

WRAITH RECON



WRAITH RECON



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With barely a whisper, a sword was drawn from its scabbard. Rauche peered up from the brush that he had crawled behind, cocking his head in the night air to hear if the sound had alerted any patrols. With a silent mental command he activated the Spellcom lens over his right eye and the blackness before him was transformed into shades of grey, as the device enhanced his vision.

The compound was just visible, at the extreme range of the lens, rising up into the overcast sky. Crude in construction, it looked like any other temporary hobgoblin fortress, with mismatched wooden stakes ringing the outpost, broken up by the occasional tower. The gateway was on the far side of the compound from their position and Rauche had no intention of using it for entry.

Between him and the palisade the ground was broken, hobgoblins having left their mark as they constructed the outpost, with ditches and troughs torn into the earth. Rather than clearing their wreckage, the hobgoblins had utilised it for defence and clusters of spikes abounded throughout the rough terrain, all intended to break an enemy's assault.

It also benefited the Wraiths, hiding their approach as they closed in on their target.

Tranter was a few paces to his left, sliding from a ditch as he warily skulked across open ground with his knives already in his hands, ready for action. Wreathed in shadows, the commando was barely visible even with the aid of the Spellcom lens. Glancing behind, he reconfirmed Allavandriel's position, her nod letting him know that her full repertoire of magic was ready to be unleashed.

'Durkin,' he whispered. 'You in place? You see anything?'

'Affirmative,' the sniper's voice sounded in his head. 'Their patrol stopped for a moment but they are moving again. Look.'

As Durkin spoke, a light twinkled in the corner of Rauche's Spellcom lens and he saw what his team mate could see as their arcane devices briefly linked together; three hobgoblins bickering as they sauntered for the eighth time that night around the compound – what passed for adequate security among these creatures. It would prove to be no match for their team.

'Okay, got them,' he whispered. 'Allavandriel, stay down – I want to save your magic in case this turns bad. Tranter, with me. We'll cut them off as they pass our 12 o'clock. Do it quietly, one each. Durkin, the last is yours.'

'Already picked him out, just say the word,' Durkin replied and Rauche could imagine him off on their left flank, motionless in some depression, his camouflage cloak shielding him from prying eyes as he looked through the scope of his magically charged crossbow. Even without the enchantments on his weapon, Durkin was fearsomely accurate – with them, he was plain lethal.

Flexing his muscles a few times to shake out the cramps before he moved, Rauche advanced at a crouch, picking his way across the rugged ground. The wraith heard the hobgoblins before he saw them and motioned for Tranter to sink to the ground just a few feet from him. Now the hobgoblins were close, he dared not even whisper into the Spellcom to give orders and he was well aware that the lens's low-light vision capabilities were something hobgoblins enjoyed naturally. If he could see them, they had every chance of seeing him.

Freezing in position and slowing his breath, Rauche waited as the hobgoblins walked out of the night, shambling with their rough gait and chatting noisily as they approached.

'Just say the word,' he heard Durkin's voice in his head. 'I have the centre.'

He saw Tranter glance back at him and he motioned with two fingers. You take the one on the left. Tranter nodded once in agreement.

One hobgoblin drew a wineskin and, pouring the contents into its mouth, belched loudly. Another hobgoblin seemed put out by this display, or perhaps it was hoping for wine itself, and it pushed the first hard in the chest. The wineskin was thrown into its face in retort.

'Now!' Rauche hissed, as he sprang into position. Tranter mirrored him almost perfectly and a faint whisper sang through the air as a magically charged bolt from Durkin's crossbow buried itself deep into the head of one hobgoblin.

Rauche's hobgoblin had time to briefly look around in dumb surprise as a dagger plunged upward into its neck, cutting off the strangled cry for help before it was properly formed. Looking up, he saw Tranter had similarly dealt with his target and was covering its mouth as he lowered it to the ground, its life blood streaming away from the vicious wound deep in its chest.

He glanced around to see if the brief disturbance had attracted any unwanted attention but the night remained silent. The whole fight had taken less than five seconds from beginning to end. Good – prolonged fights made for failed missions.

'Move up,' he whispered to Rauche through the Spellcom. 'Durkin, cover us.'

A few seconds later, they were hidden at the base of the palisade, throwing their ropes upward, the enchantments bound within the threads causing them to snake around the wooden stakes of the compound with a grip that could support a light horse. Within moments they could see inside the compound.

'SpellCom 1, this is Wraith 7. We are in position and ready to call in the strike.' he muttered quietly, when Tranter gripped his arm in a convulsive grip. He looked around to see his teammate nodding his head towards some cages. 'Damn' he whispered reflexively.

'Wraith 7 this is SpellCom 1' came the voice in his mind, 'what is your problem?'

'SpellCom 1, there are Dardarrian POWs secured next to the target. Request authority to clear non-coms from the strike zone.'

There was a moment's pause before the cool voice returned. 'Negative Wraith 7, I repeat negative. Intelligence reports that the tower contains a necromantic weapon of mass destruction on the verge of completion. It has taken a week to manoeuvre you into position; we cannot afford to blow the mission. Thousands of lives hang on this one.'

Rauche gritted his teeth for a moment, looking at the helpless prisoners. Men he was about to kill and whose deaths would haunt his dreams forever more. Beside him Tranter hissed urgently, 'You can't do this, they're our own men'.

He turned his head back towards the stone tower and in a cold voice, triggered the arcane artillery strike. Tranter cursed and tried to scramble over the top of the palisade; foolishly believing that he could rescue the prisoners in time.

'Chief, 3 o'clock – they've seen you!' came Durkin's warning.

Another murmuring bolt flew through the air over their heads as Durkin's bolt thudded into one of the figures rushing along the palisade. Forced to keep his Omnicix lens firmly fixed on the target, Rauche could do nothing as his teammate turned to protect his flank. A few expert slices and another sentry dropped. But the alarm had been raised and arrows started to whistle through the night.

Then a crackling glow began to spread across the sky. Everyone save for the Wraith Recon team turned to look. From a point above the fort dropped a sheet of purple burning fire, the heat of which burned Rauche's eyebrows before he could drop to the ground and dive for cover. Moments later Tranter landed beside him and threw himself over his sergeant's body.

The explosion was awful, the biggest yet. Bits of masonry rattled down about them, thrown 200 metres by the blast. After the last fragments had fallen, Tranter rolled off him and began to weep quietly. The sergeant slowly regained his feet, staring angrily up at the column of smoke roiling into the sky.

'Another mission, another medal,' he thought bitterly. Yet another stain on his conscience. He dragged Tranter to his feet. 'Time to bug out. Durkin rejoin us, Allavandriel you can waste anything stupid enough to follow. We have 45 minutes before pickup by Eagle 4. Let's hotfoot it.'

'Frack' spat Durkin 'I hate travelling on those birds, they are always trying to take a bite at me'.

'Perhaps next time you won't piss yourself whilst riding it. At least you're going home.' griped Tranter, who'd smeared the evidence of his frustration from his face. Then iron-faced he turned and slipped silently into the forest.

WRAITH RECON

INTRODUCTION



WHAT IS WRAITH RECON?

Wraith Recon is a fantasy setting where players take the role of a Wraith Recon team member – the elite and magically augmented Special Forces in the Kingdom of Dardarrick, the most powerful kingdom known to the world. Although Dardarrick possesses a large and very well equipped military, some things just cannot be won over with a catapult stone or a frontal assault by a regiment of heavy cavalry.

The world of Nuera is stricken by war and troubled times. Its continents are divided amongst dozens of nations, each of which try to survive the predilections of their neighbours using diplomacy or force. These struggling kingdoms have seen a golden age come and go, seemingly now destined to fall into the darkness and sorrow of unending conflict. Although short lived times of peace occur on the grander scale as an entire generation is squandered in warfare, there is always the bubbling of new battles boiling to the surface. Each kingdom has a responsibility to protect or utilise its people in these battles and wars, contributing in their own way to the overall unrest of Nuera.

Only Dardarrick has repeatedly come out on top in these conflicts, raising itself over the centuries to become the most powerful Nueraen nation. Being on top means that all those below you covet your position and Dardarrick is no exception. Despite the sheer power and grandeur of the Dardarrian government and military, enemies from all sides ceaselessly strive to take a bite from them. Like jackals trying to fell a lion, the enemies of Dardarrick are numerous and tenacious.

The Wraith Recon project was put into action to create a number of select teams of highly skilled warriors to secretly and covertly deal with the threats to Dardarrick in ways that a normal army unit or magistrate's office could never hope. They do what must be done to keep their kingdom and their people safe, often forced into morally questionable acts to benefit the good of the many.

Using magical items and specialised training gained from Wraith Recon's support organisation of SpellCom, squad members will be immersed in a different type of game that is not based on 'killing

the monster and taking its loot' but instead find themselves already outfitted with the equipment and information they will need for their assigned missions, the best their government can provide.

With this book in combination with the latest edition of the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*, readers can create their own Wraith Recon team to save Dardarrick from its enemies or narrate the whole sordid tale of the conflicts of Nuera as the Games Master. *Wraith Recon* is a self-contained setting that uses the *RuneQuest* rules to their fullest, creating the story in which players will be able to take part in.

HOW TO USE WRAITH RECON

This book is not just another fantasy roleplaying supplement. You will not find the knight in shining armour riding off to save the damsel in distress chained to a rock in front of a roaring dragon. You are not going to undo the tenets of some dark prophecy. Instead you will be called upon to fight alongside your team on a varied scope of missions for your kingdom; you are more likely to find the dragon being unleashed upon a city like the fantasy equivalent of a weapon of mass-destruction or being ordered to secretly kidnap the princess!

If Dardarrick's mighty army and navy are the sword and spear with which they defend their people and their freedoms, the Wraith Recon strike teams are the dagger behind its back. There is not a nation or kingdom on Nuera that could stand up to the might of the advanced Dardarrian army or its arcane support services in a direct conflict but facing the potential unification of its enemies, doubt has crept into some of the king's military advisors. Only through the exercise of subtlety and covert operations can these opposing powers be kept from becoming a serious threat. An assassination here, or the false evidence of an ally's treachery there, can divert the rulers of other nations into bickering amongst themselves.

This book introduces readers to the world of Nuera and its kingdoms, focussing on the recent plights of Dardarrick and the special force of Wraith Recon created to deal with them. The *Wraith Recon* setting is designed around the players creating the members of the esteemed Wraith Recon Thirteen, a new squad

assigned to some of the toughest and most important missions that SpellCom Intelligence devises. Each player will serve a role within the unit and they will collectively be responsible for the continued survival of the Dardarrick kingdom and the blissful abundance its people have enjoyed for so long.

Wraith Recon begins with a description of the Wraith Recon organisation itself, the focus of the main storyline of the setting. The Dardarrick governmental forces put together the Wraith Recon ideal to perform all the covert tasks and missions that their capable but conventional military could not. The chapter looks at the Wraith Recon organisation, its tenets and how it functions for the people of Dardarrick – even if they do not know of its existence.

The next chapter in the book explains how to create your campaign's version of Wraith Recon Thirteen – the stars of all *Wraith Recon* campaign mission packs. Using an expanded version of the Adventurer creation rules found in the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook* to create the advanced Adventurers for the setting, this book explains all the additional benefits and abilities that Wraith Recon members are given and how they are equipped in comparison to 'standard' Adventurers in a fantasy world.

Next is an expansive chapter on the primary races of the continent upon which Dardarrick lies, delving into their cultures, military tactics and alien quirks. Following this is a short chapter describing a couple of the major religions that can be used by Adventurers and foes alike.

The book continues with a detailed chronicling of the world of Nuera. This chapter talks about the various continents, kingdoms, wild areas and that which calls them home across Nuera. It covers the main places of interest and natural features of the world. With the information found in this chapter, Games Masters can create elaborate and detailed campaigns based in Nuera as a whole. Future sourcebooks and campaign mission packs will go into greater detail for some of these locations but this chapter will set the major pieces upon the map to describe the fantastic world of Nuera.

After learning about Nuera in general, Dardarrick is more closely investigated. The book moves on to describe the greater military aspects of the kingdom and how they function to make it the greatest nation ever known. Looking at how Wraith Recon works in tandem with the mighty assets of the Dardarrickian military, this chapter reveals exactly why the rest of the world covets what Dardarrick has managed to accomplish. It also looks at the most powerful asset Wraith Recon has at its disposal – Spellcaster Command. SpellCom is the single reason why the kingdom has managed to retain its position as the most powerful nation of Nuera despite all of its external conflicts.

Following this are further chapters detailing Dardarrick's most infamous enemy factions, potential threats and some personalities that the Adventurers may cross swords with. They vary from the

most terrible of foes Dardarrick faces to neutral parties that must be swayed to the kingdom's side to avoid them joining forces with current enemies. Wraith Recon team members will need to familiarise themselves with this information in order to put up a good fight against whatever evils they have in store for the people of Dardarrick.

Wraith Recon does not commonly engage in run-of-the-mill fantasy encounters. Instead, they are assigned on important covert actions that normal soldiers or Adventurers are not equipped or trained to perform. The next chapter in this book discusses the types of missions that Wraith Recon teams are sent upon, how they are expected to deal with them and a basic system of mission generation that Games Masters can use to create random missions for their Wraith Recon campaigns if they so choose.

The book ends with an example mission: Heart of Tzarkesh. This scenario is designed as the first blood for Wraith Recon Thirteen's Adventurers. It deploys the new team into the unsettled border regions of Torres, eventually penetrating deep behind enemy lines into a jungle region suffering from guerrilla warfare, where they will discover just how far the Kingdom of Dardarrick is willing to go to destabilise its neighbours.

Wraith Recon offers a new style of roleplaying in a fantasy setting. It pits a team of elite Adventurers against surprising and challenging odds in a world rich with possibility and narrative flavour. It can prove to be good for short-term action in the form of randomised *Wraith Recon* missions, or readers can follow the rest of the *Wraith Recon* product line to help defend Dardarrick or perhaps turn against it, sickened by the acts they are requested to perform, changing the shape of Nuera forever.



CHAPTER ONE

WRAITH RECON



At the heart of the Dardarrick plan for survival against its numerous enemies lays the elite members of the Special Forces battalion known as Wraith Recon. They are the covert operatives who answer only to their own command structure and that of SpellCom. Wraith Recon is the answer to the growing troubles surrounding Dardarrick – and it will stand or fall by their actions.

This chapter clarifies the role and utility of Wraith Recon. It gives the basic information concerning the battalion, which players will need to understand in order to grasp the covert strength of the elite strike teams and bring their Adventurers to life.

THE ROLE OF WRAITH RECON

A secret organisation within the confines of Spellcaster Command (SpellCom), Wraith Recon is an elite force of military-trained operatives, sworn to covertly fulfil missions on behalf of the Dardarrian greater good. They are the unsung heroes of the age, stopping conflicts before they begin or finishing fights that the regular army cannot. They go where others cannot and do what is necessary to ensure Dardarrick comes out of these situations on top.

More directly, Wraith Recon trains and commands 13 strike teams that are given incredible responsibilities, being placed in remarkable situations for the betterment of the Dardarrian people. They operate outside of the normal scope of the military, attempting tasks that larger forces could not hope to achieve and independent mercenary-adventurer types could never finish successfully.

Trained by masters of combat and outfitted by the sorcerers of Dardarrick's many arcane institutions, the Wraiths are not your typical band of warriors. They surpass common 'freelancers' in every way. Unmotivated by gold and treasure like so many common sell-swords, Wraiths are paid and equipped by the Kingdom of Dardarrick – they already have everything they need to succeed in their missions without having to stop after every battle to loot bodies and turn over

stones. A magical trinket that may have been held by a foe is more likely to be taken as evidence than as booty for personal gain, as SpellCom ensures the Wraiths are well-equipped for their duties, even providing them with the many exotic forms of transportation at SpellCom's disposal.



Constantly updated with intelligence from diviners through their SpellCom Omnilenses, Wraith Recon strike teams are assigned to missions that are integral to the success and survival of the Dardarrian way of life. These missions range greatly in their scope and difficulty; some require little combat at all, others are surgical bloodbaths.

The Wraith Recon squads are problem-solvers of the highest calibre. They do what must be done, when it needs to be done and without questioning why it must be done. Sometimes it is better for them not to know – in case they are captured. It is their honour, duty and responsibility to push themselves to the limits in order to keep Dardarrick and its people safe from the myriad threats that lurk in the nations surrounding the great kingdom.

THE ORGANISATION

Wraith Recon is a classified military battalion that is self-governed by its commanding officer, known as the Lich to his men or Wraith Commander to those outside the organisation. The Wraith Commander receives orders from the self-styled Pillars of Dardarrick – the governmental supporters of the throne – to whom he answers to.

Originally created by a select group of warlock officers within Spellcaster Command, the original handful of operatives were assigned missions seeking out and solving espionage problems in the kingdom. The unofficial group did not receive royal sanction for six more years, after which they fell under the preview of the Pillars of Dardarrick. Once given the permission to use the growing Wraith Recon force in a more aggressive manner, SpellCom recruited the most experienced veterans of the army and trained the first true Wraith Recon strike teams.

The battalion itself is not arranged in the standard military command structure. The Wraith Commander takes his orders from the Arcanist General of Spellcaster Command and the three highest-ranking officers of the Pillars of Dardarrick (more details can be found in the chapter beginning on page 90). Unlike other branches of the Dardarrick armed forces that possess long chains of command, directly beneath the Wraith Commander are the various squad leaders of the Wraiths themselves.

The Wraith Recon squad leaders are the ranking non-commissioned officers of their teams, often dealing with organising the mission parameters and SpellCom assets before deployment and serving as the final say for tactical decisions while in the field. Save for their Commander there are no officers within Wraith Recon, those positions are ostensibly filled by members of SpellCom, who may only exert authority when the team is present at its battalion headquarters.

Although the battalion maintains 13 active squads, a number of additional teams are in constant training to fill the holes left when missions result in fatalities. When counted along with the armourers, quartermasters, medics, trainers and agents, Battalion Wraith Recon numbers over 200 members. Deployable assets are

limited by the lack of Omnicriex crystal lenses and the personnel at SpellCom to supervise, analyse and provide support during Wraith Recon missions.

The individual agents known as Wolves are the survivors of squads that suffered too great a casualty loss to continue operating as a team. Instead of retiring, they are used by their battalion for extremely sensitive solo missions that even a small group of elite operatives like the Wraiths would have a difficult time succeeding in, such as long term surveillance or covert messengers. Wolves normally accept lone missions as ordered by the Wraith Commander but are sometimes called upon to work alongside a Wraith Recon team. As veteran Wraith Recon members they often outrank the squad leader that they are temporarily assigned to but try to avoid conflicts or insubordination unless their own personal orders are in danger of being compromised.

Wraith Recon does not exist as far as the common populace of Dardarrick is aware. The missions they undertake would make many folk uneasy, despite being for the greater good of the kingdom. Assassinations, wholesale slaughters of remote enemy camps, kidnappings of important targets – these are the things that Dardarrian citizens would be thankful to remain blissfully unaware of. The Dardarrians are a morally upright and faithful people that worship a pantheon of loving and protective deities. Wraith Recon was designed to accomplish the repugnant, yet necessary, things that common folk would never understand.

Although they maintain a strict silence over their existence, rumours circulate amongst the Dardarrian military about the existence of a Special Forces organisation; evidence of Wraith Recon's activities often being discovered by soldiers or scouts of their own side. Some higher-ranking officers know more than they should about the covert organisation, although few have direct access to the battalion. For the most part Wraith Recon exists outside of the attentions of others, making it a powerful hidden weapon against the enemies of Dardarrick, even internal ones.

THE TEAMS

Recruited from all parts of the Dardarrian military, the Wraith Recon teams are normally made up of four to six members who are selected and trained as a single entity. They spend so much time together that they become like family; caring for and bickering with one another just like siblings. For Wraiths, the success of the mission and the survival of squad members comes before all else.

The Wraith Recon squads swear fealty to their battalion. Once sworn to Wraith Recon, a member is a lifelong operative. There is no 'retiring' from Wraith Recon; there is always more work to be done and new threats loom over Dardarrick that must be dealt with. There may come a day when the Wraiths can set aside their weapons and return to normal lives but that day is far off.

Over the years the battalion has swelled to include 13 active Wraith Recon teams, each recruited and trained by SpellCom and the Pillars of Dardarrick. Although most squads are given

individual missions, working independently from one another, their tasks are often carefully synchronised as part of a larger chain of events, generally coordinated with major military movements or diplomatic missions.

The current statuses of the Wraith Recon teams are as follows:

- ☉ **Wraith Recon One** – Assigned in the Kingdom of Torres.
- ☉ **Wraith Recon Two** – Assigned in the Wildlands.
- ☉ **Wraith Recon Three** – Missing in Action/Whereabouts Unknown.
- ☉ **Wraith Recon Four** – Assigned to Dardarrick internal security.
- ☉ **Wraith Recon Five** – Returning from Assignment in the Wildlands.
- ☉ **Wraith Recon Six** – Assigned to Pierceling.
- ☉ **Wraith Recon Seven** – Assigned in the Kingdom of Lorn.
- ☉ **Wraith Recon Eight** – Assigned in Rivermarck.
- ☉ **Wraith Recon Nine** – Replacing casualties.
- ☉ **Wraith Recon Ten** – Returning from Assignment in Parennox.
- ☉ **Wraith Recon Eleven** – Classified.
- ☉ **Wraith Recon Twelve** – Lost in action.
- ☉ **Wraith Recon Thirteen**¹ – New recruits awaiting first mission.

¹ This is the team that the Adventurers form.

The teams are the core of Wraith Recon; following orders into whatever lands or cities they are instructed to fulfil missions from Spellcaster Command. SpellCom gives them the directives, the goal, the transport to the location and the tools to get the job done. Wraith Recon has the comparatively easy part – survive and succeed.

THE WRAITHS

The individual team members of Wraith Recon are seasoned soldiers who have been trained in multiple fields and schools of tactics, fighting and spellcasting. Recruits are selected from all walks of military or frontiersman life within Dardarrick, from woodsmen rangers to seafaring marines. Once their advanced training is complete they are given the starting rank of 'Wraith' and granted full team status.

Each Wraith must be dedicated to the team and to the Kingdom, willing to lay down their lives for the Wraith next to them and ensure the completion of the mission. They know that they exist in a state of secrecy and classification that forces them to live separate lives; enjoying their normal hours as any other Dardarrian would but throwing it all aside to join the Wraiths when the team is called to action. No matter what they are ordered to do they are expected to succeed, a daunting thought for all but the most dedicated of souls to the greatness that is Dardarrick.

Although paid well for their efforts, Wraiths are not in the organisation for the money. They are true patriots risking their lives for their fellow Dardarrians and the supremacy of their kingdom. No matter what species, race or corner of the kingdom the Wraith hails from – they now think of every piece of it as their responsibility. Or so the propaganda says anyway.

Every Wraith, once agreeing to join the organisation, is sworn into service. The oath they swear to Wraith Recon is taken *very* seriously and more than a few lacklustre operatives have met with Wolves sent to 're-educate' them in keeping their word and promise to Dardarrick. The Oath of Service is spoken twice; once to the Arcanist General and Wraith Commander and once as a group to one another within the team.

The Wraith Oath of Service

I stand before you dying, setting my life aside. The wounds, poison and illness to my kingdom has killed me. I now die, giving up what I was to cross back into the world as the spirit of my former self.

I long for the days of peace and tranquillity where I will no longer be needed, sent to my afterlife, but until the Lion of Dardarrick sleeps unthreatened I will go on. I haunt the enemies of my people and give them reason to fear the darkness.

I am the ghost of what was. I am the risen vengeance of what has happened. I am the cold chill falling upon the enemy. I am Wraith.

Brother to you, my brothers, I shall guard you until death; never fleeing, never giving up, never betraying those who stand beside me. So shall I be until the Heavens call my name.



In each Wraith Recon team there are several individual roles that can be divided between its members as they choose. Depending on the skills and talents of the Wraiths, they might have several members filling one role while none at all of another. It is up to the team to decide who can or should fill which role but the roles and what they are known for within Wraith Recon are as follows:

Squad leader: Every Wraith Recon strike team has a single member that has been charged with the overall decision-making of the team. As part of the responsibility the squad leader is granted an additional rank over his fellow team mates. Although this gives him authority over his squad, a leader who does not listen to his men and take good advice will soon be replaced. The squad leader is also the one who is contacted by SpellCom for most updates, fed the most intelligence and held personally accountable for failures during the mission. Knowledge of Lore (Tactics) and good leadership skills are fundamental to the position.

Sniper: The most skilled missile weapon specialist is usually given the task of providing suppressing fire or takes out key enemy targets from range. With the right weapon, a good sniper can follow the maxim of one shot, one kill perhaps avoiding the risk of penetrating enemy camps or emplacements. Stealth and Perception

are two other important skills, enabling the sniper to engage and disengage without being spotted and consequently hunted down.

Imposter: For non combat situations teams often need someone skilled in assuming false identities, intimidation and the ability to convince people into voluntarily giving up information. The impostor is a vital role when travelling deep within enemy territory, where a good knowledge of local customs and languages is required in order to not give away the nature of the squad or its mission. As such skills like Culture, Disguise, Influence, Insight and Language are very important to the role.

Corpsman: The primary source of first aid and healing, a corpsman is an invaluable member within the team. Whilst the sorcery of SpellCom can sometimes remove the irritations of light wounds, the chance of serious injury always threatens in combat oriented missions. A corpsman earns his keep by being able to still heal his companions if their equipment is lost or suppressed, when major surgery is required to prevent maiming, or when faced with situations involving disease or poison. The preeminent skills of a combat medic are First Aid, Healing and Lore (Regional) to have knowledge of the dangers or benefits of the local flora and fauna.

Tracker: Being able to negotiate rough terrain and follow the spore of a target are vital skills to a Wraith Recon squad. Trackers combine the talents of hunters, scouts and woodsmen to provide versatile support in a wilderness situation. They are specialised in Perception, Survival and Track, often diversifying into skills such as Boating, Riding and Lore (Regional).

Technician: A combination of battlefield engineer and armourer, the technician focuses on mastering mechanical knowledge. These abilities allow them to build rope bridges across gorges, repair equipment, undermine walls, pick locks and disarm or create booby traps. When facing fortifications or needing to overcome terrain features technicians are invaluable, training in Crafts, Engineering, Mechanisms, various Lores and Perception.

Warlock: The rarest of specialities, Warlocks are warrior-sorcerers who manage to escape recruitment to SpellCom to become front-line combat experts. This does not necessarily imply that the warlock dedicates himself to learning spells of death, since Arcana Tactical support can provide far greater acts of destruction than a lone sorcerer. Instead they diversify into spells that can augment covert missions by stealth or subtlety. Warlocks, by their very nature, find it necessary to develop their Manipulation and Grimoire skills.

MILITARY RANK

Rank in Wraith Recon is an abstract concept not directly supported by the *RuneQuest* rules system. More a case of professional recognition by superiors, it is up to the Games Master to decide how and when their Adventurers are elevated. As such, rank should be based upon completing challenging missions rather than the skill of a team member.

The disassociation between rank and technical ability allows the portrayal of incompetent superiors and the time immemorial traditions of purchasing officer rank or even nepotism. Rank therefore is not only a potential role-playing opportunity but the granting of it is a very important in-game reward.

Being a covert Special Forces organisation, the ranks used within Wraith Recon are non-standard and outside of the normal military chain of command. Team members are in principle unable to be ordered by officers outside of the organisation but likewise cannot order regular troops around. In reality however, the situation sometimes occurs that impromptu command needs to be taken, in which case it is the Wraith Recon's own personal authority and Influence skill that counts.

Wraith Recon Rank

Rank	Rough Military Equivalent	Insignia
Wraith	Private	Silver skull with quartz eyes
Shade	Lance Corporal	Silver skull with ruby eyes
Phantom	Corporal	Silver skull with topaz eyes
Banshee	Sergeant	Silver skull with emerald eyes
Ghost	Staff Sergeant	Silver skull with sapphire eyes
Spectre	Sergeant Major	Silver skull with amethyst eyes
Lich	Colonel	Silver skull with obsidian eyes

The only other insignia used by Wraith Recon teams are small silver bones that denote the number of missions the team member has successfully completed. These are pinned to the sleeves and collars of the brigade's black dress uniform. No other indicators of the missions or military campaigns are used.

Although each member of a team is aware of their companion's rank, individuals never wear uniforms and insignia outside of their headquarters. Rank titles are normally used as part of communications protocol via SpellCom Omnilens, the magical device allowing team members to talk to each other over large distances. Rank titles are also used for covert identification in non-secure environments.

WRAITH RECON DUTIES

Simply put, Wraith Recon strike teams do whatever they are ordered for the greater good of Dardarrick. Missions can involve a wide range of objectives; for instance, scouting enemy territory, clearing nests of dangerous beasts, capturing bridges, kidnapping an enemy leader's family members, assassinating political rivals to the king, stealing secret plans or even destroying fortifications. All are within the remit of the Wraith Recon brigade and whilst often morally questionable, it is a Wraith's duty to take on the missions

assigned to them by the Wraith Commander, relayed from the arcanists at SpellCom.

There are four main types of mission that Wraith Recon strike teams are sent upon; reconnaissance, retrieval, escort and elimination. There are several sub-types built into each mission category (covered in the Missions chapter starting on page 140) but they all work into one of these four main types.

Reconnaissance missions place the Wraiths in a position to do their duty without unnecessary conflict or bloodshed. They are sent to a place or region to gather information. These missions require the strike team to be stealthy or subtle depending on the location being penetrated; only resorting to violence when they cannot avoid getting caught any other way.

Retrieval missions are simple in design, difficult in execution. The Wraiths are instructed to take possession of an item or person in order to bring it back to Wraith Recon headquarters under Fort Brazen. Depending on how far the target needs to be brought, where exactly it is to begin with, or what might be guarding it, these missions can be ultimately taxing on the strike team's skills and resources.

Escort missions are among the most arduous and painstaking assignments a Wraith Recon team can be given. Instructed to take some person or item from one place to another without it being damaged or captured by the enemy, the team has a great deal at stake. If the assignment is an item they have to worry about it being stolen or broken in transit. If the assignment is a person they instead have to worry about its well-being and safety. Many other missions are upgraded to escort missions in the field when captives or new information becomes available, making sure these new assets get to where they need to be.

Elimination missions place the team on the offensive. They are handed a target; be it a person, building, item or group. The target is then tasked for destruction by the means outlined in the mission. Sometimes this means wholesale battle, other times it is a single dagger stroke across a sleeping throat. No matter who or what must be taken out, the Wraiths must ensure it happens.

When a Wraith Recon team receives its mission they are given a few hours or even days to prepare themselves. They must decide who in the team will fill what roles, what route and transportation they will take and if they will be needing specialised items touched upon to fulfil the mission. Once they have determined that they are ready the team assembles for deployment.

Deployment comes in the form of several different methods. Whilst a number of magical portals have been created between SpellCom Command and specially prepared locations around the kingdom, the sorcerers of Dardarrick have no knowledge of Teleportation in general. Thus squads have to reach their objectives the hard way, using mounts, boats or ultimately their own feet. Drops from the Air Cavalry are used occasionally when intelligence allows unobserved insertion in enemy territory. However, travel to and from their mission can often be more dangerous than the objective itself.

Once deployed, the Wraith Recon team must work towards the success of the mission. All else is secondary. Luckily, the Wraiths are never exactly *alone* in their duties – the SpellCom is always with them.

SPELLCASTER COMMAND

A group of sorcerers selected from the most elite wizards and warlocks in Dardarrick, Spellcaster Command is the power behind the throne. The coordinated strength of sorcery acting in concert has revolutionised the battlefield, replacing the previously unassailable might held by regiments of war priests. Wraith Recon team members are skilled and highly trained but so are any group of mercenaries who survive their first campaigns. The SpellCom Omnilens system, with which Spellcaster Command augments and enhances the tactical abilities of Wraith Recon, is the key that turns a soldier into a Wraith Recon operative.

At Spellcaster Command departments of researchers, sryers and ritualists use the unique abilities of the ancient



Omniciex crystal artefacts to watch over and send aid to the strike teams when they are hundreds or even thousands of kilometres away. By granting SpellCom one of the squad's sympathetically resonant crystal shards, sorcerers can communicate, track and advise the teams as they move through their missions. Not only is the SpellCom lens a powerful magical item in its own right, it is the conduit through which the Wraiths can request supporting spells and potentially even greater assets. It is the most vital piece of equipment of any Wraith Recon team member, an invaluable resource the secret of which must never fall into enemy hands, in order to keep its power the province of Dardarrick alone.

Spellcaster Command not only aids teams in the field but also before they are deployed. The finest crafting hands and minds in Dardarrick are constantly making new, interesting arcane items and alchemical potions for the use of their most covert military force. Through SpellCom these items end up in the hands of a Wraith Recon team member as they equip themselves for mission assignments, making sure that the right Wraith has the right gear for the job ahead. Wraiths never lack for the resources they need in a mission because of this and it helps keep them focussed on the mission's success instead of which enemy to loot first when the bodies drop.

Better weapons, armour and equipment are just the beginning of what Wraith Recon gets from its connection to Spellcaster Command. The ability to call in Air Cavalry assets, see the enemy in the black of night, communicate with one another over long distances and even see the touch of others' magic without casting a spell to do so; these are all just the beginning of what the SpellCom system can do for the Wraiths.

While Wraith Recon would still be a force to be reckoned with *without* the SpellCom assets at their disposal, they are truly formidable with them.

LIFE AS A WRAITH

To become a member of the secret Wraith Recon brigade can mean a life of duplicity and danger. Once in, you are *in*. The following points are important to remember when you take on the role of a Wraith Special Forces operative.

- ☠ **You are expected to be a patriot.** A belief in Dardarrick and the Dardarrian way of life is paramount. Nothing can threaten or stand in the way of the great kingdom's peace and prosperity; you will see to that in any way you can.
- ☠ **Your role is classified.** You might be the hero of Dardarrick and the saviour of its people but no one can ever be told of your exploits, or your sacrifices. The reason Wraith Recon works as well as it does is because no one knows it exists.
- ☠ **You were selected for a reason.** You were brought into Wraith Recon for your own special brand of talents. Do not be ashamed of using your gifts as often as you have the option to do so. The Wraith Commander wanted *you*, not the soldier others think you should be.
- ☠ **The mission comes first.** Wraith assignments are to be given priority above *all* else. These missions are all parts of a greater scheme at Spellcaster Command that individual Wraiths might not be privy to. Your personal desires and ethics, including those of your squad must be thought of as secondary.
- ☠ **The greatest sacrifice may be necessary.** No one wants to die but your service to Dardarrick and its people could call any Wraith to a situation where they have to lay down their lives for the greater cause. Should it be you, go to your death with pride and honour knowing that the great kingdom will revere you forever as a hero for doing so.

CHAPTER TWO

CREATING A TEAM



This chapter provides the steps required to create Wraith Recon Adventurers, using the *RuneQuest* rules. Whilst Games Masters are free to set their campaigns in any region of Nuera, *Wraith Recon* assumes that players will be taking the role of recruits to the Dardarrick Special Forces. The chance to play highly skilled and magically equipped Special Forces should be irresistible. However, the following rules can be used to create Adventurers of different origins if the campaign is set outside of Dardarrick or even as a counter-Wraith Recon unit!

To give a sense of developing their own identity (and bucking unlucky superstition) Adventurers are assumed to be part of the newly formed team, Wraith Recon Thirteen. This default identity will be the designation used throughout the *Wraith Recon* supplement series but Games Masters are of course at liberty to change the team number to suit their own preferences.

Wraith Recon assumes that the Adventurers have had ample time to get to know and trust one another before a campaign starts. The team is a family unlike any other and although individual members might not view certain things in the same way, they should maintain a degree of professionalism, which encourages that the mission comes before petty differences. Wraiths count on one another more than anything else; trusting the teammates at your back is the key to survival.

It would probably behove any *Wraith Recon* Games Master to give his players some time to get to know each other's Adventurers, their *stated* backgrounds (dark secrets can be concealed if desired) and their skills, which everyone would know from their time in training. This will help turn the Adventurers into a cohesive team and will personalise the various Adventurers within the team from the outset.

Once your version of Wraith Recon Thirteen is assembled, a mission can be generated for them to be assigned to, beginning their lives as covert operatives of Dardarrick, either created by the Games Master or using the random method included in this book (chapter begins on page 140).

ADVENTURERS GENERATION

Wraith Recon Adventurers are created using a modified *RuneQuest* Adventurer Creation process, summarised as follows:

1. Choose a race. Since Nuera is populated with many sapient species, a range of options are provided for the common inhabitants of the Rardarri continent. The Games Master will provide guidance on those races suitable for the campaign.
2. Define your Adventurer's Characteristics (STR, CON, SIZ, INT, POW, DEX and CHA). The race selected in the previous step may have a bearing on the dice rolled for each Characteristic. If the Games Master wishes to use the Points Buy system, then he should total the average Characteristic values for the race and use that as the Build Points, with the upper and lower rolled values as the boundaries for assigning them.
3. Calculate the Adventurer's attributes (Hit Points, Combat Actions and so on), as per the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*, page 8 onwards.
4. Beginning Adventurers start at age 24+1D6 – so between the ages of 25 and 30. This represents the acquired skills and maturity necessary for joining the Wraith Recon regiment.
5. Choose a nationality. Wraith Recon recruits usually come from the Kingdom of Dardarrick. However, if the Games Master permits, an Adventurer can be a refugee or turncoat from a neighbouring nation.
6. Choose a culture. The cultures available to an Adventurer are determined by its nationality.
7. Choose the Adventurer's previous profession before they were recruited to Wraith Recon. A short list of suggested professions is provided, mainly biased towards Dardarrick military careers. If desired, the Adventurer may choose from the professions in the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook* instead.
8. Determine the Adventurer's Common and Advanced skills, as per *RuneQuest*. Some new skills particular to *Wraith Recon* are described towards the end of this chapter.
9. Distribute 500 Free Skill Points, as per page 20 of the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*. No skill may be raised above 80%, the objective being to encourage a broad range of competence.

10. Establish Community, as per the Community rules starting on page 20 of the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*, but ignore Connections since the Adventurers have all been recruited into the same military organisation.
11. Roll one or more times on the Nuera Background Events table found on page 22 of this chapter.
12. **Optional:** Select Passions for your Adventurer. See Passions, beginning on page 24.
13. If you have not done so already, give your Adventurer a name!

Your Wraith Recon operative should now be ready for play.

As a guideline to the flavour and style of Wraith Recon campaigns, a short series of linked missions have been included in this book, *The Heart of Tzarkesh*, beginning on page 153.

RACE

The world of Nuera is inhabited by a plethora of sapient species, which have spread across its lands and nations. Although Dardarrick is primarily human, other races live within its borders – ready to serve in the military to protect their nation. Although truly homogenised societies have yet to exist, the main races present on the continent of Rardarri by and large cooperate with

each other at the national level, as long as their cultural and tribal boundaries are respected.

The most populous races are Humans, Dwarfs, Elves, Hobgoblins, Lizardmen, Scorpionmen and Sharkfolk. Many other races also inhabit Rardarri but are not detailed in this particular book.

Adventurers, depending on their race, use different dice rolls to generate their Characteristics from the normal method in the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*. Although this may appear somewhat unfair or unbalanced, Games Masters can prevent player dissatisfaction by ensuring that Adventurers in his campaign all come from the same origin, or prevent certain races from being used for Adventurers.

Humans

Traditional human beings are struggling to survive in a world populated by stronger, more ruthless races. The main human advantages lie in their ecological versatility, intellect and magical affinity. However, although widespread, their lack of physical superiority has prevented mankind from dominating Nuera. In lands outside of Dardarrick, humans are often forced to live as second class citizens or even slaves.



Dwarfs

Once in conflict with elves, their ancient feuds have long since been settled, only to be replaced by nationalistic differences. Short but strong, with big noses and beards to match, dwarfs often have considerable skill as artificers and artisans. They are generally found in hilly or mountainous regions. Despite often living underground, dwarfs cannot see in the dark but are able to find their way about if a lantern goes out.

Elves

Long-lived denizens of the forests and woodlands, elves co-exist with nature to a greater degree than their human brethren. They can be found outside their preferred habitat but their general frailty encourages them to live in places not dominated by other more belligerent races. Most elves have a latent magical strength predisposing them to magic. Though a little humanlike in appearance, elves are slither in build and often taller than humans, with fine bone structure and pointed, tapering ears.

Hobgoblins

Hobgoblins are hairy humanoids averaging two metres tall, with flattened noses, pointed ears and strong physiques. They thrive in mountainous regions, forming aggressive, warlike tribes that dominate the foothills and valleys of their territory. Their strength

and size serves them well, granting an ability to scale oft-times precipitous paths or cliff faces, leaping from ledge-to-ledge.

Lizardmen

The lizardmen are the reptilians that reside in the swamps and jungles of the world. Their serpentine, lizard-like bipedal form is adapted for semi-aquatic life, using their powerful tails to swim and fight. The average lizardman is as tall as a hobgoblin but leaner due to its less bulky musculature.

Scorpionmen

This race takes the form of humanoid scorpion chimeras. The preferred environments of the scorpion men are arid or desert regions where their unique physiology is adapted to heat tolerance and water preservation. They possess a venomous stinger which, although less versatile than a lizardman's tail, aids balance and is sometimes useful in battle. Whilst smaller than most other races their toughness is legendary.

Sharkfolk

Sharkfolk or sea devils are humanoids who reside in the shallows of the salt water oceans, lurking out of sight of surface dwellers. Although able to venture onto land the sharkfolk cannot linger long before their gills begin to dry. Covered with fine iridescent scales, their frilled skins display beautiful patterns and colours. They use their webbed claws and feet to propel them in the water.



Humans

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	3D6	11	1-3	Right Leg	-/5
CON	3D6	11	4-6	Left Leg	-/5
SIZ	2D6+6	13	7-9	Abdomen	-/6
DEX	3D6	11	10-12	Chest	-/7
INT	2D6+9	16	13-15	Right Arm	-/4
POW	2D6+9	16	16-18	Left Arm	-/4
CHA	3D6	11	19-20	Head	-/5
Combat Actions		3		Natural Armour: None	
Damage Modifier		None			
Magic Points		16		Traits: None	
Movement		8m			
Strike Rank		+14		Unarmed Damage: 1D3	

Dwarfs

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	4D6	14	1-3	Right Leg	-/6
CON	2D6+12	19	4-6	Left Leg	-/6
SIZ	1D6+6	10	7-9	Abdomen	-/7
DEX	3D6	11	10-12	Chest	-/8
INT	2D6+6	13	13-15	Right Arm	-/5
POW	3D6	11	16-18	Left Arm	-/5
CHA	3D6	11	19-20	Head	-/6
Combat Actions		2		Natural Armour: None	
Damage Modifier		None			
Magic Points		11		Traits: Earth Sense	
Movement		6m			
Strike Rank		+12		Unarmed Damage: 1D3	

Elves

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	2D6+3	10	1-3	Right Leg	-/5
CON	3D6	11	4-6	Left Leg	-/5
SIZ	2D6+6	13	7-9	Abdomen	-/6
DEX	3D6+6	17	10-12	Chest	-/7
INT	2D6+6	13	13-15	Right Arm	-/4
POW	2D6+6	13	16-18	Left Arm	-/4
CHA	3D6	11	19-20	Head	-/5
Combat Actions		3		Natural Armour: None	
Damage Modifier		None			
Magic Points		13		Traits: Night Sight	
Movement		10m			
Strike Rank		+15		Unarmed Damage: 1D3	

Hobgoblins

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	2D6+9	16	1–3	Right Leg	1/6
CON	2D6+6	13	4–6	Left Leg	1/6
SIZ	2D6+9	16	7–9	Abdomen	1/7
DEX	2D6+6	13	10–12	Chest	1/8
INT	2D6+6	13	13–15	Right Arm	1/5
POW	3D6	11	16–18	Left Arm	1/5
CHA	3D6	11	19–20	Head	1/6
Combat Actions	3		Natural Armour: 1 AP Hairy Skin. No Armour Penalty		
Damage Modifier	+1D4				
Magic Points	11		Traits: Night Sight		
Movement	8m				
Strike Rank	+13		Unarmed Damage: 1D4		

Lizardmen

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	2D6+6	13	1–2	Right Leg	2/6
CON	3D6	11	3–4	Left Leg	2/6
SIZ	1D6+12	16	5–6	Tail	2/6
DEX	2D6+9	16	7–9	Abdomen	2/7
INT	1D6+9	13	10–12	Chest	2/8
POW	2D6+3	10	13–15	Right Arm	2/5
CHA	3D6	11	16–18	Left Arm	2/5
			19–20	Head	2/6
Combat Actions	3		Natural Armour: 2 AP Scales. No Armour Penalty		
Damage Modifier	+1D2				
Magic Points	10		Traits: Cold-Blooded ¹ , Hold Breath ¹		
Movement	8m				
Strike Rank	+15		Unarmed Damage: 1D6		

Scorpionmen

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	3D6	11	1–2	Right Leg	3/7
CON	2D6+12	19	3–4	Left Leg	3/7
SIZ	2D6+6	13	5–6	Tail	3/7
DEX	2D6+6	13	7–9	Abdomen	3/8
INT	2D6+6	13	10–12	Chest	3/9
POW	2D6+3	10	13–15	Right Arm	3/6
CHA	3D6	11	16–18	Left Arm	3/6
			19–20	Head	3/7
Combat Actions	3		Natural Armour: 3 AP Chitin. No Armour Penalty		
Damage Modifier	None				
Magic Points	10		Traits: Cold-Blooded ¹ , Poison		
Movement	10m				
Strike Rank	+13		Unarmed Damage: 1D3/1D4 (Stinger)		

Sharkfolk

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	2D6+6	13	1–2	Right Leg	–/5
CON	3D6	11	3–4	Left Leg	–/5
SIZ	2D6+6	13	5–6	Tail	–/5
DEX	2D6+3	10	7–9	Abdomen	–/6
INT	1D6+12	16	10–12	Chest	–/7
POW	2D6+6	13	13–15	Right Arm	–/4
CHA	3D6	11	16–18	Left Arm	–/4
			19–20	Head	–/5

Combat Actions	3
Damage Modifier	+1D2
Magic Points	13
Movement	8m
Strike Rank	+13

Natural Armour: None

Traits: Blood Frenzy¹, Breathe Water, Night Sight

Unarmed Damage: 1D4

¹Blood Frenzy, Cold-Blooded and Hold Breath are detailed in the relevant sections of the Races of Nuera chapter.

NATIONALITY

Every Adventurer comes from somewhere and for those joining Wraith Recon this will normally be Dardarrick. The individual nations on the continent of Rardarri are described later in the book and players are encouraged to read through and review these summaries before deciding on their Adventurer's homeland. Once decided, though, their nationality determines the Adventurer's Culture; in most cases this will be clear-cut but in others there will be a choice.

Nation	Culture(s)
Dardarrick	Civilised
Fang Straits	Nomad, Primitive
Lorn	Barbarian, Civilised
Torres	Barbarian, Primitive
Wildlands	Barbarian, Nomad, Outcast

CHOOSE CULTURE

The culture that a Wraith Recon recruit comes from determines the types of skills learned whilst growing up. Players are free to choose (within the established parameters of their nation) between the following Cultural Backgrounds to represent their Adventurers' origin.

The cultures on the following page are slightly different to those presented in the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook* to emphasise the quirks of Nuera societies.

PROFESSIONS

Either select a generic profession from the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook* or choose a more specialised military career from the table on page 20. Games Masters should ensure that the chosen profession is available to the Adventurer's culture.

Combat Styles

In Wraith Recon the default assumption for Combat Styles is that they encompass a select group of up to four profession specific weapons. Each style is unique to the nationality, species, career or regiment which teaches it. Some examples include:

- Air Cavalry Style: Lance, Longsword, Shield and Crossbow
- Lizardman Fanged Knight Style: Stone Axe, Spiked Club, Spiked Shield and Javelin
- Lornish Iron Brigade Style: Great Axe, Hammer, Shield and Thrown Hammer
- Sniper Style: Bow, Crossbow, Dart and Sling
- Torres Hunter Style: Trident, Blowgun, Javelin and Thrown Stone
- Wraith Recon Style: Dagger, Shortsword, Thrown Knife and Garrotte

The possible combinations are endless, but for Adventurers recruited from the Dardarrian military, some examples of unit specific weapons are provided in the Legion table on page 111. Games Masters are encouraged to develop their own Combat Styles to add flavour to opponents from specific organisations. Some culturally unique weapons are described in the Races of Nuera chapter.

If desired, skill points assigned to improving Combat Styles may be invested in Unarmed Combat instead. After Adventurers have begun play, learning new Combat Styles is treated as learning a new Advanced Skill.



Cultural Backgrounds

Background	Common Skill Bonuses	Combat Styles	Advanced Skill Bonuses	Starting Money
Barbarian	Athletics +10%, Culture (Own) +30%, Lore (Regional) +30%, Perception +10%, Resilience +10% Select One Brawn +10%, Dance +10%, Ride +10%, Sing +10%	Select two Combat Styles and gain a +10% bonus to each	Craft (Any), Language (Native) +50%, Survival Select One Craft (Other), Healing, Play Instrument, Track	4D6x20 silver
Civilised	Culture (Own) +30%, Evaluate +10%, Influence +10%, Insight +10%, Lore (Regional) +30% Select One Dance +10%, Drive +10%, Ride +10%, Sing +10%	Select one Combat Style and gain a +10% bonus to it	Craft (Any), Language (Native) +50%, Streetwise Select Two Boating, Courtesy, Craft (Other), Healing, Language (Other), Lore (Any), Play Instrument, Shiphandling	4D6x50 silver
Nomad	Culture (Own) +30%, Dance +5%, Lore (Regional) +30%, Perception +10%, Resilience +10%, Sing +5% Select One Athletics +10%, Drive +10%, Ride +10%, Swim +10% (Oanni must select Ride or Swim)	Select two Combat Styles and gain a +10% bonus to each	Craft (Any), Language (Native) +50%, Track Select One Craft (Other), Culture (Other), Healing, Language (Other), Play Instrument, Survival	4D6x10 silver
Outcast ¹	Athletics +10%, Culture (Own) +30%, Evaluate +10%, Lore (Regional) +30% Select Two Perception +10%, Resilience +10%, Ride +10%, Stealth +10%	Select one Combat Style and gain a +10% bonus to it	Language (Native) +50%, Streetwise, Survival Select Two Craft (Any), Culture (Other), Language (Other), Lore (Other Region)	4D6 silver
Primitive	Athletics +10%, Culture (Own) +30%, Lore (Regional) +30%, Perception +10%, Resilience +10%, Stealth +10%	Select two Combat Styles and gain a +10% bonus to each	Language (Native) +50%, Survival, Track Select One Art (Any), Healing, Lore (Any)	4D6x5 silver

¹An outcast can be anything from a criminal outlaw to a persecuted migrant, or the offspring of such. Their skills are learned as part of trying to survive outside of society.

Armourer: Despite the implications of their name, armourers design, craft and maintain all types of equipment, including weaponry. Most professional military units have a number of soldiers dedicated as armourers so as to provide field repairs for their equipment.

Aviator: Aviators are the pilots and crew of flying creatures. Whilst the pilot obviously controls the beast, supplemental crew often take the roles of boarding teams, defending the mount with projectile weapons or providing grooming and veterinary services.

Cavalryman: Cavalry soldiers fight from the backs of their mounts, using the speed or mass of the creature to increase their tactical advantage. Their task is primarily that of reconnaissance and engaging light, skirmish troops on the battlefield. Cavalrymen

normally only learn to fight from one type of beast, although what that creature is can be very diverse in Nuera.

Commando: Professional soldiers trained to use stealth and deception to complete missions, rather than direct force. They are normally assigned to missions behind enemy lines to neutralise points of strategic importance, paving the way for more conventional military attacks.

Engineer: Military engineers are used in a number of manners from carving new roads along which troops can move, building bridges, digging tunnels and undermining defences. Whilst armourers create weapons and armour, engineers specialise in building siege engines, traps and fortifications.

Brawn (STR + SIZ)

For Wraith Recon, the skill of Brawn has been slightly modified to produce more consistently realistic results. Brawn is the efficient application of technique when applying physical force and is used in three ways in RuneQuest:

- ☉ to measure how much a person can push, pull and lift;
- ☉ to use in physical contests against an opponent such as wrestling, tug-of-wars, and some combat manoeuvres and situations;
- ☉ to break, smash and rip things.

An adventurer can normally lift 5kg for each point of STR plus each point of their critical score in their Brawn skill. For game purposes, count each 5kgs as equal to one point of SIZ. To briefly lift more than this an adventurer needs to make a Brawn roll. If he succeeds he can lift an amount based on twice his STR plus the bonus from his brawn skill (not doubled). Failing the Brawn roll may result in injury; the Adventurer must make a successful Resilience roll or suffer 1D3 points of damage to a random location below the head. Fumbling the Brawn roll automatically results in injury.

Example, Kosan the Smith has a STR of 15 and a Brawn skill of 72%. He can normally lift sacks of metal ore weighing up to 115 kilograms (75kg from his STR and 40kg from his Brawn skill). If he makes a Brawn skill he could briefly lift up to 38 SIZ or 190 kilograms (STR 15 x 2, plus 8 from his skill), enough to carry his father's large anvil across the smithy.

Note that the size and shape of an object might make it impossible to lift, even if it is within the lifter's weight capacity.

If using the Brawn skill against an opponent there comes a point where technique cannot overcome raw strength. In a contest, if an adventurer's Damage Modifier is one step smaller than an opponent then the adventurer suffers a -20% penalty to their Brawn skill while the opponent gets a +20% bonus. If their Damage Modifier is two or more steps less, then the adventurer automatically loses. Naturally these modifiers are reversed if the adventurer is the stronger one.

Example: Kosan (Damage Modifier +1D2) is trying to escape from the grip of an enraged Hobgoblin (Damage Modifier +1D4). Kosan suffers -20% to his Brawn skill when trying to break the grapple while the Hobgoblin gets +20% to its rolls.

Finally, Brawn can be used to break objects with their bare hands – such as shoulder barging a wooden door or breaking a plank of wood over a knee. To do this make a Brawn roll. If the roll is a success roll the adventurer's normal unarmed damage but increase his damage modifier by 1 step and apply it to the object's Armour Points & Hit Points as usual. If the adventurer is able to make a run up (such as shoulder charging) then increase the damage modifier by two steps. A failed Brawn roll causes no damage to the object and may cause an injury to the adventurer depending on the circumstance; use the rules for a failed lifting attempt above and apply any damage to the most logical location.



Guerrilla: Irregular troops designed to infiltrate civilian populations in enemy territory, from where they launch attacks to undermine morale or destroy supplies. Whilst guerrillas focus more on diverting troops from the front lines rather than direct assaults, most are competent fighters in their own right.

Infantryman: The ubiquitous foot soldier, trained in battlefield formation fighting and used to garrison fortifications.

Knight: The elite of the cavalry, knights are generally used for shock charges against formations. To aid their destructive potential, knights are often equipped with the best armour and mounts available.

Marine: Warriors trained for sea based combat or sea based assaults on coastal regions. A unit of marines is usually assigned to warships, dedicated to the defence of the vessel. Although capable of controlling small boats for landings/boarding actions, they do not help to sail vessels.

Medic: Combat medics are assigned to most military units due to the likelihood of injury. Despite being healers, medics are still willing and capable of fighting.

Mercenary: Professional warriors who fight for money rather than national loyalty or ideology. Distrusted by most soldiers, mercenaries who survive in their career are generally well trained with a range of competences.

Officer: Officers are trained in leadership, organisation and tactical skills, giving commands instead of participating directly in combat themselves. All officers, no matter their branch of the military, learn the same core skills.

Scout: Used primarily as reconnaissance gatherers, scouts also serve as guides, map makers, impromptu diplomats and cultural advisors.

Seaman: The crew that maintain and sail naval vessels, seamen generally only experience ship-to-ship combat – manning large weapons or engaging in boarding actions.

Warlock: Few sorcerers are permitted to join combat units but those that exist are generally trained with weapons for self-protection and named warlocks. The occasional regimental commander may have some sorcerous powers with which they augment their troops and some militaries field entire Companies of Warlocks, who combine their powers to launch battlefield scale magics of frightening power.

War-Priest: Similar to warlocks but far more common, war-priests are faithful followers of a particular deity or pantheon who have dedicated themselves to war. Whilst perhaps less skilled in combat than a dedicated warrior, their divine granted powers more than make up their battlefield effectiveness.

Civilised Military Professions

Profession	Common Skill Bonuses	Combat Styles	Advanced Skills
Armourer	Brawn +10%, Resilience +10%	+10% to a Combat Style	Craft (Armourer), Mechanisms
Aviator	Perception +10%, Resilience +10%, Ride (Flying Creature) +10%	+10% to a Combat Style	Lore (Geography)
Cavalryman	Resilience +10%, Ride +10%	Increase two Combat Styles by +10% each	Track
Commando	Athletics +10%, Resilience +10%, Stealth +10%	Increase two Combat Styles by +10% each	
Engineer	Brawn +10%	+10% to a Combat Style	Craft (Any), Engineering, Mechanisms
Guerrilla	Insight +10%, Perception +10%, Stealth +10%	+10% to a Combat Style	Disguise
Infantryman	Athletics +10%, Evade +10%, Resilience +10%	Increase two Combat Styles by +10% each	
Knight	Resilience +10%, Ride +10%	Increase two Combat Styles by +10% each	Courtesy
Marine	Resilience +10%, Swim +10%	Increase two Combat Styles by +10% each	Boating
Medic	First Aid +10%, Insight +10%, Persistence +10%	+10% to a Combat Style	Healing
Mercenary	Choose any three Common Skills and add a +10% bonus to each	Increase two Combat Styles by +10% each	
Officer	Influence +10, Insight +10%	+10% to a Combat Style	Lore (Tactics & Strategy), Oratory
Scout	Perception +10%, Stealth +10%	+10% to a Combat Style	Choose two from: Culture(Other), Language (Other), Lore (Other Region), Survival or Track,
Seaman	Athletics +10%, Swim +10%	+10% to a Combat Style	Boating, Shiphandling
Warlock	Influence +10%, Persistence +10%	+10% to a Combat Style	Manipulation, Sorcery (Grimoire)
War-Priest	Influence +10%, Persistence +10%	+10% to a Combat Style	Invoke ¹ , Piety ² (Pantheon)

¹ Invoke is the renamed magical skill of Lore (Specific Theology).

² Piety is the renamed magical skill of Pact (Specific Theology).

Allocate Free Skill Points

Every Adventurer now gains an additional number of skill points to spend on their skills, as described on page 20 of the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*. To generate Wraith Recon recruits distribute 500 Free Skill Points, limiting skills to 80%; the objective being to encourage a broad range of competence rather than overwhelming mastery in one area.

Games Masters who find their Adventurers starting off at too high or too low a level of competence can modify the above values as desired. The following table gives a rough approximation of proficiency of military excellence in *Wraith Recon*.

Wraith Recon recruits should possess at least 50% in the core skills of Athletics, Evade, Perception, Persistence, Resilience, Ride, Stealth, Swim, Unarmed and at least one Combat Style. In addition, a value of 50% or more is recommended for the additional skills required by an Adventurer fulfilling a specialist team role as described in the previous chapter.

Skill %	Proficiency	Military Equivalent
01–25	Novice	Untrained rabble of non-combatants.
26–50	Competent	Militia levied in times of war.
51–75	Professional	Standard full time troops, fully trained but with little actual experience.
76–100	Expert	Seasoned troops with at least several years of combat experience.
101–125	Master	Veteran troops with a decade of combat experience.
126–150	Grand Master	Elite troops, best of the best, such as royal guards or top special forces.
151+	Superhuman	Only a few legendary heroes ever achieve such excellence.

With some careful point distribution, players should find it easy to achieve these minimum values, yet still have plenty of points left to reach expertise in a half a dozen of the most important.

Magic Using Adventurers

Magic in the world of Nuera is difficult for common folk to access. Mastering such powers takes time and dedication, limiting its use to specialists trained from childhood. Only Adventurers who take the profession of Alchemist, Priest, Shaman, Sorcerer or Witch from the *Core Rulebook*, or that of Warlock or War-Priest described above, are eligible to learn magic, although future publications will introduce additional careers.

Nueran thaumaturgy is divided between Common and High Magic. Spell casters start with access to all the Common Magic spells available to their faith, grimoire or master. These petty magics are cast using the primary magic skill of that profession, Invoke for Priests and War Priests; Grimoire for Alchemists, Sorcerers and Warlocks; and Spirit Binding for Shamans, but otherwise work exactly like Common Magic.

The amount of High Magic a starting Adventurer begins with depends on their cult rank. A magic using character may commence at the rank their requisite skills qualify them for.

Example: Drixos, a newly created Adventurer, begins play as an Adept of the Brotherhood of Magnus. During his rise through the ranks he has studied the Arcanum Magnus grimoire. Within its esoteric pages are held the formulae for seven cantrips and seven sorcery spells. Achieving the rank of Adept, Drixos has learned 15 points of cantrips (Bladesharp 3, Detect Magic, Detect Spirit, Disruption 3, Heal 2, Mobility and Protection 4), but has yet to fully comprehend all of the sorcery spells contained within, thus far only having mastered five of them (Enhance Dexterity, Enhance Strength, Spell Resistance, Treat Wounds and Wrack)

A shaman starts with the knowledge of how to create certain types of fetish, summoning and binding specific spirits relevant to their animist or ancestor worship tradition. These fetishes should be designed in collaboration with the Games Master. Depending on their rank, fetishes created by the shaman will contain spirits with the following POW values. Aspirant – n/a, Kupua – 1d6+12, Yachak – 1d6+18, Angakok – 1d6+24 and Babalawo – 1d6+30.

For a list of example cults and their associated spells, see Chapter Five, Cults and Magic.

Starting Points of Common Magic known	Starting Number of High Magic spells or spirits known ¹	Priest/War-Priest Rank	Alchemist/Sorcerer/Warlock Rank	Shaman Rank
7	None	Neophyte	Novice	Aspirant
11	4	Initiate	Brother	Kupua
15	5	Acolyte	Adept	Yachak
19	6	Cleric	Wizard	Angakok
23	7	Hierophant	Mage	Babalawo

¹ For Divine Magic casters, the number of spells known varies according to those available to that cult rank and below.

Community

Community is very important to most races in Nuera. Generally your local community are those who will protect you as you grow up and support you as an adult. They are also the folk who may seek vengeance for your death, so a large number of healthy friends and relatives is often a valuable deterrent – or a source of new Adventurers if your current one dies.

Conversely community membership can be a damning liability. An Adventurer may come from an organisation of ill repute, forcing him to constantly struggle against pre-conceived attitudes when people discover his associations. Brethren of a known traitor or instigator of genocide may be hunted down by those seeking justice, judging the Adventurer to be a suitable subject of vengeance. Thus the ties that an Adventurer has with his community can be a powerful motivating force in an ongoing campaign.

As such a community can take many forms. It may be an extended family, a philosophical or religious brotherhood, a tribe, a guild or perhaps even a military unit. To determine an Adventurer's social connections, follow the guidelines on pages 20 and 21 of the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*; replacing **Family Ties** with the following table and substituting the word **family** for something more fitting to the organisation that the Adventurer belongs to on the **Reputation** and **Connections** tables.

Community Ties

1D6	Community Type	Surviving Superiors	Surviving Brethren
1	Family	1D3-1 Parents	Siblings
2	Cult	1D4-1 Priests	Disciples
3	Guild	1D3-1 Masters	Apprentices
4	School	1D4-1 Teachers	Students
5	Clan	1D2-1 Chieftains	Clansmen
6	Troop	1D2-1 Officers	Warriors

Background Events

Life in Nuera can be harsh. Natural disasters, wars and ill fortune make life difficult, even within the well protected lands of Dardarrick. Many terrible deeds or omens can occur in an Adventurer's life before they set forth in the world. Sometimes, however, the fate woven by the gods can instead grant a bountiful and sheltered upbringing. The table on the next page lists a selection of incidents, often dark, which may mould an Adventurer during their upbringing.

Wraith Recon Background Events Table

1D100 Event

01	A family member mysteriously disappeared 1D10 years ago but the Adventurer is plagued by dreams that they are still alive.
02	Abandoned as a small child by parents in the wilderness and wandered lost and hungry for countless days before being adopted by a new family – gain the Survival skill.
03	Accidentally injured or killed a childhood friend – gain an Enemy.
04	Accursed for performing a despicable deed, bad luck seems to dog you no matter what you do to remove the bane – start with no Hero Points.
05	Actually a member of the opposite sex, the Adventurer has adopted this role to hide from enemies or function outside of gender restrictions – gain the Disguise skill.
06	Adopted into the household of a powerful member of the ruling class – you are set to inherit the leadership or noble title when the current ruler of the clan, tribe, demesne or region dies.
07	Afflicted by wanderlust, never remained in one place for more than a year.
08	As a young child, you remember your mother being slain by a member of a different race, towards which you feel particular hatred.
09	As a youth, gave/made an illegitimate child to/with the daughter/son of the local ruler.
10	Asked to perform a deed to fulfil the dying wish of a relative or loved one.
11	Attacked by a monstrous animal or creature when a small child – gain a fear of that type of creature and suffer a penalty to skills when in its presence or if hearing its roar.
12	Betrayed a comrade to certain death, in order to save your own life.
13	Bitten by a venomous creature but survived, now the Adventurer believes themselves to be immune to poison.
14	Blessed by good fortune you start with double the number of Hero Points.
15	Blinded in one eye in battle or by a cruel stranger but the other senses compensate for the loss.
16	Born with a prominent and unusual birth mark.
17	Brought up or tutored by a sorcerer or priest – either gain the Advanced skills of Sorcery and Manipulation, OR the skills of Piety and Invoke at their default starting value.
18	Bullied and beaten viciously as a youth, you have developed psychopathic tendencies.
19	Captured and ransomed during a battle, reducing the family to poverty.
20	Case of mistaken identity resulted in a period of embarrassing imprisonment or some other unforgivable punishment whilst the double remained free.
21	Adventurer has a twin sibling, brother or sister.
22	Close relatives dispossessed of their land by the legal manipulation and sabotage orchestrated by the neighbouring ruler.
23	Considered as the local hero, remembered in local community for a particularly heroic deed.
24	Contracted food poisoning as a child, refuse to consume one type of food and will be violently sick if forced to eat it.
25	Crushed under a falling tree, mudslide, riding animal or avalanche and nearly died – harbour a dislike of that thing.
26	Discerned to be a very close likeness of someone famous (or infamous).
27	Discovered an animal cub or bird egg and raised it by hand – gain a fully grown wild animal or bird of prey as a loyal pet but must feed and control the creature.
28	Disguised real identity to avoid being hunted down in a blood feud.
29	Due to an unusual series of coincidences, you are feared as a sorcerer, even if you lack magical skills.
30	After a drinking bout, discovered that you never suffer from hangovers, no matter what you drink.
31	Encountered a villain at a time when he or she was relatively unknown.
32	Engaged in long-standing feud with religious or political rivals.
33	Enslaved as a youth, you were forced into years of subservient labour before you escaped or were rescued.
34	Entire family wiped out during the invasion of a neighbouring nation's army.
35	Every member of the family thus far has died by an unusual method – for example drowning, burning, magic, savaged by wild animals and so on.
36	Family are the custodians of a great treasure.
37	Fanatically religious sibling has embraced the faith of a disapproved pantheon.
38	Father reveals family is descended from a royal line of kings or the gods themselves.
39	Fell into the sea or river rapids as a child but was rescued by an animal (whale, giant sturgeon, otter and so on) – develop a mutual empathy with that species.
40	Found washed up on a beach or battered at the bottom of a cliff with no memory of life up to that point.
41	Foundling of unknown parents, brought up by adoptive guardians.
42	Gifted an ancient artefact or heirloom by a travelling stranger who was killed soon after by folk seeking the missing item – confer with the Games Master to decide what the object is.
43	Grew up or was born as a mute but able to still communicate with sign language or grunts – use the Dance skill to carry across complex ideas.
44	Grotesque physical deformity of a random location – no ill effects, as the Adventurer has learned to adapt but must keep it hidden to prevent causing horror or disgust.
45	Grow up to be tall and ugly – raise your SIZ to species maximum but reduce your CHA by the same amount (to a minimum of 1).
46	Happened upon a hidden hoard of silver, multiply starting wealth by 10.

1D100 Event

- 47 Hard work and dedication gains the Adventurer much respect – increase starting military rank by one level.
- 48 Hated Enemy revealed to be a close family relation.
- 49 Haunted by evil dreams of a personal doom which has yet to come to pass.
- 50 Home destroyed by an unusual natural disaster – Volcanic eruption, tsunami, earthquake and so on.
- 51 Immediate family save for one sibling or parent are all killed in a mysterious fire.
- 52 In a fit of anger, publically cursed someone who promptly died in a tragic and unusual accident, forcing your exile from your homeland.
- 53 Inadvertent comments resulted in a fight, battle or war – your thoughtless remark or action was innocent but the repercussions tragic.
- 54 Inheritance denied by greedy lord or family member who wished to cheat you out of a huge legacy.
- 55 Kidnapped by criminals or during a military raid, family have been sold into slavery but location unknown.
- 56 Losing a battle, captured by foreigners and maltreated before escaping to freedom – now have a hatred of that nationality.
- 57 Lost your childhood sweetheart, who married a friend or rival.
- 58 Maimed in a raid on your home – gain a horrific scar and permanently lose 1d3 Hit Points from one body location but as compensation gain the same amount of points as a bonus to one Characteristic (which cannot exceed species maximum).
- 59 Mauled or hunted by a dangerous animal or monster – harbour a deep fear of the creatures as a result.
- 60 Met a great hero at a time when he or she was relatively unknown.
- 61 Mistakenly burned down best friend's farm in which they lost their entire family but told nobody your guilty secret.
- 62 Mother reveals the family line is tainted by the blood of some rapine race or nationality, explaining why you have never been well regarded by your community.
- 63 Nearly drowned when swimming – become fearful of water.
- 64 On a visit to a temple was spoken to by a god, although nobody else noticed the visitation.
- 65 Once accepted clandestine help from a known criminal, which if discovered would bring the Adventurer great trouble.
- 66 Orphaned when both parents were lost through illness, an accident or some other mysterious or suspicious tragedy.
- 67 Ostracised from family for behaviour, philosophy or religious beliefs.
- 68 Outcast after killing own brother or sister in a violent argument and forced to flee your homeland.
- 69 Pacifist, you try to avoid killing where possible and are plagued by guilt when forced to do so.
- 70 Picked-up a loyal companion or retainer, not necessarily a welcome one but the relationship has somehow endured over the years.
- 71 Plagued by dreams of strange animals and old wizened men – gain the Spirit Walking and Spirit Binding skills at base value but cannot utilise them until locating a shaman to train in their use.
- 72 Profaned a sacrifice to the gods, now bad luck seems to have cursed the Adventurer.
- 73 Raised by a religious order, opinion of the faith can be good or bad depending on how the Adventurer was treated by the priests.
- 74 Ran away from family several times to become a famous hero but never made it beyond the next settlement before being found and returned home.
- 75 Regarded as the local coward, well-known in local community for a particularly *unheroic* deed.
- 76 Romantically entwined with an Enemy or member of a different race.
- 77 Savaged by a dangerous creature as a child, you gain a distinctive facial scar but now wear its skin as a cloak.
- 78 Saw a star stone fall from the heavens and know where it landed.
- 79 Saw parent or parents executed for heresy by priests of a particular pantheon – acquire a hatred of that religion.
- 80 Secretly plundered a burial cairn but is now haunted by ghosts or spirits.
- 81 Sole survivor of a tragedy that wiped out the Adventurer's entire settlement/community.
- 82 Spent childhood being raised by a different race before they banished you once you reached adulthood.
- 83 Spurned by a childhood sweetheart for cowardliness, you have dreams of marrying object of desire once you can prove your bravery by performing an epic deed.
- 84 Struck deaf in one or both ears but other senses have compensated.
- 85 Suffer but survive a terrible disease or plague and are now immune to such things.
- 86 Taught by a master as a youth – Gain a 10% bonus to a non-combat skill.
- 87 Tended by wild animals as a child, you are now (wrongly) regarded and feared as a shape shifter.
- 88 Threatened by a jealous rival, the Adventurer's family was forced to move and lost much status.
- 89 Travelled widely as a youth – gain the Lore (Other Region) skill.
- 90 Undertook a gruelling and shameful penance for some insult or slight committed against someone in power or authority.
- 91 Unwittingly caught up in a fraud, for which you must bear responsibility, despite being a victim of the same scam.
- 92 Was the sole survivor of a raid performed by an unknown foreign race.
- 93 Watched family member slain by evil sorcery or spirits – develop hatred of that type of magic.
- 94 Whilst growing up learned a new tongue – gain a Language (Other) skill.
- 95 Whole family moved to a new country as settlers, refugees or pioneers.
- 96 Witnessed a future clan hero/leader cowardly flee from battle.
- 97 After years of being beaten or abused, you finally murdered the instigator and fled your community.
- 98 You are occasionally touched by visions of the immanent doom of others.
- 99 Roll twice and choose which one you would prefer.
- 00 Roll twice more and take both events.

Games Masters are encouraged to allow players to make several rolls on the table. The events can be used as personality guidelines or motivations for starting Adventurers, until they have found their feet in the storyline of the campaign. Some entries may not be suitable for Adventurers of certain races or nationalities. If something incongruous comes up, either re-roll the event or use the Background Events table on page 23 of the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*.

PASSIONS

Passions can be a useful aid to roleplaying *Wraith Recon* Adventurers, indicating the core morals, ethics and loyalties they value above all else. The range of possible passions is near limitless. A member of a military unit may have a passion of Loyalty to Regiment, whereas a farmer whose kinfolk vanished during a raid might instead possess a passion of Find Family. Passions need not be positive either; someone who had suffered at the hands of the saurians might have Hate Sirrushi for example.

This section provides an **optional** set of mechanics for Games Masters to use to simulate the passions of their Adventurers.

Creating Passions

An Adventurer's Passion is measured like any other skill – on a scale of 1 to 100 and above and should be recorded as an Advanced Skill on the Adventurer sheet. The object of the Passion can be anything – a person, a community, a country, an object, an ideal or even a task.

Passions can be established at any point – either during Adventurer creation or, and perhaps most interestingly and appropriately, during game play. All an Adventurer needs to do is stipulate that he intends to develop a passion for something.

Passions declared during Adventurer creation, have no cost: the Passion skill is not counted as either a cultural, professional or freely chosen skill, it simply comes into being. Games Masters are encouraged to allow players to select from one to three passions for their Adventurers, possibly tied into relevant Background Events they experienced.

If the Passion is established during play, then it costs one Improvement Roll to establish it at its base value. If the circumstances warrant it, then the Games Master can choose to waive this cost.

The starting value of the Passion always begins at 30+POW+CHA. Once game play starts it may be adjusted by roleplaying or the investment of Improvement Rolls.

Example Passions

Positive Passion	Negative Passion	Object of Passion
Love/Adore	Hate/Detest	Loved one, family, teacher, master, ruler, deity
Loyalty to	Enmity for	Family, school, temple, guild, community, nation
Protect/Comfort	Destroy/Torment	Object, person, community, religion, race, nation
Seek/Pursue	Flee/Fear	Object, person, place, nation, ideal, emotion
Uphold/Espouse	Foreswear/Repudiate	Ideal, ethic, moral code

Where a person or people are concerned, Passions such as love or hatred **do not need** to be reciprocated. It is up to the Games Master to decide if it is or not and the player must choose whether the unreciprocated fervour will strengthen his Adventurer's Passion or weaken it. If the decision is made to strengthen the depth of feeling, then the Passion value can be increased by 1D10%, or likewise decreased, if the depth of feeling is diminished.

Increasing and Decreasing Passions

Like any skill, Passion can be increased if the player wishes to spend an Improvement Roll on the relationship. However, if, during play, something happens that would deepen the Passion, or diminish it, the Games Master can either impose an immediate increase or reduction depending on the circumstances:

Amount	Deepening	Diminishing
1D10	Recognition by an object of adoration or love. Reciprocation of hatred or dislike, Entry into membership of an organisation, Successfully protecting target of passion, Finding a clue towards an objective.	Being refused entry to organisation. Feeling guilt over destroying something. Successfully resisting a fear. Breaking an oath to uphold or foreswear something.
1D10+5	Marriage to object of love. Promotion within the organisation one is dedicated to, Attacked by object of hatred. Rewarded for upholding an ethic or ideal.	Physically assaulted by someone loved or adored. Temporarily spurned by the organisation one is dedicated to. Witnessing the failure of an ethic to cause the desired result.
1D10+10	Life saved by object of love or adoration, Nearly killed by object of hatred. Become the favoured representative of an organisation, cult, or god.	Nearly killed by object of love or devotion. Cast out from organisation one is dedicated to. Discover an ethic or ideal is a total lie, Betrayed by ally or nation.

Once a Passion has been established, it can fall below its starting value. If reduced to zero or less, the nature of the passion changes to its opposite counterpart. For example, a member of Wraith Recon may start out with the Passion (Loyalty to Dardarrick) but after being ordered to perform missions of questionable ethics, the value of the passion may drop to zero, at which point it changes to Passion (Enmity for Dardarrick). The passion can change back again in the right circumstances, its embers remain, ready to be fanned into flames in the correct situation.

Using Passions

Passions can be used in several ways to increase the drama of scenarios.

- ⊕ As a *comparative value* to demonstrate strength of feeling. If for instance the Adventurer possesses two Passions that are placed in conflict, either the Passion with the higher value takes precedence or an opposed test should be made between the two. If the value of the passion exceeds 100%, then it is an all-consuming obsession, which should drive the Adventurer to extraordinary lengths in pursuit or defence of whatever he loves or loathes.
- ⊕ As a *bonus* to any skill that might be used to influence a situation relevant to the passion. The bonus is equal to the Passion's critical range. If more than one Passion is relevant, their bonuses are cumulative. So, if a Wraith Recon with Passion (Hate Cult of Praxious) and Passion (Defend SIRRUSHI) was in a situation where he was protecting some saurians against the Bronze Templars, he would add the bonuses from both Passions to whatever skill he was using to protect the SIRRUSHI. The Games Master is always the arbiter of when a Passion can be used as an augmentation in this way.
- ⊕ As the *resisting skill in an opposed test* that concerns the object of the Passion. For example, an enemy leader with Passion (Hate Dardarrick) could use it in an opposed test (instead of Persistence, say) where a Wraith Recon is trying to use his Influence of 80% to diplomatically persuade the commander to abort a risky attack against the nation. Whether or not the Passion is used as a skill outright in this way, or used as an augmentation to, for instance, Influence or Persistence, is dependent on the circumstances and the strength of feeling. If the target's Persistence was higher than his Passion (Hate Dardarrick), then an augmentation would serve better. If Persistence was lower, then the Passion can be used as the active, resisting skill.
- ⊕ As *a skill in its own right* where the Adventurer is wrestling with his conscience over some matter concerning the object of his Passion. These are most used in circumstances where the Passion may override normal cultural or ethical boundaries. For example, most societies frown upon the killing of helpless or defeated foes but if an Adventurer with the Passion (Destroy Cult of Praxious) manages to defeat a priest of the cult in combat they may attempt to kill the priest if you they can succeed in a straight test of their Passion.

Passions are powerful emotions and should be exploited to the fullest in a Wraith Recon campaign, where duty, loyalty and moral ambiguity play a significant role.

Final Touches

If the Adventurer has not yet been named, the player should come up with something suitable for a high fantasy setting. Names can vary greatly according to race or nation but there are no restrictions save the player's imagination. If desired a saurian could have something sibilant sounding, for instance.

In addition to a birth name, *Wraith Recon* Adventurers should have a short nickname, by which their compatriots call them during missions. These are sometimes derogatory or humorous and if desired, the Games Master can delay the naming for several sessions before letting the *other* players decide what an Adventurer is called. This allows a name to have more relevance to what each Character has done, building an esprit de corps between the Players. Some examples are:

Bash, Bones, Breeze, Dagger, Fatal, Fox, Freeze, Fumble, Grim, Grumpy, Hawk, Jinx, Loon, Mad, Maniac, Midas, Pyro, Rat, Razor, Reaper, Roach, Rock, Scar, Shadow, Slice, Slug, Smoke, Snake, Sting, Tiny, Titan, Torch, Trip, Wolf

Last but by no means least; all but one of the Adventurers should start at the rank of 'Wraith'. Unless someone gained a promotion as a Background Event, the players should decide who will play the part of team leader, starting with the rank of 'Shade' but bearing responsibility for the team.

Heroic Abilities

Since Wraith Recon team members begin the game as highly skilled operatives, it will not be long before they are eligible to start learning Heroic Abilities. As a change from the Core Rulebook, Heroic Abilities in Wraith Recon are purchased by the spending of Improvement Rolls, not, Hero Points. With the dangers they are likely to face, Adventurers need to save all their Hero Points to succeed in their missions or perhaps even survive them!



CHAPTER THREE

ARMING A TEAM



This chapter provides guidelines on how to equip and advance *Wraith Recon* Adventurers. Although Games Masters are at liberty to set their games in any part of the world, the following rules assume that Adventurers will be equipped as Dardarrick Special Forces.

Previous versions of *Wraith Recon* have relied upon lists of generic magic items. In *RuneQuest II* such lists are not an inherent part of the game system, so an alternate rules-set has been provided for creating unique sorcery enchantments.

Since these enchantments and any additional spell support require the full time efforts of sorcerers to maintain, the amount of specialised equipment a Wraith Recon team can draw upon is dependent upon the military seniority of the team members. The higher their rank, the more likely that the team can requisition additional (and more powerful) enchantments to fulfil their missions.

In *Wraith Recon* magic is rare and magicians rarer. Unlike other campaign settings where every peasant has a few points of common magic to help with their daily chores, in Nuera sorcery especially is a discipline that only some are capable of mastering. Possibly because of this, the wizards of Dardarrick have raised the creation of magical items through enchantments to new levels of sophistication. SpellCom in particular have attempted to systemise the creation of magic items in such a way as to approach something close to a science.

The amount of equipment and spell support provided to a team should be carefully limited. Ideally the superiority of a Wraith Recon team is based on its *skill* and not the magical firepower it can draw upon. Whilst powerful weapons and big explosions are great fun, they should not replace the necessity of using wits and creativity to overcome problems. Not all missions are combat based, so enchantments other than weaponry should be carefully considered before finalising equipment choices.

STANDARD ISSUE WRAITH EQUIPMENT

Every Wraith team member receives a standard package of equipment for their assigned missions, no matter what race,

The Superior Equipment of Wraith Recon

SpellCom Artificers ensure that these items are resilient as well as useful and all Wraith Recon gear is of a higher calibre in terms of durability and resistance to damage. It will always be sized appropriately, modified to accommodate physical differences and made of the highest quality materials that Nuera has to offer. If it is made for the use of the Wraiths it will bear their organisation's symbol – a stylised skull – and it will be made of sterner stuff than anything the enemy will be carrying.

The Dardarrian Forge of Artificers has gone to great lengths to make sure that these items are resilient as well as useful and all Wraith Recon gear is of a higher calibre in terms of durability and resistance to damage. Crossbow cords and bowstrings are made from woven griffon hairs and dragon sinew, leather items are soaked in an alchemical hardening solution and even the wood and metal of weaponry is rubbed with secret chemicals to protect it. Great lengths are taken to make sure the Wraiths are not left with rotted, rusted or broken equipment in the middle of a mission assignment.

This does not mean that their items are indestructible unfortunately; it merely means that common damage from weather and wear can be ignored. *Only* attacks directed against the items themselves can hope to damage them in any way, as otherwise they are designed to function through the toughest of circumstances.



speciality or skill level. These packages can vary slightly from mission-to-mission and from Adventurer-to-Adventurer but the core basics are always there.

Even though Adventurers are created with a certain amount of starting money, purchased equipment is certainly going to be inferior to the items provided by SpellCom, taking up precious space on their person that could be used for more useful mission-

based accoutrement. Wraith Recon team members are welcome to spend their money on their own personal items but they will need to keep track of it themselves.

The following is the standard Wraith equipment package that every Wraith Recon strike team member receives when they are assigned to a mission. There are modifiers to this equipment based on rank and team role; they are covered later.

Basic Wraith Recon Package

- SpellCom Omnilens Helmet, Circlet, Spectacles or Monocle*
- Wraith Armour*
- Wraith Melee Weapon*
- Wraith Missile Weapon*
- Wraith Backpack*
- Native Clothing*
- Regional Map*
- Backpack*
- Waterproof Bedroll*
- Flint and Steel*
- Incendiary Paste*
- 50 feet of Black Silk Rope*
- Padded Grappling Hook*
- First Aid Kit (Bandages, needle and thread, herbal painkillers)*
- 2 Flasks*
- 10 days worth of Dried Rations*
- 100 Silver pieces worth of regional currency*
- 20 Gold pieces worth of regional currency*

The first five articles are especially enchanted items provided by Spellcaster Command, the most important of which is the SpellCom Omnilens, key to the special ops role of the Wraith Recon brigade.

As the Wraiths gain skill and experience, they will be assigned more difficult missions and need to be suitably equipped for dealing with increasingly challenging threats. The following table shows how, as each Wraith progresses in rank, additional enchantments are available to him, representing the assignment of more senior members of SpellCom to provide their specialised equipment.

Rank Requisition Limits

Rank	Additional Enchantments Limit	Sorcerer's Enchant Skill
Wraith	1 Spell	50%
Shade	2 Spells	60%
Phantom	3 Spells	70%
Banshee	4 Spells	80%
Ghost	5 Spells	90%
Spectre	6 Spells	100%
Lich	None	150%

The SpellCom Omnilens

The chief arcane asset of the Wraith Recon strike teams is undoubtedly the 'Spellcaster Command Omnicix-shard Lens

System'; or SpellCom Omnilens for short. The powerful and ancient Omnicix gems (see The History of Dardarrick on page 90) are the hub of the SpellCom system, allowing the sorcerers of Spellcaster Command to overlook and magically interact with those who wear the specially-crafted lenses.

Each Omnilens is a crystalline shard magically cut from an incredibly hard Omnicix crystal, framed with silver wire and fitted to helms, circlets or spectacles in such a way that it can be swivelled or worn over the wearer's eyes. Normally the lenses are fashioned so they remain inconspicuous until slid into place, disguised as ornamentation or pieces of jewellery. Wearing the SpellCom Omnilens grants the user several useful and powerful abilities combined into a single device.

The primary property of these crystals is that all the shards cut from the same stone remain magically connected to each other – no matter the distance separating them. Sounds are naturally transmitted via this mystical web, the possessor being able to telepathically 'hear' what is occurring in the immediate vicinity of the other shards. Sorcerers at Spellcaster Command skilled in scrying can further manipulate this link to be able to perceive with additional senses through a specific shard. The paranormal bond is even capable of transmitting sorcery, allowing spells to be remotely cast to help the wearer or against a nearby target.

Another interesting property of the crystals is that they change the nature of light passing through them and internally fluoresce in the presence of magic. Gazing through a shard grants the viewer the Night Sight trait and allows them to see magical items and operating spells in their line of vision.

It is these unique properties of the Omnicix crystals which have enabled Wraith Recon to be so successful. However, the finite number of crystals found thus far and the difficulties of successfully carving a sympathetically resonant set of lenses from each, has prevented the powers offered by the magical discovery from granting Dardarrick an overwhelming advantage over its enemies. Only 13 sets of Omnilenses have been thus far assigned to Wraith Recon, the others being used by SpellCom to establish a communications network par excellence across the nation.

Standard Wraith Items

In addition to the vital SpellCom Omnilens, Wraith Recon teams have a number of standard issue enchantments assigned to them. Each was cast at an effective level of 60% and has a Magnitude of 5 in case of magical dispelling.

Wraith Armour: These are full suits of fine mesh mail sewn between layers of padded black silk to suppress any noise it might make whilst the wearer moves. It comes complete with a hood to replace the need for a helmet. The armour is enchanted with two combined spells to enhance its use in covert operations; Toughen and Unburden. The armour provides 6 AP but has no associated Strike Rank or movement penalties.

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Wraith Armour

- Waterproof Bedroll
- Wraith Backpack
- Dried Rations
- Flint and Steel
- 2 Flasks
- Native Cloathing
- Wraith Melee Weapon
- Regional Coins
- Black Silk Rope
- Regional Map

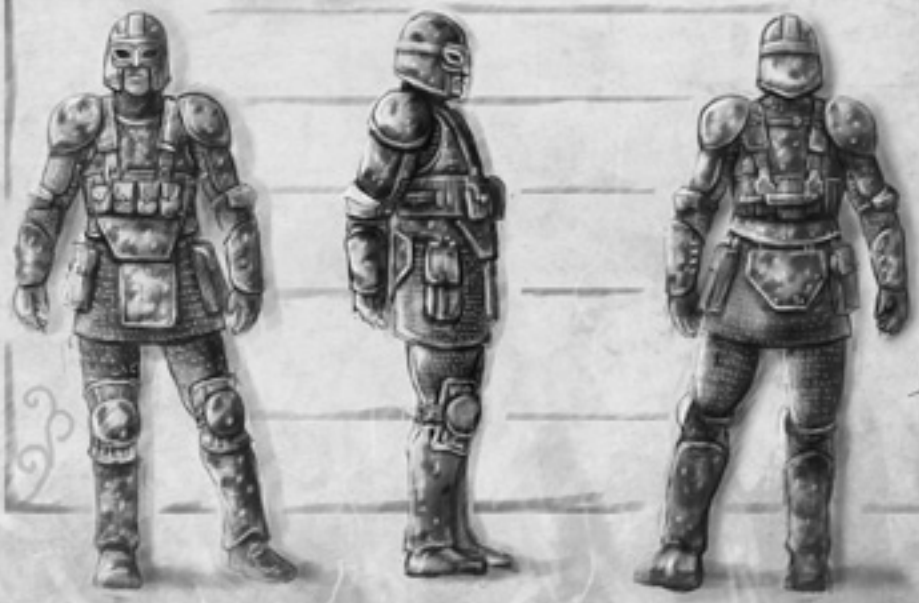
- SpellCom Omnifens Helmet

- First Aid Kit

- Wraith Missile Weapon

- Padded Grappling Hook

- Incendiary paste



Mark II Wraith Armour
 Design
 - Chief Designer -
 Ouzach

Wraith Melee Weapon: Special Forces team members are issued with a magical melee weapon as part of their armament. This can be anything desired, from a simple knife to a greatsword. Standard Wraith weapons are enchanted with a combined Banish and Puncture, allowing it a chance to dismiss spirits or demons of up to 18 POW and ignoring six points of armour when it hits.

Wraith Missile Weapon: In addition to a melee weapon, Wraith Recon team members are also issued with a missile weapon. Similarly this can be anything desired, from a throwing axe to a repeating crossbow. Wraith crossbows have complex looking magazines attached that can hold up to six rounds of ammunition. Once emptied however, the magazine must be reloaded by hand, which takes several minutes.

The weapons are enchanted with a combined Farther and either Reload, if a projectile weapon, or Recall if a thrown Weapon. This extends the weapon's effective range and allows items up to heavy crossbows to fire every Combat Action without needing to pause to reload, or the same weapon to be sequentially thrown without needing to draw another.

New SpellCom Sorcery Spells

The following new spells are known to the Dardarrick sorcerers of SpellCom:

Farther: Weapon's effective Range increased by five metres per 10% known in the spell.

Puncture: Weapon ignores one AP per 10% known in the spell.

Reload: Assuming a magazine is part of the weapon, it automatically cocks/draws/loads itself, reducing reload time by one per 20% known in the spell.

Recall: Unless impaled, weapon flies back to the thrower's hand, covering five metres per 10% known in the spell before the thrower's next attack.

Toughen: Raises the Armour Points of an item to one per 10% known in the spell, superseding the original value. If the APs granted by the spell are less than the original APs of the item, the spell takes no effect.

Unburden: Item either reduces its Encumbrance by three points or its Armour Penalty by five points, per 10% known in the spell.



Wraith Backpack: These large haversacks are enchanted with Unburden in order to lighten the load of anything contained within them. Whilst it does not provide any additional storage space, it does permit up to 18 ENC of equipment to be carried as if weightless, if its bulk can be fitted inside.

Additional Equipment for Mission

Assignments

After a Wraith Recon team has been issued their basic equipment, SpellCom will oftentimes grant additional equipment to the team members in order to make sure they have everything they will need for a specific mission.

Depending on how the Games Master wishes to handle it, he can either offer a list of pre-generated magical equipment from which the Adventurers can select specific articles, or he can allow the Players to design bespoke enchantments within the limits assigned to their Adventurer's rank. A member of *Shade* rank for example could have two additional spell effects enchanted at a skill of 60%. For rules concerning the making of such equipment see the Enchant skill below. If desired the Adventurer can decide to have two or more of his spell effects combined into a single enchantment.

Enchant (Pow x 2)

The Enchant skill allows the creation of magical objects with either a temporary or continuous duration. There are three main types of objects that can be created:

- ☉ objects that enhance themselves (e.g. a sword enchanted with Damage Enhancement);
- ☉ objects that confer a benefit (or 'curse') on the wearer (e.g. a ring with Enhance DEX);
- ☉ objects that allow the user to impose a spell on a target (e.g. an arrow with Palsy).

Temporarily enchanted items normally take the form of potions, powders or ammunition. They trigger when the item is broken, dispersed or digested – but only work a limited number of times. They are created by the sorcerer binding a spell into the article and placing it on an indefinite hold until the item is activated. The Magic Points used to power the spell do not regenerate until it is completely used, or the sorcerer decides to allow the 'held' spell to lapse, at which point the article loses its enchantment.

Permanent enchanted items are usually crafted from more substantial materials such as stone, wood or metal. Instead of containing a one-shot spell, they operate continuously. They are powered by the sorcerer hiving off part of his personal Characteristic POW and placing it into the object. Since he has reduced his POW he lowers his maximum number of Magic Points but does not need to reduce any skills due to the lowered Characteristic. The enchanted item

remains eternally functional (anti-magic spells merely suppress the effect temporarily) and cannot be unwoven unless handed back to the sorcerer who created it or the item is physically broken.

Breaking a permanent enchantment scatters the invested POW into the aether, causing the original sorcerer to suffer a psychic shock as the bond between the disparate parts of his soul is briefly riven. However his lost points of POW slowly return at the rate of one point per week. Conversely, if the sorcerer is slain, then any enchantments he created continue to function.

To create an enchantment, a sorcerer first selects the spell(s) he wishes to cast into the object and decides which, if any, Manipulations will be added. Spells woven into an enchantment cannot be cast at a skill level greater than the value of the Enchant skill. For example, a sorcerer whose Grimoire skill is 78% and Enchant skill is 34%, cannot cast any spells from that Grimoire into an enchantment beyond the 34% cap. Thus if he attempts to create a magical ring which increases STR, he could only bind an effect of +8 STR into the enchantment, not his maximum possible effect of +16 if casting the spell normally. The amount of Manipulation is also limited by the Enchant skill. So the same sorcerer with 34% Enchant and 61% Manipulation can add a maximum of four points of Manipulation.

The time required to emplace an enchantment is the same as it would take to cast the spell in Combat Actions but is measured in hours. The cost to create the enchantment is equal to whatever the cost would normally be to cast the spell.

Once the parameters of the spell(s) are decided, the sorcerer must successfully roll against their Enchant skill. A critical success reduces the amount of POW or Magic Points invested by a single point (to a minimum of one). A failure has no detrimental effect save that the enchantment failed, but a fumble causes the sorcerer to not only fail but also suffer a temporary reduction of their Characteristic POW equal to the cost of the enchantment. These points return at a rate of one per week.

The Combine Manipulation can be used to create complex enchanted objects, however if any of the combined spells have the concentration trait then the combined spell as a whole gains the Concentration trait. If any of the combined spells have the Resistance Trait then whole spell gains that Resistance Trait. This may mean that a spell can be resisted in more than one way, in which case the target makes one resistance roll and the spell must overcome *all* of the target's appropriate resistance skills at once. Generally sorcerers attempt to avoid combining spells with different resistance traits for this very reason.

When creating a temporary enchantment, the sorcerer can use Magic Points from any source he has access to. So if he has access to a *power storage crystal* or additional Magic Points (e.g. due to a Tap Spell) then those Magic Points can be used. He cannot, however, have a third party donate the Magic Points for him: the Magic Points must come directly from the sorcerer or something

he has a psychic link to. If creating a permanent enchantment, the sorcerer must use his own POW.

Temporary enchantments have a number of uses equal to the Targets Manipulation used at the time of creation. An unmanipulated enchantment would have one use but one with 4 targets could be used 4 times. The sorcerer needs to provide 1 dose of enchanted material or equivalent for each Target. For example, a Treat Wounds enchantment with 4 targets would require 4 doses of potion or pills. A Wrack (Fire) enchantment with 4 targets would require 4 items of ammunition. When the spell (or spell fragment) is triggered, it usually continues to affect the target(s) until its Duration expires. Common sense should be applied for items such as Wrack enchanted ammunition, which would only inflict a single Combat Action's worth of magical damage, unless the projectile actually impaled the target.

To use a temporary enchantment, the wielder performs an appropriate activating sequence; swallowing healing pills, firing an enchanted arrow and so on. Using the enchanted item is automatically successful. However if an enchanted spell requires concentration, then the *wielder* of the enchantment must provide it. Therefore an enchantment with the concentration trait needs to remain in contact with the wielder.

Where a magical effect has the Resist trait, it is the value of the creator's Enchant or Grimoire skill (whichever is lower) at the time of its manufacture which is used as the opposed casting roll. If the target manages to resist, the spell is still consumed.

Permanent enchantments are used in the same way as temporary enchantments except that they are not consumed by being used. However permanent enchantments with the autonomous trait are *always on*. In most cases, such as a ring of Enhance (Dex) or a mask of Abjure (Air) this is not a problem but some more dangerous items such as a Hood of Smothering will attempt to cast its spell on anyone who touches it, making handling such objects very risky.

Permanent enchantments with the Concentration trait are quiescent until being actively wielded and concentrated upon. This works for most items, but for offensive objects there is always at risk of such items being accidentally activated by stray thoughts or magic, in which case it may discharge unexpectedly. For this reason, SpellCom artificers generally avoid creating permanent enchantments designed to inflict harm.

As can be seen, the art of creating an enchantment goes far beyond just enchanting the spell into an object. The sorcerer must choose the right materials and the right balance of magics. Because such enchantments are, despite SpellCom's best efforts, more art than science, no two enchantments ever feel or work quite the same.

The following lists show examples of enchanted equipment that team members could requisition from Spellcaster Command before deploying on any given mission. Using single shot enchantments

The following lists show examples of enchanted equipment that team members could requisition from Spellcaster Command before deploying on any given mission. Using single shot enchantments can often keep a useful effect from becoming a threat to game balance. They also encourage players to be more thoughtful about conserving their resources, encouraging more cerebral solutions to problems they may face. Additionally SpellCom is normally unwilling to cripple one of their premier sorcerers by investing much of his POW into permanent magic items, which may become lost on the mission.

Single use enchantments are generally safer ways of handling more powerful or destructive effects:

- ☉ Arrows of Thunder (Wrack – Lightning)
- ☉ Bolt of Suffocation (Smother)
- ☉ Bone Dust of Revivification (Animate Dead Flesh)
- ☉ Candle of Exorcism (Banishment)
- ☉ Cordial of Curse Removal (Neutralise Magic)
- ☉ Elixir of Heroism (Enhance STR and CON)
- ☉ Incense of Augury (Project Sense)
- ☉ Oil of Sharpness (Damage Enhancement)
- ☉ Philter of Water Breathing (Abjure Air)
- ☉ Potion of Healing (Regenerate)
- ☉ Powder of Delusion (Phantom Sight)
- ☉ Salve of Renewal (Restoration)
- ☉ Slingshot of Clumsiness (Diminish DEX)

Permanent Enchantments usually involve more passive blessings or augmentations to the user:

- ☉ Amulet of Warding (Spirit Resistance)
- ☉ Belt of Flying (Fly)
- ☉ Blindfold of Detection (Sense Specific Object or Substance)
- ☉ Boots of Speed (Haste)
- ☉ Crown of Slavery (Dominate Lizardman)
- ☉ Knife of Door Slicing (Form/Set Wood)
- ☉ Mask of Discernment (Mystic Vision)
- ☉ Ring of Sustenance (Abjure Food and Water)
- ☉ Rope of Binding (Diminish STR)
- ☉ Shirt of Protection (Castback)
- ☉ Skin of Shifting (Shapechange Human to Panther)

Combat Zone Magical Support

In addition to giving out additional enchantments and equipment to the team members, SpellCom maintains special teams of spell casters, unique to Dardarrick. Colloquially known as Arcana Tactical, these sorcerers combine their abilities to cast augmented rituals of powerful sorcery, which can produce devastating effects at the battlefield scale. Wraith Recon teams can call for Arcana Tactical support when in the field in order to complete their mission or extract themselves from overwhelming odds.



The uses Arcana Tactical can be put to are varied but of limited availability. The rituals the sorcerers cast take time to prepare and expend a large amount of magical strength. In addition, their powers are in constant demand from all the Wraith Recon teams as well as conventional forces if Dardarrick is currently engaged in military conflict.

A Team Leader wishing to requisition Arcana Tactical must call for support via their Omnilens. Whether or not such support is available is up to the Games Master to determine. Whilst the demonstration of such overwhelming power is undoubtedly entertaining, it can also become a crutch for poor planning. Care must be taken to grant the access sparingly or base the availability on the mission itself, for example some missions may be based on providing *forward observation* in order for Arcana Tactical to strike a target.

If a Games Master wishes to make support random, calls upon Arcana Tactical can instead be based on the rank of the Team Leader. The number of calls that can be made over the course of a mission is limited, exceeding the value results in requests being

ignored. However, each call does not guarantee support will be granted. Mimicking the fog of war, a roll must be made to see if Arcana Tactical can provide aid at that moment. If failed, that call is wasted.

Arcana Tactical Support Limits

Team Leader Rank	Number of Requests Allowed	Chance of Support being Granted
Wraith	1	50%
Shade	2	55%
Phantom	3	60%
Banshee	4	65%
Ghost	5	70%
Spectre	6	75%
Lich	Unlimited	Automatic

The Tactical Arcana support options are detailed in the following entries.

Need-to-Know Intelligence: The Team Leader can use his SpellCom Omnilems to get useful information about a given enemy or object. The Adventurer can verbally request ‘tactical information’ about anything his Omnilems can currently see. At the beginning of the Adventurer’s following turn he receives some kind of lore or knowledge concerning the target. This can range from ‘the beast is known to have a taste for human flesh’ to ‘the mob’s leader is the bald man second from the left’.

Emergency Requisition: Sometimes the Wraith Recon team gets into a situation that they simply do not have the right tool for. The Team Leader can, once per mission segment in an assignment (see *Wraith Recon Missions*) call SpellCom for a piece of equipment or supplies. This equipment will then be delivered at a future point, carried by demons or elementals to the Team Leader’s current position. The time taken for such deliveries depends on the distance to be travelled from SpellCom to the team’s location and the movement rate of the creature bearing it.

Magic Assistance: The Team Leader can call upon the magical abilities of Arcana Tactical to magically augment the Wraith Recon team members. Organising the necessary magic requires 1D3 rounds of preparation after the request is made. The spells granted are beyond the Team Leader’s control but are usually helpful for the

situation. For example, if cut off by a gaping chasm, the team might receive Fly spells with which they are carried over the obstruction. Most magic granted in this manner is biased towards escape and evasion, rather than direct combat.

Arcane Artillery: The Team Leader can call for empowered spells to be hurled at foes at long distances. This requires 1D3 minutes of preparation, whilst the Team Leader continues to observe the target and gives verbal confirmation of the strike, which must be visible and within 200 metres of the Omnilems through which it is aimed. When the ceremonial spell has been completed, a devastating wave of destruction is unleashed upon the target, generally destroying the objective. The manner in which this happens is usually up to the Games Master to improvise but it could be anything from an earthquake collapsing a tower to a vast strike of forked lightning blasting a garrison of troops.

Summon Airstrike: The epitome of military support, a Team Leader can request a unit of flying creatures to drop spells or make attacks upon a group of enemies or other targets. The type of support provided depends on what is available in the local area. If a unit of Dardarrian Air Cavalry have been held nearby in anticipation of providing an airstrike, then they can answer within a matter of minutes. On the other hand, if the request for an airstrike is made deep within enemy territory then the sorcerers of Arcana Tactical might draw upon local resources, such as controlling all the birds within several kilometres and forming an impromptu formation. Lacking suitable creatures to call upon, the sorcerers may resort to opening a portal to some diabolical realm from which swarm demonic beings. Such options are rarely used however, since monsters so summoned are generally antipathetic towards anything in the field of vision. It requires 3D6 minutes for an airstrike to arrive after the request has been made.

ALL GEARED UP...READY TO Go!

Once the Adventurers have been fully briefed on the mission assignment they are about to go on, chosen their team roles and equipped themselves sufficiently – they are ready to head over to Spellcaster Command for deployment. The specifics of this are covered in the *Missions* chapter.



CHAPTER FOUR

RACES OF NUERA



Nuera is inhabited by a surprisingly diverse range of humanoid species, mostly sapient, which uneasily coexist across the world. Nations are formed from cooperating or conquered societies generally under the authority of the dominant race. Some live in clans or tribes segregated from other species, whereas many urban settlements are homogenised collectives of different races residing in close proximity with one another.

Although inter-species tensions are sometimes expressed in open war, genocide is a rare occurrence, most races subjugate defeated foes, displacing them from settlements or enslaving them for more practical uses. Dislike does exist betwixt some races but outright antipathy is rare and localised, most peoples especially those in civilised regions are accepting of differing skins, features and culture.

RACIAL DISTRIBUTIONS

The species of Nuera are often adapted for particular ecological niches, helping them to avoid constant conflict. For example, reptilians are eminently suited to wetlands, jungles and swamps. These specialisations have greatly aided the societal survival of many races, being able to retreat into regions considered inhospitable to others.

Upon the continent of Rardarri, where *Wraith Recon* is primarily focused, five major species dominate. The Asagi are goblinoids, cruel demons that thrive in the cold of the high mountains. SIRRUSHI are reptilians that infest the jungles and swamps, basking in the tropical heat of the south. The Akrabhi are bipedal arthropods who roam the arid deserts and steppes of the western Wildlands. Oanni are fishfolk that inhabit the ocean surrounding the continent, controlling undersea empires and shipping.

Although collectively known as species, each are in fact collectives of sub-races, for instance the reptilians, are actually made up of

distinctive races such as lizardmen, serpentmen and crocodilians, all effectively the same basic humanoid reptilian but with minor physiological and cultural differences. Likewise the Akrabhi are descended from a range of arachnids.

Enoshi the fifth species, better known as humanity, are adapted to no particular habitat. Instead they can survive in a wide range of regions and climates but are unable to thrive in any of them. Far from being the superior species of Nuera, humanity is both physically and reproductively inferior to most of the other races. Their tenacious ubiquity however has allowed them to serve as minor allies or even slaves for centuries and it is only recently that the humanocentric kingdom of Dardarrick has gained true independence and begun to expand its borders.

The remainder of this chapter focuses on the four dominant races in Rardarri, one from each of the non-human species.

Additional Races

Unfortunately space forbids a detailed description of the countless sapient races that previously existed in earlier versions of *Wraith Recon*; thus this book focuses on a handful of the more interesting and most widespread antagonists that Adventurers may encounter.

However, since Nuera is overflowing with odd, exotic breeds of creatures, Games Masters are actively encouraged to add whatever extra races they desire, converting favourite ones from other game systems and settings. Some new races can be found in *RuneQuest Monster Coliseum*. These can easily be plugged into your version of Nuera.

Other classic races mentioned in this book have no published version. Use the following table as a guideline for their base Characteristics and notable traits.

Race	STR	CON	SIZ	DEX	INT	POW	CHA	AP ¹	Move	Notes
Pahhur Dwarf	As per Dwarf but possesses Fire Immunity ²									
Crocodilian	2D6+9	2D6+6	2D6+9	2D6+3	2D6+5	2D6+3	3D6	3	8	Cold-Blooded ³ , Hold Breath ⁴
Dark Elf	The same as a normal elf, but substitute Dark Sight for Night Sight									
Fire Giant	3D6+12	1D6+12	3D6+12	3D6	2D6+6	3D6	3D6	1	12	Fire Immunity ²
Cynocephales	As per Hobgoblins, save cynocs have the heads of hyenas and move at 10m									
Goblin	2D6+3	2D6+3	2D6	2D6+3	2D6+5	2D6+3	2D6	1	6	Night Sight
Ogre	2D6+12	2D6+6	2D6+6	3D6	2D6+5	3D6	2D6	-	10	
Orc	4D6	2D6+6	2D6+6	3D6	2D6+6	2D6+3	2D6	-	8	Night Sight
Serpentman	2D6+3	2D6+3	2D6+6	2D6+12	2D6+9	2D6+6	3D6	1	8	Cold-Blooded ³ , Poison ⁵
Saurian	3D6	2D6+6	3D6	2D6+12	2D6+5	2D6+3	3D6	3	8	Cold-Blooded ³
Troglodyte	As per Lizardmen, and add a stench poison attack of CONx3% potency which causes Nausea if the opposed roll versus Resilience is failed									

¹ Armour Points due to Natural Armour.

² Fire Immunity protects the creature against all heat and burning.

³ See Cold-Blooded Trait on page 45.

⁴ See Hold Breath Trait on page 45.

⁵ Use the default Snake Venom found in the RuneQuest II Core Rulebook.

HOBGOBLINS

The Asagi are the mountain demons, taller and stronger than humanity these goblinoids are a diverse range of beings that live upon and within the northern mountain ranges of Rardarri, which extend across the Wildlands, Dardarrick and Lorn. Supreme amongst the Asagi are the race commonly known as hobgoblins.

Physiology

The average hobgoblin warrior is a creature sure to strike fear into the heart of any normal man. Standing around two metres tall, hobgoblins have well developed muscles born from a lifetime of climbing and are surprisingly agile for their stature. Their flattened noses, pointed ears and almost feline faces mark them unmistakably as one of the goblinoid races but an observer not running in fear might notice some important differences in comparison to goblins and bugbears.

A hobgoblin's weapons and armour would seem to be unusually well looked after, even polished, for what is supposed to be a barbarian warrior. Far from adopting a goblinoid's traditional stealth, hobgoblins fight in rigid and disciplined formations,

easily a match for any unit from one of the more civilised races. Despite being nearer in size and mass to bugbears, hobgoblins are physically closer in form to the smaller goblins. However, they are much stronger and tougher than their diminutive cousins and have a very different outlook on the world. In the few studies that have been performed on the goblinoid races, beyond mere adventurer boast and banter, there has been no evidence that hobgoblins are any more intelligent. It is their natural aggressiveness and innate discipline that allows them to accomplish far more, to the extent a tribe is able to dominate all manner of creatures, even those physically stronger.

Their highly developed senses are a legacy from their goblinoid origins and are far superior to those of any human. A hobgoblin's finely attuned hearing seems to be able to not only detect the faintest of noises in relative silence but also has the ability to pick out and filter individual sounds from a multitude of sources, even during pitched battle. It has been theorised that far from being a natural talent, this capability is hammered into hobgoblins from an early age, as goblins and bugbears do not seem to demonstrate anything similar, though their own hearing is at least as good. The benefits of hearing your unit leader's voice barking commands in the midst of deafening combat are obvious.

Size, weight and muscle power aside, the defining difference between hobgoblins and related races, physiologically speaking, is their relative lack of stealth. Goblins and bugbears demonstrate a consummate ability to utilise any shadow or terrain feature to mask their approach upon an enemy and even when fully armed for battle they are able to make near soundless passage. It is apparent that somewhere along their history, hobgoblins lost much of this capability and though some few individuals are experts at stealth tactics in combat situations, as a race they are noticeably inferior when performing such careful actions. It is this one deficiency alone that may permit many goblins to live freely and not be part of an entirely enslaved race, subservient to hobgoblins everywhere.

Origins

Placed squarely between goblins and bugbears on a physical basis, hobgoblins have often posed scholars and other students with interesting questions and speculations concerning the origin of the species. It is often presumed that goblins and their kin have existed in the world for at least as long as the other races. There are certainly very old histories and legends telling of their existence and they are well situated within the myths of most civilised races.

Their proliferation throughout the mountainous ranges of the world attests to both their long and tumultuous history, as well as their stubborn refusal to be wiped out by the likes of the lowland species. Given this, it seems a likely assumption that hobgoblins should be the most successful and prolific of all their kin. Scholars deem the hobgoblin to be the strongest goblinoid race, not least because they exhibit so many humanlike characteristics. Texts have been written about the formation of the Lornish hobgoblin hegemony, which set the mould for other civilised races. Hobgoblins are capable, respond readily to discipline and easily dominate other races, so why are they not more common? Indeed, why are the other races not constantly engaged in full scale warfare against the large and self-sustaining hobgoblin empire?

The pervading misconception within Dardarrick is, of course, that being mere monsters, hobgoblins have neither the wit nor the ambition to conquer the entire world. To any who have made the most cursory study of the hobgoblin race, this reasoning is utter folly, perhaps dangerously so. There are far too many recorded incidents, throughout history, of hobgoblins destroying powerful armies and breaking immense fortresses for them to be dismissed in this way. Many scholars, loremasters and other deep-thinkers believe instead that, the hobgoblins' empire of Lorn has seen its zenith and is now fading, the decadence of the hobgoblin tribes and the distrust of the clan chieftains of their current overlord beginning to fracture the nation. A recent trend for racial supremacy amongst the young of their kind, is now threatening the authoritarian control of the lesser races, humans especially being persecuted in out of fear that they will revolt in order to form another independent nation such as Dardarrick.

Discussions on the specific origins of hobgoblins are varied but they all tend to follow a common theme in that the race is derived from goblins directly. Some tell of an ancient sorcerer, quite mad,

who attempted to create a warrior race in order to overcome his rivals who commonly used unaugmented goblins to further their plans. Others presume hobgoblins were indeed artificially created but dismiss the use of magic, citing instead a process of selective breeding such as that used to produce stronger and more aggressive war horses. Yet more pronounce that the creation of an entire race for war is an insane and time-consuming venture and propose that hobgoblins developed naturally from goblins and further, that bugbears developed from hobgoblins. This prompts speculation of a race even more powerful than the towering bugbears.

For their part, hobgoblins rarely, if ever, speculate on their own origins and are content to leave such thoughts in the hands of their god and his shamans.

Diet and Related Matters

Goblinoids are noted for their ability to subsist for long periods of time on just about any organic matter they scavenge and this, more than anything else, points to a racial stubbornness to exist within habitats that any other race would shy away from. Hobgoblins seem to be a little more refined in their preferred tastes and, where possible, exist solely on meat and water.

Horse flesh is a favourite and the harsh rule of a local chieftain may be lessened with a regular tribute of livestock to provide the primary source of food for his tribe. However, if meat is scarce and raiding is not an option, hobgoblins are perfectly capable of digesting an incredible array of material, even turning their hands to farming on occasion. The only foods they seem to avoid at all costs are carrion and, interestingly, cannibalism, the latter of which they absolutely shun though it is a common practice amongst other goblinoids.

The Life Cycle of the Hobgoblin

The life of a hobgoblin revolves around just three things; eating, training for war and achieving a greater standing within the dominance hierarchy of the tribe. Individuals are expected to work towards the good of the tribe and are rewarded for successful results. Of interest is that whilst young are protected and seen as embodying the future of the tribe, the role of motherhood is not assigned any great standing. A female hobgoblin may be respected as a warrior in her own right but her duty to provide the tribe with new potential warriors, whilst expected, will never be rewarded.

Physically, female hobgoblins look very similar to their male counterparts, particularly when dressed in armour, to the extent that a member of any other race may have great difficulty distinguishing sexes. They are certainly capable of becoming as good a warrior as any of the males, though the female will rarely attain any position of true authority within the tribe's structure. Whilst carrying young, her fighting ability and thus her tribal standing, all but disappear.

In common with other goblinoids, hobgoblins have no concept of long term relationships between sexes and though an especially

weak female may be considered the property of a strong male, in general she will be fully capable of choosing her own mate for breeding purposes.

The gestation period of a hobgoblin female is six months and she will typically bear two or three young, though life in a hobgoblin tribe is often harsh if not brutal and it is rare for more than one of the young to mature as an adult. Hobgoblin young develop fast and are capable of rigorous combat at the age of six, able to face and defeat any non-fighting member of the other races. They are considered adults within the tribe around the age of 11 or 12, when they will join the mature warriors.

A hobgoblin may die of old age between 60 and 65 years, though it is exceedingly rare for any to reach this age. Most will die much sooner through battle, challenges or disease and only the shamans and priests of a tribe have any real chance of attaining such great ages, as they are afforded greater levels of protection by the other tribal members.

Physical Variations

Hobgoblins tend to exhibit the same types of physical variation within the species as the other goblinoid races do in terms of hair, skin and eye colour. Commonly, skin colour is dark or red/orange, whilst the hair that covers all parts of their body bar hands, feet and face is typically dark red/brown or grey. Of more note is that such colour variations tend to breed true within a tribe so that each member is more or less identical in terms of colour. Exceptions can arise, however, and are often treated as figures of ridicule or as being 'not of the tribe.' Needless to say, the life expectancy of any who are different is drastically reduced from the norm.

The combination of dark skin and red eyes seems to be exceedingly rare and, rather than being subjected to vilification, such hobgoblins are usually accorded greater status within the tribal structure. Hobgoblins often portray the progenitor of their race, referred to as The Mighty One, as bearing these colours and so it is natural to assume that such hobgoblins are seen as having been touched by the supernatural being that he watches over their destiny. These individuals often become shamans within the tribe.

Exceptionally large males are often seen with their pale noses developing either a blue or red shade, the colour again dependant upon the tribe they were born into. The exact purpose of this colour change and the process of its development is not known, though it is certainly a natural phenomenon rather than being artificially applied. It is often presumed that such colourations, which become bolder as the male develops physically, make him somehow more attractive to hobgoblin females and thus increase his chances of mating.

Psychology

A hobgoblin's life is one of constant dominance, not just within the tribe itself, but also other tribes and the 'lesser' races within its region of control. On the one hand, a hobgoblin shares many traits with the other goblinoids. It is merciless in nature, unsympathetic

of other sapient beings and utterly dedicated towards its own personal advancement. From the earliest age, however, a hobgoblin is taught that the tribe as a whole is of all-importance and that true strength and power are bestowed by its underlying order.

Manifesting as a strong adherence to discipline that sets hobgoblins apart from every other related race, hobgoblins are relatively easy for their leaders to control and their belief in the strength of their own tribe is paramount. However, a hobgoblin is unlikely to be willing to lay down its life for others, merely that any personal advancement will take place through actions that benefit the entire tribe and are thus amply rewarded.

An example of this can be found in the hobgoblins' attitude towards their young. Though capable of fighting at an early age, their young are kept far from any potential combat unless the tribal lair itself is actually being overrun by enemies. This is not out of any maternal or paternal feeling towards the young, merely that they represent the future of the tribe. All goblinoids display a distaste for any race other than their own but hobgoblins have developed a belligerence that far outweighs that of their cousins.

They vigorously pursue war training and conflict as a way of encouraging that only the strongest survive, gleefully raiding neighbouring tribes at any opportunity to prove their superiority. Long standing conflicts with differing tribes sometimes elevate into outright enmity, forcing a resolution by formalised battle, the losing tribe being forced to surrender its territory and search out new lands to settle; often causing a succession of further battles as the losers try to claim the region of a less powerful clan.

Where a race is defeated by hobgoblins, it will be either forced to pay tribute or be completely enslaved. Nowhere is this more true than with the other races of their own species, such as orcs and goblins. Entire tribes may be rounded up and moved to the hobgoblin's own lair, where they will be turned into servile labour or used as cannon fodder in future battles. Hobgoblins operate a brutal regime for any rebellious captive, viewing them as less than beasts of burden, since in their mountainous habitat livestock is more useful and valuable food.

Habitat

In common with the scourge that is the goblinoid races, hobgoblins can be found in most of the mountains and foothills of Nuera. However, as well as being a little less prolific than their goblin cousins, they are also wary of more extreme terrain, being all too aware of the additional and often unnecessary dangers that can be posed by harsh weather or frigid glaciers. Whilst hobgoblins prefer defensible locations for their settlements, they rarely live in the extremely infertile and dangerous upper elevations, instead displacing the lesser goblinoid races to those places and keeping the more fertile lower regions under their direct control.

In general, hobgoblins prefer forested foothills and lower mountain valleys as places to settle. Open plateaus or bare hillsides are usually shunned, though they may be found in such places, travelling from one lair to another. They are very cautious when determining a

region for a tribal lair and by preference will choose an area that provides a great many hiding places or is extremely difficult for an enemy to reach, hence the number found in forests and mountains. Where this is not possible, hobgoblins look for defence when creating a lair. Ruined forts and underground cavern complexes or tunnel systems are popular choices.

Though not generally nomadic by nature, hobgoblin tribes have been known to move from area-to-area in search of more prosperous lands. There are two circumstances that can cause this to happen. Firstly, a tribe's lair may simply be located in an area that has become too dangerous to remain in, whether through a natural catastrophe or determined resistance to a tribe's raiding. A more powerful goblinoid tribe moving into the area may also cause a move, if they survive the battle for domination. Secondly, and more commonly, a hobgoblin tribe may eventually exhaust all readily available resources and be forced to find a more bounteous area.

Unless disaster is imminent, a tribal chieftain will never risk his entire tribe by simply striking out into the unknown. Instead, small bands of scouts, numbering no more than five or ten of the tribe's best warriors will be dispatched to locate and report on possible sites for a new lair. Such bands will take steps to avoid direct combat, concentrating instead on finding a new lair in an area that can support the entire tribe.

There are several key factors that hobgoblins will consider when searching for a new home. Most importantly, the surrounding area must be able to support the tribe in terms of both food and supplies. As the largest hobgoblin tribes can number well over 300 warriors alone, with nearly twice as many young, this is no easy task to accomplish. The scouts will be looking for numerous weakly defended farmsteads and villages over which to exert authority, abundant natural resources or several smaller goblinoid tribes the hobgoblins can begin to enslave. They will also attempt to get a sense of the balance of power in the new region.

Though hobgoblins are aggressive in war, they are by no means foolish and will avoid stronger tribes or civilised neighbours with which they have negotiated agreements. The defence of the lair itself is of prime concern so the scouts will be searching to identify areas that could be made to be impregnable against anything short of a direct, and very costly, assault by a sizeable army.

Once a suitable site has been found, a warband, often led by the tribal chieftain himself, will be sent to take the new lair and clear out any current inhabitants. More scouts will be used to locate food sources and the construction of defences, ranging from simple ditches to full blown repairs on ruined fortress walls, will commence. This is done with all speed, for it is at this time the tribe is at its most vulnerable, with neither the new lair nor the old fully defended. It will be the chieftain's primary concern to bring the rest of the tribe to the new lair as quickly as possible and so the warband will work fast, taking no more than two or three days to complete the preliminary defences.

Aside from a few warriors in the original warband, every warrior of the tribe will be used to protect the movement of the tribe's young and possessions as they make the journey to the new lair. Unless forcibly evicted from their previous lands, a tribal chieftain will go no further than 50 or 60 kilometres when moving in this way and so the task of relocating the entire tribe from the initial scouting to the abandonment of the old lair will take little more than a week. Being a critical time for the tribe, stragglers are not tolerated and any hobgoblin falling behind will simply be left to fend for itself.

Once installed within the new lair, any neighbouring races will instantly notice the new arrivals' presence. Raiding parties are immediately mounted and begin to wrest control over neighbours and their resources. These raids are the hobgoblins' primary means of sufficiency and as food reserves are likely to be low after the relocation, the hobgoblins will be vigorous in their attempts to replenish stocks, with horses and other livestock being their main targets. The defences protecting the lair will also be reworked and built upon, becoming ever more elaborate and, by goblinoid standards, sophisticated, with initially even the young being drafted in to assist. Walls, watchtowers and often small engines of war will be constructed to prevent any attack from forcing the hobgoblins to move on once more.

After a tribe has established itself in a new area, a constant process of intertribal raiding will begin, with the aim of exerting dominance over every race in the area and ensuring that the tribe will not need to move again in the short term.

Hobgoblin Society

The vast majority of hobgoblins live as members of tribes, though independent mercenary companies are also common. Tribes steadily grow in prosperous times with each hobgoblin having its own specific tasks to fulfil, though every mature adult is considered first and foremost a warrior. A typical tribe will average around 150 warriors, though it can grow to over twice that size in areas with many diverse resources or when two weakened tribes ally to face a third and eventually amalgamate into one.

There will also be a great many non-combatants in the form of the injured, young and pregnant females, perhaps tripling the size of the entire tribe in numbers. Though there can be infinite variation between tribes in terms of lair, equipment, specific culture and resources, all form a dominance hierarchy led by an overall tribal chieftain who is recognised as the greatest warrior of all and who likely attained his position through sheer force of arms. All authority within the tribe is derived directly from the chieftain and he will maintain an iron grip on the order of the hobgoblins beneath him.

Directly beneath the chieftain in terms of both rank and authority are his overlords, the most capable warriors of the tribe who act as unit leaders and bodyguards. There will generally be between four and twenty such overlords, depending on the size of the tribe and they are noticeably better equipped than the bulk of the hobgoblins they lead. The chieftain personally selects warriors himself for this

duty, usually after some great achievement in battle, though a scout consistently finding wealthy resources for the tribe to plunder may also be granted such status.

Hobgoblins have a subtle and cunning martial honour system, with which they acknowledge that the laws of the tribe must come first in all things. When a chieftain dies for any reason, his successor will come from within the elite group of overlords who are already considered to be far superior to the average warrior of the tribe. Very rarely, the overlords may reach a consensus as to who the natural leader should be, especially if one of the overlords has considerably more status or reputation than the others.

To a hobgoblin, status comes from successful raiding, or less frequently depending on where the tribe is located, victory in battle. Thus it follows that the most reputable have the best skill in arms. However, this is often undermined by chieftains who generally take great care to select who is permitted to join or lead a raid, keeping their overlords more or less equal to one another. When a new chieftain must be chosen, challenges known as Surka are normally issued between the contenders to determine who has the right to lead the tribe.

Surka – The Tribal Challenge

It is this system of challenges that forms one of the more remarkable aspects of hobgoblin society and something that distances them yet further from their goblinoid cousins. Any disputes in the tribe, from the ownership of a horse to the rightful leadership of the tribe will be resolved in one of two ways. Either the chieftain will arbitrate important issues with no room for argument or more commonly, a challenge may be issued, if the hobgoblin in question is so permitted:

- ☉ No hobgoblin who is not considered a full warrior may challenge one who is (indeed, a hobgoblin that cannot fight for any reason will not have many rights at all within the structure of the tribe).
- ☉ Only an overlord may challenge the chieftain and then only as a direct result of a claim to lead the entire tribe himself.
- ☉ No hobgoblin may challenge a priest or shamans.
- ☉ Shamans are held to exist beyond the authority of the tribe and are thus forbidden themselves to issue challenges.

There are always witnesses to a call for Surka, indeed it is likely to draw a substantial crowd from tribal members and any melee weapons or armour owned by the protagonists may be used. Surka always ends when one combatant yields to his opponent.

Thereafter, the matter in dispute is considered permanently resolved. The amount of damage a hobgoblin sustains in such a challenge is purely down to his own discretion and there is no loss of face for being forced to yield to a superior warrior. To the hobgoblin mindset, the fact that there is always a victor and a vanquished in battle is in perfect accordance with the natural order of their way of life.

Stubbornly continuing a challenge to the point of being maimed is considered foolish, costing that hobgoblin much of its status. On a practical level, this cultural ritual ensures any disputes within the tribe can be resolved quickly and easily and yet do so in such a way that needless and wasteful loss of life is avoided. After all, no tribe is served by having its members slaughter one another.

Overlords, priests and the shamans are the only members of the tribe permitted to advise the chieftain and openly question his orders, though it is understood that the chieftain's final decision is just that – final.

There are several circumstances, however, where an overlord may decide to take extreme measures against his chieftain and make an attempt for the highest position in the tribe. He may sincerely believe a chieftain's orders will irreparably harm the tribe, or he may have become powerful enough to believe that he can overcome his leader. Nevertheless, this form of Surka is always fought to the death and the whole tribe is summoned to watch. This is done primarily so that the chieftain, whomsoever it may be after the combat, is undisputed in his claims to rule the tribe as the ultimate embodiment of their combined strength.

Because of this, assassinations or any form of foul play outside of Surka (in which any number of dirty tricks may be employed so long as others are there to witness it) are exceedingly rare in hobgoblin society. Without the outward display of martial prowess, there might always be some element of doubt in a new chieftain's ability to rule the tribe correctly and in a manner that will benefit all. As a chieftain's own power flows from his position at the head of the tribe, this is the last thing he will want.

Division of Wealth

Through the processes of raiding and racial subjugation, it is possible for a hobgoblin tribe to amass a large amount of wealth in a relatively short period of time. Hobgoblins, however, are very much a pragmatic race and material goods such as horses, weapons and armour are afforded greater worth than such abstract concepts as currency. That said, barter and exchange of items for coinage is possible between warriors and a great many silver and gold coins may find their way into personal jewellery and the decorations of a warrior's armour.

It is the task of the chieftain to personally divide any plunder taken during a raid and hand a portion to each warrior who took part. The chieftain himself will claim around a quarter to a half of the total haul, depending on how successful the raid was considered to be. However, he is also expected to support the tribe with his own amassed wealth in lean times and also grant additional rewards to any warrior who performs exceptionally well in battle. Many chieftains may grumble at such expense but they know all too well their position relies on the continued unity of the tribe, with no room for dissension.



Shamans and overlords all receive shares that are more or less even and will be between three and four times greater than that of an ordinary warrior. Those who cannot fight will never receive anything of their own.

Religion and Spiritual Matters

Hobgoblins are nominally animists, with shamans instead of priests. They worship the spirits of the world instead of gods, venerating natural phenomena like lightning, earthquakes and the enduring cold of glaciers. Although they also pay homage to the being known as The Mighty One, there is no formal priesthood, rather it is more a case of ancestor worship. If a real disaster strikes the tribe, the members may superstitiously claim it is the displeasure of The Mighty One, which has caused their misfortune.

Most tribes have shamans to service the few spiritual needs that the hobgoblins have but rarely have more than half a dozen organised in their own strict hierarchy. Shamans function outside of the chain of authority that runs through the tribe and they are considered inviolate when it comes to Surka and punishment – even the most irreverent of chieftains will be unwilling to court danger by harming a hobgoblin who is granted any amount of supernatural power directly from The Mighty One or his frightening spirits.

Shamans are primarily used in two ways by the tribe. When posed with a particularly difficult problem, a chieftain may consult with them for advice, though he may place no special value in what they say and will be under no compulsion to obey their words. Secondly, shamans are expected to use their supernatural powers for the good of the tribe either in battle or in the normal day-to-day life by overcoming trials and obstacles that might otherwise be laboured over.

For their part, hobgoblin shamans are always keen to capitalise on their status within the tribe as it grants immediate power and will always keep them far from any physical labour. This egocentric superciliousness often causes friction between the shamans and the overlords.

Although it is rare for a hobgoblin to abandon his spiritual beliefs and give worship to the gods of a foreign pantheon, a few take the irrevocable step of becoming a cleric. Such priests tend to be the most fanatical hobgoblins that an Adventurer will be unfortunate enough to meet, with their blood-crazed rages or dogmatic haranguing of non-believers a true phenomenon to witness. Priests occasionally return to their tribes to bring the light of truth to their brethren, however few succeed in convincing new converts, most often raising the ire of the shamans and end up engaged in a magical struggle that often destabilises the tribe.

Technology and Industry

A tribe's sufficiency is maintained by tribute and raiding, the latter being the preferred method as it allows warriors to improve their status. However, within the nation of Lorn finding likely targets for such activities are strictly ritualised, a hobgoblin being forbidden to unnecessarily slay members of the subjugated races who form the backbone of the workforce supporting their nation. Deaths between hobgoblins themselves are acceptable, although not encouraged since a tribe may seek compensation for the death of a warrior but not of the goods taken from their territory. Plunder is most often taken in the form of edible livestock, slaves and valuable items in that order.

Owning a lesser goblinoid tribe, the underlings often provide military support in order to remain ostensible allies. Rebellious goblinoids become hapless slaves, forced to toil in forests and roughly cultivated land to provide for a tribe's sustenance. Subjugated human settlements are generally more pliable and can be trusted to provide regular payments of food and equipment.

If these two methods fail to support a tribe, hobgoblins certainly have the wit and intelligence to turn their own hands to the more fundamental means of survival. If the situation warrants such measures, blacksmiths, farmers and even shepherds can arise from the ranks of the warriors. These duties are allocated by the chieftain who will likely spend his own time searching for new raiding targets as few hobgoblins are likely to tolerate this labour for long. He may well only have a matter of weeks before he begins to face a succession of Surka challenges from his overlords.

Very large tribes, which can number upwards of 500 hobgoblins, can begin to suffer with so many mouths to feed and there are few areas that can support a tribe of this size through tribute or raiding alone. In these cases, tribes may be forced to turn to agriculture simply to supply enough food. Wise chieftains always try to rotate warriors used in this labour and the cleverer ones may use it as a punishment detail that will cause no argument or possible recrimination.

All warriors are capable of adjusting and repairing their own weapons and armour, which usually come from plunder taken in raids and they are, in fact, taught to do so from a very early age. The maintenance of one's own arms is considered an important duty within the tribe and failure to do so will bring the immediate, and usually unwelcome, attentions of the tribal chieftain. This is another mark that distinguishes the race from other goblinoids, as goblins for example can be noted by their shabby armour and rusting weaponry, whereas a hobgoblin's will likely be polished and shining.

Taking into account their stature, units of hobgoblins have been mistaken for human soldiers at range, a fact that talented chieftains have used against Dardarrick to great effect.

Hobgoblin tribes are also skilled in the construction of simple but effective defences for their lairs. Any hobgoblin lair, whatever its location, is likely to have a very large array of traps, ditches, grounded spikes and even primitive engines of war such as catapults and ballistae. Given time and a ready source of materials, a hobgoblin tribe may even attempt large scale stonework though, as a rule, they much prefer to work with wood for speed and simplicity.

The Tribe at War

In open battle, hobgoblins form disciplined units led by an overlord that can rival the capabilities of any similar force of humans. Where several units are engaged in combat simultaneously, mature young on the verge of adulthood will often be employed as runners, ferrying orders to each unit directly from the chieftain who will be fighting with a bodyguard of his most trusted overlords. The tribe will rarely engage in combat without the forward planning of the chieftain and every warrior will be instructed with precisely what he is expected to accomplish. This method of warfare, far from being rigid, makes a hobgoblin tribe a very potent force that is difficult to overcome unless the enemy is able to achieve superiority either in quality of soldiers or sheer numbers.

Outside the borders of Lorn it is not unusual for a tribal lair itself to come under attack, for as soon as the hobgoblins begin to prey on other civilised settlements, it can only be a matter of time before an army of some sort is raised to destroy them. When defending their own lair, hobgoblins are at their most dangerous. As well as the large number of defences that the tribes prepare, chieftains also use a system that humans may define as standing orders. Each warrior is given long term instructions of where to go and what to do in the event of attack so when the alarm is sounded, the entire tribe

can be mobilised and ready to fight within minutes. With sentries permanently in place, often in hobgoblin-built watchtowers, surprise is nearly impossible to achieve.

Every hobgoblin tribe has its own banner that is considered a prized possession of the chieftain. The design is usually a stylised icon that will reflect the name of the tribe and may also be found on the shields of some of the warriors. The tribal banner is normally kept safe within the chieftain's own living space in the lair and only brought out in large-scale battles where the majority of the warriors will be fighting. It will be carried within the chieftain's own bodyguard unit by a warrior the chieftain has personally selected either for special honour or great punishment; depending on how much the tribe actually reveres their banner.

However, it tends to be the law of most tribes that if the warrior loses the banner, he is not expected to return to the tribe alive. As a final note with regards to tribes and warfare, the most common cause of Surka against a chieftain is a serious defeat in battle. This is one likely reason that chieftains plan their battles so well and in such detail – another indication that the hobgoblins are, at their core, a very pragmatic race.

Mercenaries and Warbands

The Warlord of Lorn, in order to maintain rule over his nation, demands that each hobgoblin tribe within his borders assigns a proportion of its own warriors to form warbands, which are sent into the lowlands to garrison the borders and major settlements. Generally it is the younger hobgoblins who engage in military service, hoping to find battle in which they can win status and accumulate personal wealth with which they can support themselves on returning to the tribe.

Hobgoblin warbands typically have between 20 and 100 skilled warriors, who rotate in and out of the unit as young warriors journey from the tribe to replenish the retiring elder or maimed veterans.

Some mercenary warbands form either from surviving warriors of a shattered tribe, or a group of hobgoblins who have grown dissatisfied with their chieftain. Unable or unwilling to challenge him they will simply leave, striking out for the south, willing to offer their services directly to the Warlord. Such a betrayal of the chieftain is unforgivable and systematic searches will be mounted within the tribe's territory to locate absconding warriors and if any are caught they will be subjected to a protracted and painful death. Once clear however, pursuit will not be continued.

Mercenaries are also formed in other parts of Nuera. These bands are willing to fight for almost anyone, with other goblinoid tribes being the most common employers, though humans and even scorpionmen have seen the value of the hobgoblins' disciplined approach to war. Some come to regret such a warband in or near their settlements, however, as hobgoblins may demonstrate difficulty in adjusting to different cultural perspectives. When hobgoblin

mercenaries are used in predominantly cavalry armies, their warlike nature and love of horse flesh can create an uncontrollable friction with the mounted units.

Hobgoblin mercenaries themselves have no such prejudices with who employs them and will literally fight for any who can pay. With effort they can adapt well to life beyond the strict confines of their original tribe and eventually come to understand the values of both gold and honour. It is relatively rare, for example, for a hobgoblin mercenary warband to intentionally betray its current employer, if for no other reason than they realise their chances of successive employment would likely disappear thereafter. With steady service and skilful fighting, hobgoblins amass more gold, which is in turn spent on weapons, armour and horses, which remain their true passions.

The structure of a warband follows similar lines to that of a tribe, with the overall captain (who may well term himself warlord after several successful engagements) commanding several sergeants of his own choosing, who in turn have authority over the regular warriors. Payment and plunder are also shared out in similar ways, with the captain taking up to half of each, though he is expected to arm and equip all his warriors regardless of circumstances. The more adventurous captains may even go to the expense of mounting their entire warband on non-equine beasts, once he understands how much more cavalry units can get paid.

Each warband will carry a banner into battle and a much greater significance is placed on this than within tribes. To a hobgoblin mercenary, the entire pride of the warband is bound into the banner and they will fight fiercely if it is ever captured by an enemy in combat. In addition to the warband's icon, again based on their name, there will also be stylised depictions of their greatest victories and thus their banner is a direct measure of their achievement and worth. When courting new employers, a captain will always bring his banner to negotiations, born by a powerful and intimidating warrior, as proof of what his warband has accomplished in its history.

Methods of Warfare

Though both hobgoblin tribes and mercenary warbands tend to be judged purely by the number of warriors they contain, this is often a false measure as these warriors are capable of fulfilling a variety of roles on the battlefield. Though dedicated in the main to raids and ambushes, any large group of hobgoblins is capable of conducting disciplined manoeuvres on an open battlefield that make them comparable to well-drilled human soldiers in terms of effectiveness and flexibility. Ultimately, this race can turn its hand to almost any military action with at least a reasonable degree of success.

Warriors

The regular hobgoblin warrior most will meet in battle will be formed up into units with other tribal members, numbering anything between 20 and 100 overall, led by an overlord. The

majority will be clad in at least hard leather armour, bearing a large shield and a bashing weapon capable of inflicting a Stun Location manoeuvre, with javelins being a common addition for many.

However, it is possible to find a great deal of variation in the way hobgoblins are armed and armoured, even between warriors belonging to the same unit. Bashing weapons may be replaced by spears or battleaxes, or the shield may be discarded altogether so a polearm or greataxe may be wielded. Tribes who have been successful in many raids and particularly wealthy mercenary warbands are likely to have large proportions of their warriors sporting chainmail. Breastplates and helmets are also popular choices amongst hobgoblins.

Archers

Many tribes will have the resources to arm their warriors with longbows but, given the hobgoblin penchant for destroying enemies at close quarters, they tend to be employed only in the defence of a lair, or for specific and well-defined tasks. A chieftain may decide, for example, that an enemy needs to be thinned out before he orders an attack or that the use of longbows would make a superior diversionary action possible.

Cavalry

Hobgoblins have been known to use cavalry to supplement their attacks, though this is far more common within mercenary warbands than with tribes. However, some tribal chieftains do see the value in such units, particularly if the terrain around their lair suits mounted warriors or if they have been defeated in the past by a charge of cavalry. Horses are never used as mounts since they are irresistible delicacies and unsuited to mountainous terrain. The preferred mount of hobgoblins are large wolves or sabretoothed cats but given the dietary requirements of such animals, it can be very difficult keeping such a unit active for any great amount of time.

Scouts

Every fighting group of hobgoblins will maintain a select number of warriors who specialise in endurance, observation and tracking. These scouts are primarily used to locate and report back on targets for future raids, or for locating ambushes ahead of the main hobgoblin force. In battle, the scouts may join regular warrior units or operate in small groups, infiltrating enemy positions to create disruption and havoc, chasing down fleeing units, or simply harrying an enemy as they attempt to close on the hobgoblins' front line.

Whilst they sometimes possess unusual competence for stealth, such skills are always considered secondary to their strength in battle. Even these hobgoblins are warriors, first and foremost. They tend to opt for lighter armour than the traditional warrior, the better to aid rapid travel, and ranged weapons such as longbows and slings are very common.

Chieftain's Retinue

The most potent unit in a hobgoblin tribe, however, will always be led by the chieftain and is comprised of his most favoured overlords. These hobgoblins represent the very finest warriors of the entire tribe and, concentrated into one solid block, they are a very powerful force on any battlefield. There will be a huge variation in their weapons and armour but it will be of a distinctly higher quality than that of any other warrior and it is here any magical support the chieftain can call upon will be found. This retinue is also likely to include a warrior who will hold the tribal standard aloft to be used as a focus and rallying point for the entire fighting force and also to mark the position of the chieftain at all times.

If the tribe has one or more shamans, it is also likely that the banner will be the fetish for a potent spirit unique to the tribe and thus a powerful weapon in its own right. The chieftain and his retinue are expected to lead by example and so can always be found at the forefront of any large hobgoblin assault, using their martial skills to literally smash through enemy opposition and allow the rest of their force to sweep through broken and demoralised lines with catastrophic results.

Raids and Ambushes

Unless the tribe's home is the target for a raid or a formalised battle has been called for, it is unlikely that the majority of a tribe's warriors will ever be utilised at once. Even whilst the important business of raiding goes on, lairs still need to be watched and guarded, regions have to be scouted and even stronger defences constructed. A chieftain will always judge what size of force is required to win a battle, based upon the verbal reports of his scouts.

The tribe's scouts regularly scour the terrain for kilometres in every direction, seeking incursions into the tribe's territory, whether by rival raiding parties or dangerous creatures seeking new hunting grounds. These scouts are very capable in what they do, able to gather preliminary information on an enemy, usually spend two to three days evaluating any one target, keeping their distance whilst memorising all they can about their unsuspecting prey.

Their reconnaissance complete, they journey back to the lair, where the chieftain will decide which of the targets his scouts have presented will be attacked first, as well as how many warriors will be committed. Plans of battle will also be made, taking into account an enemy's defences as well as the surrounding terrain and the chieftain's overlords will often take part in this process, volunteering to lead raids and even making suggestions to their leader. On rare occasions where the chieftain is less sure of what lies outside the lair, the tribe's shamans may also be consulted.

With plans set, the overlords then instruct each of their warriors in what they are expected to achieve in the coming battle. Strict objectives will be defined and adhered to. If the tribe is seeking fresh meat, for example, no hobgoblin will engage in wanton slaughter for the sheer joy of it unless he is welcoming of a chieftain's

punishment. That said, it is just as likely that a tribe's objective is the removal of every ear from the members of a rival hobgoblin raiding party, before kicking them back over their shared border.

Hobgoblins, as a race, are well suited to the following of well defined orders without variation and are more than capable of carrying out some of the more complex commands their chieftains may sometimes demand. The patience required in waiting for the right time to strike, the blood thirsty charge followed by the immediate breaking off of combat and the accurate timing of diversionary attacks are all well within the grasp of most hobgoblin warriors.

With their highly developed night sight, hobgoblins prefer to attack in darkness but they are equally suited to daylight battles. They are well aware of how many other races suffer in darkness and have even been known to make intelligent use of fire in such battles. Tactics such as blinding their opponents and destroying their night vision, or employing scouts to create large fires that silhouette targets for archers have been witnessed in some raids.

It is in the largest of battles, where the majority of a tribe's warriors are brought out to fight, that the hobgoblins' cunning tactics and disciplined resolution to orders can impress even the most seasoned of generals. This is, thankfully for other races, a rare occurrence and usually only when a chieftain makes the decision to face an approaching enemy away from the lair. When hobgoblins fight in such numbers, they are unlikely to intentionally leave behind any survivors, captives being more valuable as slaves.

Weapons and Armour

Hobgoblins manufacture and use the same types of weapons and armour as available in the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*.

LIZARDMEN

The SIRRUSHI are reptilians that thrive in the swamps, marshes and jungles of southern Rardarri. Lithe, muscular and scaly, they include many bipedal forms each subtly adapted to their preferred environment, troglodytes or even estuarine crocodilians for example. However, the most common race amongst the SIRRUSHI are the ubiquitous and ever ominous, lizardmen, which are examined in closer detail.

Physiology

Many travellers who first see lizardfolk confuse them with other reptilian humanoids. Further observation will quickly dispel such an error. As their name suggests, lizardfolk have more in common with lizards than with any of the reptilian species. Taller than men, yet only slightly more muscular, lizardfolk walk upright on powerful hind legs that are as capable of crushing a man's skull as they are at swiftly climbing trees. Their hands and feet end in sharply curved talons – three fingers and two thumbs on each hand and four toes on each foot.

Languidly waving to and fro behind them is a large, powerful tail used for balance, as well as to propel a lizardman when swimming. Even though the strong tail can make a potent weapon, few lizardfolk use it as such, equipped as they are with formidable claws and teeth. Tail posture makes up an important aspect of lizardfolk body language, adding depth and meaning to speech. Rare individuals learn to use their tails more actively, for tripping their opponents or rudimentary grasping. Lizardfolk are adapted to lives near and in the water; in addition to the placement of their eyes and nostrils and their powerful tail, lizardfolk have more efficient lungs, enabling them to remain underwater for up to twice as long as a man.

Lizardfolk are covered in many small, thick scales sporadically shed throughout the year. The scales are tough, capable of deflecting blows in combat. Supplementing this natural armour are rigid

Tails in Combat

The tail of a lizardman is very versatile. Whilst its most obvious use is to slap at an opponent it can perform several versatile manoeuvres with no conscious control on the part of the owner. Due to its power and length a lizardman tail has a Size and Reach of Medium, allowing it to be used in armed combat engagement distances. Instead of attacking, or even parrying, with a weapon, the lizardman may use its Unarmed skill instead.

Trying to anticipate what a lizardman's tail is about to do is often a difficult task, since it normally remains hidden from direct sight by their own body. Unless the opponent is expecting such a sneaky tactic, the first time they experience one of these tail manoeuvres, they must make an unopposed Perception test, else be taken completely by surprise and lose a Combat Action.

The tail can be used to make the following Combat Manoeuvres, with the usual penalties for repeated use:

Bash Opponent – The lizardman spins in place, using its tail to deliver a roundhouse blow that knocks the opponent back one metre for every three points of damage rolled (or fraction thereof), hopefully knocking the opponent back into treacherous footing.

Entangle – The tail grabs the foe, preventing him from using the grasped location and leaving the lizardman's own weapons free.

Pin Weapon – As with Grip.

Trip Opponent – The lizardman sweeps its tail across the ground, catching the opponent in the knees and inflicting a –20% penalty on the foe for the low blow.



bony plates covering the most vulnerable parts of a lizardman – the chest, stomach and the area between the shoulder blades. Between the gaps of these plates is soft fleshy skin, undefended by scales. A would be attacker is advised to drive his sword or spear point between plates into these vulnerable areas.

Scale colouring can range greatly but within a clan it will be mostly the same. Normally colouring is green, brown or grey, whereas the rarely seen flesh is usually white or light grey. On hatching, most lizardfolk are very darkly coloured all over, emerging from the egg a dark brown or green. As they age, lizardfolk quickly lighten to match the colour of their clan. Over the course of their lifetime, lizardfolk lose their colouration – making the most elderly of the clan instantly recognisable by his lack of pigmentation. In addition to their base colouration, lizardfolk also have markings on their bodies – dark mottling, patches or bands are most common. Unlike scale colouration, which is usually the same for all members of a tribe, such markings are much more individual, indicating parentage and family grouping.

The elongated snouts of lizardfolk contain powerful jaws capable of snapping bone with ease and a mixture of inch long incisors and flat brick-like molars for crunching up food. Their eyes and nostrils are positioned atop their low, domed heads, so lizardfolk can lie submerged in water whilst still being able to see above the surface and breathe easily. The whole of the eye is coloured, typically yellow although sometimes ranging from off-white to green-brown, with a vertically slit pupil vertically bisecting the orb. Lizardfolks' heads are covered in scales somewhat smaller and less densely packed than the ones covering the rest of their bodies. In contrast, the underside of the skull – the base of the neck and underside of the throat – is unguarded and vulnerable. Lizardfolk are constantly moving their heads about, twitching back and forth in an attempt to watch everything around them. Some varieties of lizardfolk have spines or crests atop their skulls; though these serve no real purpose save for display.

It is a common misconception that lizardfolk have inferior senses – especially eyesight; as anyone with experience will testify. A lizardman's vision is slightly inferior to that of a human when observing still objects but superior at perceiving motion. The peripheral vision of lizardfolk is also superior, making it more difficult to sneak up on lizardfolk. As to their other senses, their ability to hear and smell is different, not better or worse. To a lizardman scent and taste are indistinguishable from one another and they can taste such things in the air as the identity of another lizardfolk – each clutch has a readily distinguishable scent – and environmental features such as the presence of fresh water or a coming storm. Lizardfolk hear a much lower range of sounds and vibrations than men but they are deaf to noises of a higher pitch.

Cold-blooded

Perhaps the most significant element of lizardfolk physiology is their cold-blooded nature. Lizardfolk have no way of internally regulating their body heat, relying instead entirely on the external temperature. When their bodies are too cold or too hot, lizardfolk become sluggish,

only growing more active as they heat up or cool down to a more suitable temperature. Lizardfolk have devised ways to get around this, such as constructing shelters that retain heat when it is cold and remain cool when it is hot. Some lizardfolk live underground in areas that remain at a constant temperature all day long. Despite such adaptations, lizardfolk life is very much dictated by external factors.

Cold-blooded Trait

Cold-blooded is a new creature trait. It has both positive and negative effects, which clever players can take into account when encountering such beings in an environment for which they are not suited. For example, a lizardman caught in magically created cold weather.

The positive effect of a cold-blooded metabolism is that the creature does not need to eat frequently. One meal a week is sufficient to keep it healthy and well fed, and gorging itself on a large amount of meat will remove the need to eat for a month.

On the downside, when exposed to temperatures below 15 degrees Celsius, its reflexes become muted, suffering a penalty of -6 to their Strike Rank and the loss of one Combat Action per round. Below five degrees Celsius cold blooded creatures become completely torpid, entering a helpless catatonic state.

Hold Breath Trait

Lizardfolk can hold their breath for extended periods of time. If prepared and remaining static, a lizardman can hold their breath for a number of minutes equal to half their CON. This period is halved if the lizardman is swimming or fighting.



Outside of the warm humidity of Torres lizardfolk often spend part of the early day lying in the sun in order to heat up; whereas conversely in the unbearably sticky heat of the southern summer, lizardmen rest in the shade or water in the middle of the day to lower their body temperature. To outsiders this can make them seem lazy and sloth-like but it is merely part of a natural process.

Depending on their location, these creatures can be very vulnerable to attack during the colder parts of the night, when they are slow to react, more so than at the hottest times of the day since it is easier for them to cool themselves than vice versa. However, even at these times lizardfolk are not helpless. At their most lethargic they remain fearsome opponents and are sometimes capable of bursts of activity even on the coldest nights.

Diet

Contrary to the impression they create – ferocious beasts, all sharp claws and teeth – lizardfolk are in fact omnivorous, eating a mixed

diet of plants, fish and meat. It is important that lizardfolk are able to eat a varied diet, because the hunting available in the dense swamps of Torres is somewhat restricted to seasonal fish and birds. Although many of the more civilised lizardfolk maintain fish farms, their primitive cousins only rely on whatever they can find.

Lizardfolk are strictly hunter-gatherers; save for establishing underwater fencing to create enclosures for trapping fish, they raise no crops or livestock of their own. The preferred diet of a lizardman is red-blooded meat whenever available – even, under certain conditions, that of humans. Other sapient creatures are too fatty, hairy or stringy to be considered a treat. If possible, lizardfolk will organise tribal hunting parties for land animals, sometimes bringing them into conflict with men.

Despite this predilection, a clan with a wise leader will lead hunts into settled lands only on occasion, fully realising the consequences of becoming too great a threat to the local human settlements. Less cautious tribes can find themselves eating well for a short period before being assailed by organised units of local militia, determined to extract revenge and collect the inevitable bounty.

Lizardfolk disdain eating food not hunted or gathered by themselves, or by one of their clan. Upon reaching adolescence, all lizardfolk are expected to partake weekly in the gathering of food, although those unable to do so due to sickness or maiming will still be provided with food so long as it remains in abundance.

Lifecycle

Female lizardfolk lay eggs only once a year, giving birth to a clutch of up to a dozen at a time, the number depending on the population pressure and availability of food at the time. Mating season occurs at the hottest point of the year and is preceded by the males brawling for the right to mate with a female. The strongest and most aggressive of the males may breed with several females; the weakest may breed with none. After mating, the female lizardfolk hide themselves away in specially constructed nests at the heart of the settlement until they lay their eggs.

Once laid, all lizardfolk eggs are kept in one place. In lizardfolk society parentage carries little meaning and a lizardman's parents have no more or less contact with their child than with any other, as all members of the clan take some role in the upbringing of the young. Indeed, after hatching the parentage of a lizardman can be determined only by two means – by the lizardman's markings, which are hereditary, and by a scent unique to each female's clutch.

Eggs hatch after three months, most of the hatchlings in a clutch emerging within a few hours of one another. The hatchlings are slightly smaller than human newborns and are very scrawny things with short, stubby tails; no scales; and only rudimentary teeth and claws for breaking through the shell. The new hatchlings are looked after by nurses, those females beyond fertility, usually in their late twenties. A hatchling is only defenceless for its first few days, its first scales and second set of teeth and claws developing

within a few weeks. Lizardfolk reach adolescence – when they are known as clutchlings – at three years and are fully-grown adults at five. The natural lifespan for lizardfolk is 40 years, although very few reach that age.

Lizardfolk Mentality

To lizardfolk the survival of the clan is of paramount importance in their lives. They are not devoid of individual instincts or independence by any means but in the harsh environment they inhabit there is little room for individual goals and agendas. Instead all lizardfolk must put aside personal desires for the greater good of their clan. As a result of this dedication, lizardfolk are prone to acts of great selflessness, throwing themselves suicidally into a fray in wave after wave, either to drive their enemies away or to allow the majority of the clan time to escape. At other times the clan may elect to evade confrontation altogether, withdrawing deeper into their swamp homes and hiding from intruders.

Lizardfolk are not averse to bargaining with adversaries if it means the continued survival of the tribe, although they do not see any bargains made as binding. Indeed, once an agreement has been reached, they may very well renege on it later if they think they can benefit more from eating hostages, resuming raids or other activities. It should be noted that this belief in the continued survival of the clan applies exclusively to the clan and does not extend to members of other tribes or the race as a whole. This often leads tribes into conflict with one another and tribes will band together only if each one thinks it can gain from doing so.

Often perceived as slow witted, lizardfolk certainly seem to consider their every action carefully, apparently investing a great deal of thought into each and every step. This is not to say that they do not or cannot act instinctively or on an impulse, rather that they more often choose not to do so. Once a path is chosen a lizardman will follow it with great determination and is not easily dissuaded. In this respect they are often said to be stubborn but this is not so. Lizardfolk will not continue with a course of action if doing so becomes impractical or dangerous.

Lizardfolk society seemingly alternates between impressive feats of co-operation and internal upheaval and strife. At first these two states may seem incompatible and counterproductive but periodic strife is an important aspect of lizardfolk survival. Stagnation and complacency on the part of the tribal leaders is never a good thing and having to fight to retain one's position in the hierarchy ensures only the most determined and capable are entrusted with the survival of the clan.

Strength and wisdom are considered the most desirable virtues amongst lizardfolk; selfishness and cunning the least desirable. The ability to undermine another's position with words and intrigue or to manoeuvre oneself into a better position to the detriment of others is not viewed as at all useful to the rest of the tribe; being able to fight off aggressors or guide one's companions through a harsh existence in the wilderness are understandably considered much more valuable.

Many amongst the civilised races consider lizardfolk to be little more than bloodthirsty barbarians who raid, pillage and kill – beasts, in short. Most lizardfolk are certainly primitive by a civilised culture's standards but they are more than capable of dealing on an equal level with outsiders if and when they choose to do so. They are by no means mindless animals.

What can make lizardfolk seem barbaric and animalistic is that whenever they choose to deal with outsiders, they enter each meeting anew, considering their circumstances and needs afresh each time, without regard for any precedents. A clan may have dealt peacefully with a trader twice before but this is no guarantee that they will do so in the same way a third time. If the lizardfolk decide they have no further need for trade or a greater need for food, then they may well decide to eat the trader instead, paying little heed to the possibility that they will need his services again in the future. Conversely, the fact that a clan has always attacked travellers passing through its territory does not mean that they will be unwilling to bargain with them instead, if the travellers have something they want but cannot take easily with force (professional services, a supply of woodwork or the ability to deliver a message, for example).

Lizardfolk consider there to be nothing wrong with this inconsistent attitude or approach to dealings. To others, this is what makes them unpredictable and dangerous. If you do not intend to fight them, make sure you are obviously more useful to them alive than eaten.

Habitat

Lizardfolk typically live in wetland areas such as swamps, marshes or riverbanks in the warmer areas of the world. Lizardfolk territory often includes features such as large flat rocks, dried clay shelves and stretches of sand that soak up the sun's heat, as well as sources of fresh water. Here lizardfolk can be found sunning themselves in the morning or cooling down in the middle of the day.

Since they can subsist on considerably less food than an equivalent sized warm-blooded creature, this permits a given area to be able to support more lizardfolk than other creatures and that they will often outnumber other races in the locale. Finding difficulties in tolerating extremes of temperature greatly restricts the areas in which lizardfolk can comfortably live, limiting their potential threat from over breeding.

Within their swamp homes lizardfolk prefer to keep to themselves, only raiding nearby settlements for meat from time-to-time. Although more than capable of defending themselves from aggressors, lizardfolk are not inclined to throw their lives away except in the most desperate of circumstances. Thus in the face of determined invaders, lizardfolk prefer to slink away deeper into the swamp until the threat has passed.

A significant number of lizardfolk live below ground in cavern complexes. Lizardfolk like to be near plentiful sources of fresh water and many of the caves will be water filled. Such habitats need to be chosen with care, for deep underground the temperature

is unlikely to change over the course of the day. The ambient temperature must be warm enough the whole year round. If the complex is not at a perfect temperature, then the lizardfolk will often settle near volcanic vents to warm themselves, or icy streams to cool down in.

Nests

Amongst the lizardfolk, all but the most primitive tribes construct settlements known as nests. Nests typically consist of a grouping of simple mud domes partly sunk into the ground. Such structures accommodate a household of lizardfolk known as a clutch – usually between five and 10 members strong – but are only used for sleeping in, or for shelter from the worst extremes of temperature. The thick walls of these mud huts absorb the heat from the sun throughout the day, slowly releasing it overnight and keeping the lizardfolk from getting too cold. During the day, the huts' interiors remain shaded and cool, providing respite from the heat at the height of summer.

At the very heart of the nest is a much lower-roofed dome, carefully guarded. This is where the female lizardfolk come to lay their eggs and where they remain until hatching under the watchful gaze of the adults.

Lizardfolk settlements are almost always situated near water, ideally in the middle of a marsh and surrounded by bogs and pools. This provides not only fresh water, fish and a place to cool down but also a natural means of defence. Lizardfolk sentries take it in turns to hide for long periods in the water, submerged but for their eyes and nostrils, to watch for intruders. Those who can remain still for long stretches of time are well respected amongst the lizardfolk, the most proficient joining the ranks of the Stillguard, who are capable of sitting in ambush for days at a time.

The outermost limits of the nest will often be marked by piles or ritual displays of bones – those of the lizardfolk's own dead and those of their prey. Subterranean lizardfolk also build nests but have little need for the shelter afforded by domes. Bone totems will mark the limits of the tribe's territory but the nest itself will be largely devoid of structures. Instead the lizardfolk will make use of natural features such as outcroppings, rock pools and hollows for their needs. The only structure will be a shelter for the safekeeping of eggs. This shelter will usually be constructed from mud or hollowed out from warm areas of cavern rock.

Lizardfolk Society

The clan is the focal point of lizardfolk society, the driving force behind and linchpin of its very existence. To lizardfolk the continued survival of the clan is their primary concern – lizardfolk are born and die, years pass but the clan must go on, no matter what. This communal survival instinct is capable of driving the lizardfolk to extraordinary lengths, unthinkable to other species – migrating across continents in pursuit of better lands, engaging in brutal acts of genocide against other neighbouring humanoids and making pacts with more powerful creatures such as dragons to act as their patrons.

The sanctity and importance of the clan is not something that a lizardman needs to be taught – it is an instinctive knowledge that every hatchling simply knows from the moment they crack open their shell.

Upon reaching adolescence, lizardfolk are expected to devote themselves entirely to the clan. They hunt for food on its behalf, take their turn guarding or teaching its young and defend it when necessary. A lizardman is usually more than willing to lay down his own life for the clan.

A clan comprises between 50 and 100 lizardfolk, about half of whom will be hatchlings. Each is typically centred upon a single settlement or closely situated group of settlements known collectively as a nest. The territory of a clan extends for many kilometres beyond its nest and encompasses the tribe's traditional hunting grounds. Any other creatures found within its territory are considered fair game.

Within a clan, lizardfolk group into rough family units about 10 strong known as clutches. A clutch is made up of lizardfolk laid by the same mother and may include lizardmen from several different fathers. Lizardfolk from the same clutch often fight and hunt together, acting as a close-knit warrior band. The members of a clutch usually live closely together, often sharing a dome. These clutches are the ties that bind a clan together in adversity, strengthening the already strong feelings of loyalty the lizardmen feel for one another. In the mind of a lizardman there is no separation between his clutch and his clan – they are one and the same. It is rare that a lizardman should have to choose between them, although clans have been known to break apart when several strong leaders clash.

Clan life is strictly patriarchal. Men are the warriors and the leaders, whereas women are the child bearers. The division between the sexes is not completely rigid – whilst women are not forbidden from partaking in male activities such as hunting or fighting, they are certainly not encouraged to do so. Their place is in the nest, not beyond it. Male and female lizardfolk are not kept apart until they reach adolescence; until then both sexes are taught and raised together. It is the duty of both the men and women of the clan to teach the young their skills. Female lizardfolk remain within the nest, venturing out to forage but not to hunt.

Females build and repair the huts in the nest and craft the simple tools, but not the weapons, needed by the clan. Male clutchlings are taken under the tutelage of an adult upon reaching adolescence and are taught the skills of surviving in the wild, of hunting and fighting. At this time lizardfolk who show a particular affinity with spirits and nature may be taken by the clan druids to be apprentices. At the same time the shamans of the clan may take one or two of the young to be trained as acolytes under him. Lizardfolk druids are almost always male; shamans can be of either sex.

Strength is the most prized characteristic amongst lizardfolk and it is the attribute by which the hierarchy of the clan is determined and with which internal disputes are settled. No lizardman has a

birthright to rule and any may challenge him for the leadership of the clan at any time. Challenges for power are a common occurrence, although the clan well recognises the strength of their leader and only the especially confident or brave will take him on. Power struggles are resolved in one of three ways and are always a matter between the challenger and the challenged only – there is no room for allies.

The first way is a simple face-off in which the lizardfolk circle each other, bearing their teeth, flashing their claws and thumping their tails on the ground. The lizardman who backs down first loses. This method is used for disputes where a point must be made but both sides know the relative strength of the other and one combatant is aware that he cannot beat the other. Such contests are only utilised to demonstrate the concern of an underling that the plans or thoughts of his superior may be dangerously flawed.

The second way of resolving conflict is the hammuka or ritual wrestle. Wrestling is as much about skill as it is about raw strength and is a very old lizardman tradition. Combatants fight in a circle drawn in the dirt three tail lengths wide. In especially well-rooted lizardfolk clans or those with a degree of civilisation, the ring may be a permanent fixture of the nest, marked out with large stones or dug into the earth. The first contestant to fall to the ground or be pushed out of the ring is the loser. Such wrestling matches are usually very quick and frequent victory is a source of great pride. Some fights last for multiple rounds, others just for the one. These matches are used to claim rights or ownerships within the clan, especially those concerning reproduction with females.

The third method of settling disputes is the most primal and the most brutal – a deadly fight to the finish using only the natural weapons and abilities of the lizardfolk. Considering what they have at their disposal, such fights are often fatal. The victor is the lizardman still standing at the end. Such combats are usually to unconsciousness or until one protagonist concedes. Lizardfolk are not renowned for pulling punches and most matches end bloodily.

The victor of a lethal challenge, if he was the challenger, exchanges his position in the hierarchy with the loser; whereas if the victor was the defender he maintains his position. In the aftermath of a successful challenge there will be many counter challenges to redress the ranks and attempt to topple the challenger from his new position. There is no limit to the number of challenges that can be issued or the number of times a lizardfolk can be challenged.

Although this could theoretically lead to constant scrapping for power and position, most lizardfolk are well aware of their relative positions and the strength of those above and below them in the pecking order. Unless they perceive a weakness or an opportunity, lizardfolk are generally content to remain where they are. Instead struggles are restricted to a flurry of activity one or two times a year when a challenge is issued and the other members of the clan respond by taking advantage of any gaps and weakness that appear in the hierarchy as a result of power shifts.

Ritual Challenges

The mechanics for determining the results of lizardfolk ritual challenges are relatively simple.

Face-offs are settled by an opposed test of the two participants' Influence skills as they seek to intimidate one another. The winner forces the loser to concede whatever point they were disagreeing over, potentially forcing them to change their attitude or recount an order. However, to reflect the importance of status within lizardman society, if both participants achieve the same level of success, the lizardman with the higher status wins rather than whoever gained the higher roll on the dice.

Hammuka are settled by opposed rolls of the Unarmed skill. If both achieve the same level of success, then they remain entangled in each other's clasp. The contest continues until one participant both succeeds and gains a level of success over his opponent, at which point he throws his foe out of the circle. The loser forfeits whatever the two were arguing over, perhaps the right to lead a foraging party, or the chance to mate with a particular female.

Lethal challenges are run as full combats. Whether a participant survives the challenge is dependent on the damage received during the fight. The winner, if of lower status, exchanges his rank with that of the loser.



Despite the emphasis on strength, the leaders of the clans are usually those supported by the druid-priests, who select those of perceptive intellect or easily pliable leaders if the druids wish to control the clan from behind the throne. In contests, the use of alien magic is forbidden along with any non-natural weapons. Only natural abilities are permitted, which in lizardfolk tradition includes the supernatural abilities of a druid. Of course, in times long since past there is no doubt that it was the druid-priests who established such traditions to allow them to maintain their grip on the reins of power.

In fact there is nothing that prevents a druid from entering a leadership challenge themselves. Druid-priests are thus more than capable of holding their own in such fights, calling upon the gifts of their totemic gods to assume the jaws of a giant crocodile or the strength of some other great beast. Whilst most other societies would consider this to be unfair or cheating in some manner, lizardfolk consider it perfectly sporting. However unless blessed with overwhelming powers, most druids avoid the prospects offered as leader, recognising the risks involved in fending off regular challenges.

Relations with Other Creatures

Lizardfolk are inherently distrustful and wary of creatures not of their clan, including other lizardfolk. This is not to say that they will not have dealings with other creatures, merely that they will only do so if they stand to gain something from the encounter. In lands close to civilisation lizardfolk may deal with humans on a semi-regular basis. Unless dissuaded by some means more primitive clans will often view roads as a source of meat and will periodically ambush unwary travellers.

However, barbarian culture lizardfolk are much more sophisticated, aware of the opportunities offered by negotiating with adjacent settlements but such a relationship is rarely stable. Sometimes they make alliances with more civilised neighbours, perhaps promising to guard roads or borders that lie in swampland in return for regular deliveries of food or goods or protection against a greater threat. Pacts are also made with other swamp dwelling creatures, even non-sapient ones, offering fresh meat in exchange for leaving them alone.

Lizardfolk are no more or less likely to make alliances with other clans of lizardfolk than with other creatures. The Kingdom of Torres is only loosely bound together under the grudging cooperation of the druid-priests. If some danger threatens several clans in an area, then they will almost certainly form a temporary alliance until the danger has been averted. Often clans are more wary of one another than they are of other creatures, simply because they are often in direct competition for the same resources and where their survival is concerned there can be no compromises. Only the King of Torres can unify the clans but even his authority is temporary, limited to a brief crusade against another nation before mutual distrust will turn the army into a discordant rabble.

It is not unheard of for clans to take other creatures captives, if they provide some potential in trade or negotiation. Lizardfolk have little need for slaves themselves, for they are not trusted enough to tend the tribe's eggs or young, nor capable enough at hunting or foraging for food in marshy swamps. Thus they are only ever used *as* food, or where possible, as hostages to be exchanged for more useful goods.

Lizardfolk do not like to be beholden to others, for it places an unnecessary risk on the clan – after all, another creature is unlikely to care for the long-term survival and propagation of the clan to the extent that the lizardfolk do. However, lizardfolk are not averse to making deals and alliances with other species or creatures, particularly those more powerful than the clan could hope to overcome, such as dragons or naga. The presence of additional powerful enemies makes alliances of this kind even more appealing.

In return for the creature protecting the clan, the lizardfolk agree to serve the monster as warriors or servants. As mentioned previously, lizardfolk rarely consider such deals to be binding and are not averse to betraying them at a later date if it proves to be to their benefit. Of course, the same can be said of the monsters the lizardfolk serve,

which in most cases will readily sacrifice the lives of the clan in exchange for their own survival. Perhaps this mutual distrust is actually an advantage for both sides, as both must be constantly vigilant and may be too busy watching to betray one another.

A clan that has remained in the service of a powerful creature for a generation or more will inevitably have had its mindset warped and corrupted over time to accommodate that of their master. They may regard the creature as a part of their clan or go so far as to consider the creature to *be* the clan, its survival more important than their own. If a wily master can encourage this outlook, lizardfolk can make exceptionally faithful servants with the kind of loyalty that cannot be bought.

Druid-priests and Shamans

As a result of the significance of their balanced relationship with nature, those who deal with it directly typically occupy positions of importance and respect. If a clan fails to placate nature properly it can have disastrous consequences for all. Likewise, if a clan fails to treat a druid or shamans with proper respect, woe will inevitably befall them.

Lizardfolk druids intercede with the nature gods directly, using their position as priests to ensure the survival of the clan. He must constantly watch the tribe's leaders and make sure they are acting in the interests of the greater good, putting the needs of the clan above their own. Should the leader appear to be faltering, acting selfishly and endangering the future of the clan, then it is the duty of the shamans to step in and put him back on the right path. This is of course a dangerous move and many leaders resist forcibly.

Nevertheless, lizardfolk society does still have a place for shamans. Whereas druid-priests are social guardians and guides, shamans often lead lives apart from the clans, wandering the swamps in search for great spirits. At best mystics, at worst psychotic outcasts, they watch their clansmen's activity from outside of society.

The principle purpose of a shamans is to ensure the spirits of the marshes and swamps are properly propitiated, preventing evils from awakening or natural disasters from occurring. In their own, half-mad way, the meandering shamans are more powerful than the druid-priests, yet use their powers to suppress the dangers of the otherworld instead of using them to seek personal gratification and authority.

To protect themselves many shamans bind their spirits into creatures rather than fetishes, creating menageries of loyal creatures, such as snakes, crocodiles and even dinosaurs, which accompany them on their quests.

Religion

Lizardfolk take a fairly relaxed view of religion, often encouraged to do so by their druid leaders. Revering their balance and co-existence with nature is key to the survival of their clan. Guided

by the teachings of their druids, lizardfolk often worship nature as a whole, rather than specific divine manifestations of it. Lizardfolk pay tribute to the passing seasons, offer sacrifices in return for bountiful hunting and beseech nature for long summers and mild winters. Druids bless the clan warriors on ceremonial hunts at significant points of the year and join them in war.

Nonetheless, lizardfolk do have a pantheon of gods, totemic beings which reflect aspects of particular creatures or plants. Limiting worship to a single deity is unheard of, the druids and their acolytes being free to draw down the powers of any god within their religion. However, some clans do favour a particular force of nature over others, adopting them as a particular totemic patron. Especially pious members of the clan gain no direct powers or blessings for their devotion, save those which the priests grant them. Only lizardfolk who train to become druids are ever granted access to the divine gifts they can call upon.

Language

Lizardfolk speak their own reptilian tongue, although to the more educated people of the world who learn it find it is a primitive dialect but intelligible nonetheless. A major part of the communication is the extensive use of body language to add meaning and nuances to verbal speech. Of primary use in this body language is the posture and movement of the tail, a fact that can make accurate communication with lizardfolk all the more difficult.

To those speakers of the reptilian tongue unfamiliar with the particulars of lizardfolk body language, an Insight Skill Test is appropriate to decipher any hidden meanings. A sample of common meanings of body language is provided here:

- ☉ Head thrown back and neck exposed – sign of subservience.
- ☉ Both hands behind the back – shows the lizardman means no harm as his claws are not bared.
- ☉ Tail coiled behind the lizardman – shows the lizardman either expects to be attacked or is about to pounce.
- ☉ Tail laid to the side – shows that the lizardman feels safe from attack, either as a sign of superiority and confidence or an expression of trust and security.

Methods of Warfare

Lizardfolk are a race who rarely make war just for the sake of it. They take up arms and fight only when the clan demands it; to raid nearby settlements for food supplies and materials or to defend their nest from intruders. As in many other aspects of their life, lizardfolk are something of a contradiction when it comes to combat – they engage in combat only when necessary and yet they excel at it.

This contradiction is carried over into their methods of warfare. Lizardfolk are exceptionally patient, experts at preparing ambushes and setting traps but also ferocious and savage, falling upon their opponents like beasts, tearing, clawing and biting with abandon.

In melee, lizardfolk have a distinct advantage over most of their foes; their tenacity and the fanatic determination that their clan survive at any cost. Lizardfolk fight with a grim and savage purpose and because of their dedication to their tribe's survival, they are not afraid of dying if it serves that purpose. If pushed into a corner, lizardfolk are capable of throwing themselves in suicidal waves at their enemy, in an effort to buy the rest of the clan time to escape. Still, lizardfolk are not prepared to throw their lives away needlessly. If the clan is not in danger and their lives are threatened, they are more than willing to withdraw, using their superior local knowledge to make good their own retreat.

Ambush

When fighting in their own territory – boggy marsh, swamp and riverside jungle – lizardfolk are adversaries to be feared. They prefer to ambush their opponents, making use of local knowledge and wilderness skills to set traps and lie in wait. Their favoured tactic is to lie concealed in marsh water next to the path of their targets, submerged and hidden except for the tops of their heads. As an opponent passes their hiding place, warriors attack with javelins and spears, before leaping upon the victims and striking with their claws and teeth. They will often attempt to grapple an opponent and drag him underwater, where the greater lung capacity of the lizardfolk allows them to remain until their prey has drowned.

The Stillguard of the lizardfolk are masters of ambush and the very best can remain hidden for a week, allowing nature time to remove any traces of their presence and only emerging from their hiding places once the prey has fully entered their trap. They use cunning tactics, often making use of less-skilled warriors, who leap out and pin their enemies down in melee whilst the Stillguard assault them from behind, emerging from cover considered impossible for anything to hide in. Lizardfolk scattered in the undergrowth ahead and behind their prey attack any stragglers or routers. A lizardfolk band given time to properly prepare for an ambush is formidable indeed.

The Stillguard

To qualify to become a member of the elite Stillguard, the applicant must possess at least 90% in the skills of Persistence, Stealth and Mechanisms. In addition, the aspirant must also lead a successful ambush on a party of sapient creatures, using his skills to organise the positions of his clutchmates and set the traps himself.

If the lizardman passes the test, he is regarded as a prime candidate for leading raids and organising nest defences, gaining a commiserate boost of status within the clan.



Raiding and Hunting

Lizardfolk do not always fight on the defensive but even when attacking, they are loathe to engage an enemy on anything approaching equal terms and will avoid open battle whenever possible, preferring to use missile weapons or terrain to the best advantage.

In lands near other civilised creatures, the clan will often dispatch warriors to make raids for food supplies. Such raids are carefully orchestrated affairs but not to the same extent as ambushes. Since they take place outside of lizardfolk territory and lizardfolk are active only during the daytime, they rarely use of the cover of darkness to approach. Typical objectives of a raid are to steal away guarded cattle, vegetable supplies or humans for food. Grains are generally left alone since lizardmen do not use fire for cooking. The same tactics and methods for raiding apply equally to more esoteric objectives, such as recovering stolen eggs or captive lizardfolk.

A lizardfolk raiding party will usually comprise of between six and 10 lizardfolk, several of whom will be experienced trackers or scouts aware of the region they are entering. The stealthiest will sneak up to and survey the target, watching for several hours before reporting back so that the leader can formulate a plan.

The warriors will then attempt to sneak up on any outlying sentries or peasants, making use of vegetation and other natural features to conceal their approach. Once outlying targets have been taken out or distracted, the war band approaches the main target in small groups of two or three, attempting to avoid the notice of any guards and pass over or around defences. Lizardfolk are strong jumpers and are capable of leaping over fences and ditches and up onto walls, using their tails for balance when they land.

If they meet armed resistance the raiders will attempt to make use of their superior fighting abilities to take out lone guards. If this is not done quickly enough to prevent a hue and cry from arising, the lizardfolk will normally flee to try again some other day. Whilst lizardfolk have no compunctions against bloodshed, the druid-priests are conscientious that unnecessary killing usually brings reprisals. Those druids that accompany raids will exert their influence to ensure raids involve the minimum of violence, whilst also making use of their powers to identify spellcasters and to thwart an enemy's defences with their own spells.

An ideal raid will not alert the enemy to the lizardfolk's presence until the raiders are already making their escape. The lizardfolk will utilise stealth for as long as possible but when it seems their cover is blown they will attack with relish.

In addition to raiding, lizardfolk delight in the opportunity to hunt. As opposed to raids, which are attacks conducted away from the lizardfolk's favoured environment, hunts are attacks conducted well within their own familiar lands. Lizardfolk prefer to set ambushes for their prey but when this is not possible they will actively pursue and attack their opponents.

They will attempt to close with their prey as quickly and as quietly as possible, choosing the location where they attack carefully so as to limit their opponents' manoeuvrability and escape routes.

Areas close to water are especially favoured. When the lizardfolk have chosen the point of engagement, they attack from all around, unlimited by barriers such as water, first hurling javelins at their prey and then closing in to fight in melee with claws and hand weapons. Protracted combat does not appeal to lizardfolk and they try to make each engagement end as quickly as possible.

Although a typical hunt targets large animals for food, small lizards, birds and swamp rodents are the usual fare. It may also target unwitting, intelligent creatures, such as parties of adventurers who have wandered into their land. Lizardfolk also hunt colossal beasts from time-to-time, such as hydras or dinosaurs, but more out of necessity rather than for food. Such hunts are carried out much as described; although the lizardfolk warriors engage with greater caution, often using weapons with reach (especially the long spear) so as to keep such creatures at a distance.

Weapons and Armour

Lizardfolk are a race never caught unarmed, for nature has blessed them with dangerous natural weapons – sharp claws on their hands and feet and a strong maw filled with inch-long fangs. Lizardfolk prefer to use their natural attributes in melee and most learn to attack with any part of their body, including the tail. Rumours persist of rare lizardfolk who mount weapons on their tail, usually a blade or bludgeon of some sort to augment its damage.

Despite their natural weapons, lizardfolk do make use of others, preferring light weapons that are wieldable in one hand – stone axes and wooden clubs embedded with teeth are particular favourites. When launching an ambush, lizardfolk make extensive use of small, crudely fashioned javelins, enabling them to strike whilst remaining entrenched in cover. Lizardfolk weapons are not especially sophisticated, as they are mainly crafted from sharpened stone – typically flint, or obsidian where available – and wood. Encouraged by their druid-priests, lizardfolk eschew the use of metal weapons and armour which generally rust and corrode in the damp environment of their homes.

Because their hides grant a degree of protection and metal is difficult for them to craft, let alone preserve, lizardfolk disdain the use of all but the most natural of armours, often formed from wood or leather, even the hides of other lizardfolk.

The use of shields is a different matter entirely and warriors often wield large shields along with their natural weapons or single-handed melee weapons. Such shields are made from toughened leather or hide stretched over a wicker frame, or part of the shell or carapace of some swamp dwelling beast. Whenever possible, lizardfolk shields are adorned with spikes to enable them to be used as weapons if needed – lizardmen are used to having a weapon at the end of every limb and do not like to lose this flexibility when using a shield.

Almost all lizardman armaments are hand crafted by themselves, so such items have no cost, only the requirement of finding the raw materials that are used to construct them.

Body Armour

Armour	AP	ENC	Locations
Lizardman Hide	1	0	Abdomen, Arms, Chest, Legs
Woven Bones	2	1	Abdomen, Arms, Chest, Legs
Carved Wood Slats	3	3	Abdomen, Arms, Chest, Legs
Chest Stones	6	8	Abdomen, Chest
Dinosaur Skin	Special ¹	Special ²	Abdomen, Arms, Chest, Legs

¹The skin of a flayed dinosaur is worth half the original AP of the beast.

²The bulky leather of dinosaur skin has an encumbrance value equal to its AP value.

Helmets

Armour	AP	ENC	Locations
Wickerwork Helm	2	1	Head
Crocodile Skull	3	2	Head
Dinosaur Skull	Special ¹	Special ²	Head

¹The skull of a dinosaur is worth half the original AP of its head location.

²The bulky bone of a dinosaur skull has an encumbrance value equal to its AP value.

Close Combat Weapons

Weapon	Handedness	Damage Dice	STR/DEX	Size	Reach	Combat Manoeuvres	ENC	AP/HP
Axe, stone	Single	1D6+1	13/11	M	M	Bleed, Stun Location	2	6/6
Club, spiked	Single	1D6+1	9/7	M	M	Impale, Stun Location	2	4/3
Two Handed Spiked Club	Double	1D12+1	15/11	H	L	Impale, Stun Location, Sunder	3	4/8
Longspear ¹	Double	1D10+1	5/5	L	VL	Impale	2	4/10
Sword	Single	1D8	9/7	M	M	Bleed	2	6/10
Spiked Shield ²	Single	1D6	9/7	M	S	Impale	2	4/10

¹This weapon may be set against a charge.

²This weapon may Parry ranged weapons.

Ranged Weapons

Weapon	Handedness	Damage	Damage Modifier	Range	Load	STR/DEX	SIZ	Combat Manoeuvres	ENC	AP/HP
Blowgun	Double	—	N	10m	1	-/9	S	—	1	1/4
Javelin	Single	1D6	Y	10m	—	7/9	L	Impale, Pin Weapon (Shield)	1	3/6
Thrown Stone	Single	1	Y	20m	—	5/5	S	Stun Location	—	10/3

SCORPIONMEN

The Akrabhi are the arthropod folk who live in the deserts and wastes of the east, away from other species who often regard them with phobic horror. Somehow descended or related to arachnids, the more frightening many legged races of this species are fortunately unknown in Rardarri. Roughly humanoid in form and capable of communicating with speech, only the scorpionmen inhabit the continent, possessing an often savage nomadic culture that has spread across the Wildlands.

Physiology

Of the many intelligent races that walk, swim, crawl or fly on any world the scorpionfolk are exceedingly unusual in appearance, for they are a blend of two different creatures. The folk, for that is how they name themselves, are a mix of humanoids and gigantic scorpions having a bipedal form, inhuman toughness, external chitin and a venomous sting.

This unusual and unnatural melding means the folk are shunned by most intelligent races that fear their alien physiology. Most

believe the tales of humanoid scorpions to be just that; tales, suitable to frighten children, that the folk are nothing more than humanoid raiders who have tamed huge scorpions for steeds. A misunderstanding fostered by the fact that where you find scorpions you can find the folk: the truly desolate places, the true wildernesses, deserts and isolated wastelands of the world.

The skin of a scorpionman is a layer of chitin, which not only provides a measure of armour but also stops their bodies from losing water and allows them to inhabit places most creatures find too extreme. The chitin segments are largest on their torso and back, forming large armoured plates, and smallest on their faces and joints. The chest and abdomen appears normal from a distance but on closer examination what looks like muscle definition from a distance is actually chitin plates. Male and female physiques are impossible to tell apart for the most part; there are no breasts on female folk although females are generally larger and heavier than their male counterparts. The skin is tough yet flexible, having a colour reminiscent of their surroundings.

Rocky defile dwelling scorpionfolk skin tends to be dull grey whereas that of desert dwelling folk tends to vary from yellowish to orange-brown colouration. Some rare subterranean folk are said to have midnight black skin, although this is only a rumour as these creatures are very difficult to find, even for one who knows the ways of the folk.

Of all their inhuman physiology it is their faces and eyes that cause the observer most difficulty. The plates that cover their body also cover their faces, limiting their scope of expressions. This makes it particularly difficult to understand their motives or emotions. Their eyes are also inhuman being solid black or deepest brown. There is no perceptible iris or pupil and they do not blink, so when looking at their faces it is very difficult to see what they are looking at.

Hair is present in both sexes although it has to be said that it is only a simulacrum of hair. The hair is made up of the same material as their scales, with tube like strands ending in a point which bunch together naturally to form dreadlocks. Hair length and its decoration is a matter of status with the scorpionfolk. If a single scorpionman is encountered with short hair then they are renegades. The pseudo hair grows at the same rate as the folk themselves, not constantly but in bursts. Consequently, once cut, the hair never reaches the height of an uncensored adult. Scorpionfolk with shorn hair remain of low status for the rest of their lives, even if they gain the right to remain in the tribe.

Growth amongst the scorpionfolk is a peculiar thing, unlike that of vertebrates. They grow in spurts, the chitin armour once set is relatively stiff making it impossible for the soft tissue inside to expand beyond the limit set by the armour. Consequently, in order for them to grow they must shed their skin, like a snake. This occurs approximately once a year for well-fed scorpionfolk and takes about an hour. Once the outer chitin is shed, the new flesh underneath is soft, which allows a burst of growth. The new chitin armour takes a number of hours to harden dependant on

conditions, in the hot desert it can take a few hours but in more temperate regions it can take several days.

An adult member of a successful tribe can expect to reach adult size and be ready to mate in 10 years. Females grow to around 1.8 metres tall; males are a little smaller and lighter. Tails grow to about 1.5 metres in length, allowing them to strike over the head or around the side of the scorpionman. Once full growth is reached they moult at an increasingly slower rate but each time they do, they put on a little more bulk and grow spines or growths from between their chitinous plates. Other than making them look more formidable the changes have no significant effect.

Scorpionmen within tribes live for between 30 and 40 years. Unusual examples can live up to 50 or 60 but at 40 they are past their prime and have stopped moulting and growing.

Once members of the tribe are past their prime they are likely to have their positions usurped by younger, fitter adults. If they are not killed when they lose their position they are exiled from the tribe. Exiles are fair game for any scorpionfolk that come across them, so only an exceptional individual survives. Old folk are very unusual; they normally just fade away as their physical prowess declines.

Diet

Scorpionman physiology requires that they eat live prey, hunting and paralysing their food. They consume the whole of their catch and as such do not need to hunt often but their scarcity of large prey requires they continuously hunt. An antelope or similar small grazing animal will sustain an adult for a several weeks as it is slowly broken down and liquefied by the venom of their sting.

Alternatively a humanoid will provide a similar amount of nourishment, for they have no problem eating anything that walks, crawls, swims or flies. They do not brew beer or drink wine and they rarely need to drink water – the majority of moisture they need comes from their prey. This makes them poor hosts for dinner and even worse guests.

Once a prey animal has been immobilised or incapacitated it is returned to the camp where the individual capturing the food eats it. It is important to note that scorpionfolk do not share their food and higher-ranking adults can take food from younger adults. In times of scarce food only the highest-ranking adults eat and the lower ranking adults are expected to make do. It is not uncommon during a time of extreme hardship for the tribe to shrink down to just the highest ranking members with the lower ranks being consumed by their tribe mates.

Scorpionman Mentality

It is difficult for most humanoids to understand and relate to any truly alien race and the scorpionfolk are as inhuman as they come. Once they may have been like men but now they are completely different. Even reptilians can be related to humanoids; after all mammals and reptiles have a similar ancestor somewhere in their family trees.

How the Folk Came to Be

The scorpionfolk were almost certainly created as a result of magical interference but what form the magic took and who performed it is open to speculation.

According to some scholars the deserts and dusty savannas of the Wildlands came into being as a result of a conflict between sorcerers and the gods, both of whom took the creatures of the world and breathed life and intelligence into them. The destructive conflict of these armies was wide ranging, overturning civilisation and leaving the once great cities shattered wrecks. When the conflict drew to a close the losing side had the last laugh, turning the verdant green kingdom into a barren wilderness.

In an act of mercy, the one remaining power blessed the survivors with a gift of transmutation, allowing them to live in the arid wastelands. Identified from ancient carvings, his teachings and veneration have passed down in the oral tales of the folk but whether he was originally a sorcerer or a deity nobody still knows.

Their metamorphosis was so complete and all encompassing that the very thought processes and attitudes of the new race slowly changed, becoming as inhuman as their patron. The things that had previously driven them now held no interest, their goods and treasures were useless to them, clothing, foodstuffs, even jewellery just did not suit them anymore.

The scorpionfolk were at first greatly unhappy with the transformation but as time passed and they survived in the Wildlands where others did not, they grew to realise their blessing. Taking to wandering the broken lands that made up their former domain, the folk gradually lost their arrogant competitiveness and developed a completely new culture. It is certain that there are no voices of descent amongst the scorpionmen today.



Scorpionfolk revere arachnids and scorpions most of all. Their actions often reflect those of their more primitive cousins. Short tempered and exceedingly violent in their response to the unexpected, they instinctively strike first and worry about the consequences after. This is the most important thing to remember about the scorpionfolk, surprise them and they will attack immediately.

However, the folk are not mindless slaves to a behaviour pattern based on a stylised caricature of the scorpion. Like many creatures there are two imperatives that drive scorpionmen: survival and reproduction.

Since their nomadic lifestyle is based upon the continual search for sustenance, they are aggressive protectors of their territories; killing or driving off any interlopers or other tribes of scorpionfolk who infringe their boundaries. They defend their lands antagonistically, seeking out any intruder and punishing them mercilessly.

As a people, one of the best ways to understand the folk is to realise that they are intrinsically apathetic, at least during the day when all creatures take shelter from the heat. When not hunting or travelling the thing they like best is to meditate on the nature of the cosmos or give faithful worship to their deity.

Each member of a tribe has to earn the right to live and the young must spend much of their early lives fighting among themselves trying to survive, there are always more hatchlings than food available to feed them, so any who stay alive to moult five times (approximately five years) are considered worthy enough not to be treated as food and permitted to erect a tent in the camp.

After this point they will struggle to improve their social position. Males expend great effort trying to gain the right to mate with a fertile female and, if they survive, breed again. The females spend their time trying to overthrow and replace the position of alpha female in order to become fertile.

Scorpionfolk acquire a few belongings during their life but their prize possessions are giant scorpions. These are both guards and beasts of burden, trained from an early age to follow simple commands. The scorpions provide an essential component in folk society, not just as mounts but also as totem creatures and symbols of authority. The larger the stable of scorpions a member of the folk has the higher their ranking.

Scorpionfolk Society

Scorpionmen communities are generally matriarchal, centred around the largest and oldest female of the group, although this is not exclusively the case. The size and opulence of a scorpionfolk's tent is a good indication of status; even renegade folk living in civilisations other than their own have, as their inner sanctum, a tent filled with cushions and tapestries, where they retire during the middle of the day and the cool of night.

The minds of the folk are not like those of the mammalian or reptilian races. There is no such thing as love or compassion, not because they deny themselves these emotions but because they genuinely do not feel them. They only respond to might, fear for their tribe or of losing status within the tribe, because nothing else matters.

One of the few things not lost in their transformation was the need or ability to create things with their own hands. Scorpionfolk often craft weapons, armour and textiles. Instead of raising livestock from which to take wool, male scorpionmen can produce their own coarse silk from their lower abdomen, which was originally used to spin a nest as part of the mating ritual. This silk is only produced when a male reaches reproductive age and only then if he is well fed. Males use it to weaving their tents and embroider the tapestries which decorate them.

Scorpionfolk society is based on the theory that if you can take something and hold onto it then you have the right to do so. As a consequence they do not consider it stealing or murder to kill and eat travellers and take their goods. If the travellers were worthy they would have arranged better protection for themselves. Individual status within each tribe is based on this same principle, 'might is right'. Each member of the folk has to prove their might in order to earn the right to do things within the tribe, from gaining the right to have a tent to earning the right to mate. Throughout their lives scorpionfolk are continually trying to prove themselves worthy of their status by undertaking trials of one kind or another. These trials often involve following the orders of their elders and betters, as well as more formal age and position related trials.

Habitat

The scorpionfolk form small, close-knit communities, the largest being 50 adults, double the number of young and upwards of 50 giant scorpions. Being nomadic they need little in terms of property carrying what they need on the backs of their animals between temporary camps. Needing little food and being unable to save or preserve any excess, they carry few supplies of this nature. What they do carry are their treasures, their weapons and the comforts of their tents.

The places where the scorpionfolk live are generally barren lands and desert areas. While they do not like direct sunlight, they seem to have a high tolerance for heat but very low temperatures make them sluggish (see Cold-blooded Trait on page 45). During the day the folk mostly remain in their tents or in underground burrows, coming out in early evening to hunt.

Because of the difficulties of mating and that only the alpha female is ever fertile; offspring are irregularly produced in batches depending on the virility of the male who last copulated with her. Since scorpionmen are semi cannibalistic many young are eaten if they range too far away from their mother. Consequently scorpionfolk do not usually overpopulate their environment and feel little need for conquest over other lands.

Reproduction

To better understand scorpionfolk a good place to start is to look at their mating habits and how they handle their young. By looking at these issues it is possible to gain an insight into the way they think through the way they treat one another.

As with anything else an adult male must earn the right to mate. This can be through valour in the field of battle but generally involves helping in the running of the tribe and through usurping the position of other, older males.

Once the males have reached a position where they are eligible to mate they will go through a ritual of purification. This involves leaving their tents and their pets and going out into the desert away from the camp. They spend the night avoiding bands of high-ranking females from their troop and the other normal hazards of their land. If the females locate the male they try and capture

him and bring him back to the camp. If this happens the females gain prestige and the male loses the right to mate along with much prestige. The decision to undertake this trial does not come lightly to scorpionfolk males as it can threaten their lives.

Females occasionally kill a captured male who they feel is unworthy before returning to camp and the loss of prestige involved in capture can result in the male being exiled from the tribe.

Should the males return undetected they are deemed worthy of attempting a trial with the alpha female. This is the most dangerous time for a male, as the mating is actually more a test of strength and will than courtship. Under the watchful eyes of the tribe's highest-ranking individuals, the supplicant and the alpha female begin a sideways circular dance. The dance spirals the two together and when they meet the male and female begin a strange tug of war form of wrestling. If the male is powerful enough to wrestle the female into position he may attempt to mate.

Mating Challenges

The mechanics for determining the results of reproduction challenges are based upon the Brawn, Dance and Unarmed skills. The male must make an opposed test of each skill against that of the alpha female. If he wins all three contests, the scorpionman gains the right to reproduce with the female. If he fails one test he may try again at some point in the future. If he fails twice, then he loses the right to ever mate and drops in status within the tribe. If he fails three times the attempt was so miserable that the female eats him!



If successful in his union he impregnates the female with a number of packets of sperm and she becomes pregnant, soon after transferring the eggs to one of the subordinate females who will actually gestate and perform the live birth. If the male fails to make any headway with the female she will in all likelihood kill and eat him. Normally neither partner uses their stings in the dance but if the female does sting the male then it is because she found him unworthy. If instead he survives the attempt with his status unsullied, the male will then get to repeat the process in the future.

Females give birth to up to 20 young at a time, which are born alive but are only semi-intelligent. The mother determines when to give birth, the number of young and their sex based on the available food supply and the requirements of the tribe. This choice is an unconscious one by the female and is hormonally based. The young are inevitably born in places of safety, special birthing areas woven then abandoned by the male. From the moment when the egg implantation takes place, it can take from three months to a year for the eggs to reach maturity. In times of plenty the young

will develop more rapidly than in times of hardship. The only exception to this is where warfare or other factors have cost the tribe many members. In this situation pregnant females give birth to a large number of young.

The young are tiny, miniature versions of their parents, when born. Initially they cling to the hair of their mother, never straying more than a few metres away from her for any length of time. Within a month the mother grows tired of their attention, abandoning them to the predilections of the tribe, where the young instinctively band together in a mutual defence crèche and must fend for themselves in search of food.

The youngest offspring are displaced out to the edge of the camp whilst the eldest gain questionable security by remaining close to the inner. This follows the standard pattern of the folk to have the more expendable on the outside, protecting the less expendable on the inside.

Both parents gain great prestige with the birth of the young but they take no part in their upbringing. After the eggs are transferred to the surrogate female, the male initially hunts for extra food to help accelerate the maturing eggs but once they hatch and the female gives birth, the male loses interest and returns to the struggle of gaining enough status to make another mating attempt.

Young scorpionfolk technically do not need to feed for most of their first year of life, subsisting on the yolk sack inside their stomach and getting all their nourishment and liquid from this source only. However, any additional food they can consume increases their growth rate and chances of survival. During this period they learn their first lessons in the tribe; how to hunt and kill, and how to avoid being killed themselves. They are hunting machines at this time, preying on anything that crosses their path. These are likely to be small animals, such as mice and reptiles but may also be siblings or even older scorpionfolk.

As they get older they spend their time performing feats of strength against one another and against other older young. At this point the maturing young are driven by hunger fuelled aggression and sometimes mistakenly attack any adults that they come across in the same way they hunt each other. If they do this they are inevitably killed and eaten by the adult no matter if they happen to be the parent or not.

This harsh pattern lasts until at about their fifth moult, when they are given adult tasks to undertake and expected to become the backbone of any combat force. Young adult males and females from about five years onwards have a full grasp of the language of the tribe and are rational, sapient creatures.

At this stage they are expected to gain a mentor among the adults of the tribe and hone their hunting, scouting and interpersonal skills. Young folk showing special ability begin training in the professions they will hold for the rest of their lives. For tribes suffering bad years of shortages, a decade after spawning only one in ten of the

original litter make it to adulthood, ensuring only the strongest and fittest survive.

Magic and the Folk

From their beginnings, the scorpionfolk have been associated with magic. Whilst their original metamorphosis was obviously the result of magic, adventurers who have braved the dangers of the barren deserts to explore the lost cities tell of finding the remains of great constructs and buildings constructed with sorcery, glowing faintly blue under the stars.

Scorpionfolk tribes almost always have a number of divine priests dedicated to the Scorpion God. The desert tribes are probably the only place this god is worshiped and little is known about it as no outsider is ever inducted into the priesthood. Occasionally priests of other faiths attempt to find converts amongst the scorpionmen but these are very rarely successful, ultimately being sacrificed and eaten if they cause too much offense, as the Scorpion God is very jealous of his people.

Being highly religious the handful of scorpionmen who exhibit any sign of magical capability are turned over to the priests for training. A very few find themselves unsuited to pious worship and exiled from their tribes by the priesthood. These outcastes find themselves drawn towards the cyclopean ruins half buried in the desert sands, into which they vanish, never to return.

Scorpionfolk Language

Like most species, scorpionfolk have their own language, although theirs is virtually impossible for normal humanoids to learn. The language is based on soft ululations, which can be projected at high volume so as to cross open expanses of desolate landscape. Their vocalisations are melodic but difficult to discern to the uninitiated since there are no noticeable breaks between words or the end of sentences. To produce these tones the scorpionman must change the shape of his throat since he has no flexible lips with which to form sounds.

The scorpionfolk have a second method of communication, based completely on body language. This variant is often easier to teach other races and has the advantage of being silent and even further distance communication if visibility is good enough.

Relationship with the Other Races

Relations between scorpionfolk and other races are, at best, somewhat strained, if not openly hostile, even between their own tribes. Although they control the majority of the Wildlands, their authority is not unified and remains unchallenged due to the harsh environment and the fact that few are willing to battle scorpion mounted cavalry.

It is said that a dangerous reputation is worth 1,000 soldiers and the scorpionmen's reputation is dangerous indeed. It is quite possible that they encourage their savage repute. The folk certainly revel in their status and do nothing to dismiss it. The area of land an

individual tribe roams is often huge and patrolling such an expanse is difficult. What better way to prevent interlopers than by having a reputation for slaughtering all comers. Indeed, those scorpionfolk not having come across other species before are as likely to attack them as any other intruder.

Trade does exist between the scorpionfolk and the other races, as they have no metalworking industry and are always interested in live food, sometimes even willing to trade ancient items of jewellery for cages of rats which they deem delicacies.

However trying to find out who actually trades with the folk is difficult. This is supposedly due to the nature of such trade, as many of the trade goods of the scorpionfolk come from their raiding and pillaging activities and as such are considered stolen property by some. In reality, it is more often than not that the trader has been eaten, accidentally killed in a cultural misunderstanding. Fortunately if a regular visitor is known to the folk they may actually wait for trade before opening hostilities.

Since they rarely leave their homelands, those races that know of the folk often do so only through reputation, rather than first-hand knowledge. The occasional scorpionman exile manages to wander into Dardarrick with enough wit to respect local customs. Few are actively seeking new experiences but trying to find a new 'tribe' to which they can belong. Most seem willing to fight as mercenaries for regular meals in exchange, especially if paid in rodents.

Methods of Warfare

Fighting is a way of life for the scorpionfolk and in many cases they live to do battle, to struggle and to prove their mettle to their tribe by overcoming all obstacles in their way. They consider every situation a challenge to be overcome, every encounter a test of their strength and their basic method of meeting such challenges is with overwhelming force.

As noted previously, scorpionfolk do not feel emotions in the same way humanoids do, so they have no thought of compassion or mercy. An enemy is anyone who is not of their tribe and the best way to deal with an enemy is to defeat them. Scorpionfolk do not take prisoners except when there is a specific reason to do so. After a successful combat the surviving folk almost always consume defeated foes. There is no point wasting food.

Any creature taken alive, either surrendering or being captured is taken back to camp. Prisoners are inevitably killed and consumed back at the camp by the high status folk not involved in the combat. This makes them very dangerous opponents in battle, because they seek nothing less than the complete annihilation of their enemies.

Scorpionfolk have some significant advantages over other humanoid races in combat:

- ☉ Firstly, they move very rapidly and have good manoeuvrability over a number of different surfaces such as loose sand or sharp rocks.
- ☉ Secondly, they are exceedingly resilient physically both due to their high CON and their natural armour.

Scorpionman Venom

The potent venom of scorpionmen makes them particularly feared, despite their modest size and strength. It is a complex two-stage poison designed to incapacitate a living foe whilst they are taken back to camp, after a number of hours however the second stage begins, slowly digesting the internal structure so that the victim gradually liquefies within their own skin, more doses of the toxin repeatedly injected over the course of several days until death finally ensues. This latter functionality allows the hunter to more easily consume his prey.

Application: Injection.

Onset time: Paralysis in 1D3 rounds, Digestion after 1D3+3 hours, Nausea if survives.

Duration: Scorpionman's CON in hours.

Resistance Time: The victim must make a single Resistance roll when first stung. Failure indicates that the series of conditions will take effect at the proper onset time.

Potency: Scorpionman's CON x 3.

Resistance: Resilience.

Conditions: Paralysis occurs rapidly once the toxin reaches the spinal cord. Unfortunately for the victim the venom only blocks muscular control and not pain reception. Four to six hours later the toxin breaks down into a digestive enzyme, which first attacks the skeletal structure and musculature. Once digestion begins the victim loses one point from each of his Characteristics save SIZ and this damage is repeated every three hours thereafter. If a Characteristic reaches zero the victim dies, reduced to a sack of goo. If no further doses are injected before the venom runs its course, a living victim remains under the effect of permanent Nausea until they receive serious medical care.

Antidote/Cure: No known cure, although the priests of the Scorpion God do possess the magic to purge the toxin, although not to cure its effects. A successful Healing roll within 15 minutes of being poisoned will excise the poisoned flesh (permanently lose one HP from the location) allowing the victim to make a new Resistance Roll as per the Healing skill in the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*. Success prevents any further Conditions from taking effect.



- ☉ Thirdly, they have a poisonous stinger with a long reach.
- ☉ Fourthly, their colouration allows them to hide in the open desert, nearly invisible against the terrain.
- ☉ Finally, they ride giant scorpions in battle.

Their tactics are simple; find the enemy before they find you, identify a problem before it becomes a threat to the tribe and crush it completely. To achieve these aims tribes always have scouts spread out widely around the camp. If moving, the scouts tend to

congregate in front and to the sides of the tribal column but if they are at rest they spread out evenly all around.

These scouting groups are made up of three individuals; one young adult, one low-ranking adult and one specially trained scout. If any of these groups spot a problem they signal the tribe by means of mirrors or by returning the young adult when this is not possible.

Once the main group has been informed of the problem a senior member of the tribe moves to investigate and young are sent out to contact the other scouts and inform them of the problem. Anyone observing the scorpionmen at this point would be forgiven for thinking they were observing an ant's nest being disturbed.

There is a frenzy of activity with the alpha female being bundled away with guards to a place of safety and a defensive rearguard set up formed from the remaining adults and young. If a threat is too much to handle the tribe takes cover or moves away at top speed, leaving the rear guard of expendable young adults to delay pursuit. If the problem is not so severe scorpionfolk will take their time and investigate thoroughly. Taking into account the terrain that the enemy is in or moving into and their potential capabilities, the adults quickly decide how to tackle the situation.

Having decided on a course of action, another burst of activity occurs with messages sent back to the main group. A war party is quickly assembled, made up predominantly of the expendable lower status folk with a smattering of more experienced and senior adults. This force gathers ahead of the enemy taking up positions using their inherent camouflage and any natural cover to fade from sight.

When the enemy is in the perfect position a signal is given and the ambush begins. If present, the priests support their tribe with Divine Magic, whilst the warriors swarm forwards. The remainder stay out of melee and rain missiles down on the unsuspecting foe. The group involved in melee is made up of the more expendable, lower standing adults, with the senior adults present acting as archers.

Once the scorpion mounted lancers hit, they trample down and sting as many of the enemy as they can indiscriminately and then disengage, repeating the charge time and again, not staying in contact for too long, not only giving them time to regroup but allowing the archers to fire once more. The speed and ferocity of the attack usually means the enemy is quickly overwhelmed. If the enemy puts up stiff resistance and the scorpionmen start to take casualties, they withdraw as quickly as they attacked. The war band then scatters and hides before the enemy can regroup and counterattack.

The senior adults then meet to decide what to do. If the enemy is too strong for them, they tend to simply melt away into the desert. Otherwise reinforcements are sent for to replace those fallen and another ambush is prepared.

If a tribal camp is under threat, a different technique is used. The lowest standing scorpionfolk are thrown at the enemy with the intention of engaging in melee until they are told otherwise or they are dead, while the rest of the tribe dismantle the camp and withdraw to a place of safety.

Unlike most creatures, scorpionmen are not at their most dangerous when their young are threatened, as they are deemed expendable. Rather it is the alpha female and egg bearing surrogates that are most important. If there is a chance of escape, the tribe fights only long enough so that the highest standing adults can escape. If there is no escape then the whole tribe, throw themselves at the enemy in suicidal waves, trusting that their mindless savagery and physical capability will drive the enemy off.

Arms and Armour

Before their metamorphosis the scorpionfolk came from a civilised and organised society. They had all the normal arts and crafts associated with a Bronze Age civilisation. Since the cataclysmic alteration of their lands however, they are rarely capable of forging their own metal weapons, instead taking what they need from the bodies of their foes, finding them in sand covered ruins or trading for them.



What weapons scorpionmen ultimately use are constrained by their availability. People being targeted by raiding or war parties can expect to face the same weapons they use themselves.

Scorpionfolk favour exotic weapons. The weapons of choice in raiding and war parties are the lance and the recurve bow, both of which they wield with great expertise. Curved swords are also commonplace. They avoid reach weapons, except the lance when mounted, as using them precludes a scorpionman warrior from using its potent natural sting.

Armour is often difficult for a scorpionman to find, since its use is somewhat restricted in hot regions.

Most of the folk actually reuse the chitin from the bodies of dead adults, using the thickest parts of the chest carapace, which is then gradually ground down on stones to the correct size and shape required for a particular location. It takes the chest segment from a full grown adult to create the armour for a single location, or seven dead adults for one complete suit. The advantage to Scorpionman Chitin armour is its exceptional lightness reducing the Armour Penalty by one for each location.

Heavier protection can be gained from flaying the bulkier chitin from a giant scorpion. One full grown scorpion provides enough material for a full suite of chitin armour. Its thickness however does not grant the same Armour Penalty reduction, so it is not as popular amongst warriors, save for the manufacture of helmets since only the smaller tail segments of a giant scorpion provide a rigid and correctly shaped piece which can satisfactorily protect the head.

Desert Lance: These are in fact longspears, which the scorpionfolk wield as lances from the back of their giant scorpion mounts.

Jambiya: This flat, highly curved dagger has a narrow blade, sharp on both the inside and outside of the curve. This is the standard dagger found in some of the desert climes.

Khopesh: The khopesh is a heavy, primitive and awkward weapon to use. The blade looks like an elongated sickle blade grafted on to

a sword blade. This design is developed from an agricultural scythe, with the size and shape being because of the limitations of bronze from which the weapons were originally made. It is the inner edge of the curve, which is used to chop.

Throwing Blade: This weapon resembles a short sword with three or four points. The handle and lower part of the blade appear normal but the blade forks several times into a number of dagger-like points. It is thrown horizontally, so that it spins parallel to the ground.

Tulwar: The tulwar is essentially a very heavy scimitar with a small handle. It has a curved blade, somewhat longer than a falchion, which widens towards the tip. In unskilled hands it is particularly unwieldy. The blade is sharp on its convex side, forming a slashing weapon with a sharp tip that could also be used for thrusting when necessary.

Inject Venom Combat Manoeuvre

Whilst the stinger of a scorpionman's tail or the fangs of a cobra are extremely threatening, a strike from the natural weapons of a venomous creature does not necessarily indicate that venom was injected. Fangs may not pass a blocking shield or stingers fail to penetrate armour. There are even circumstances where a creature may not want to use its venom, its supply limited or it is engaging in some form of social combat.

Using the Inject Venom manoeuvre indicates a specific desire for the creature to poison its foe. It has the added advantage that the creature may forfeit any chance to inflict damage done to instead find a weak point in the defence/armour, bypassing it only for the purposes of applying its venom – for example a large venomous snake might attack a warrior wearing chain armour and instead of inflicting damage from the bite, ducks past the victim's parry to merely scratch the back of the his sword hand, poisoning him.

This combat manoeuvre can be used both *offensively* and *defensively* by venomous creatures.

Body Armour

Armour	AP	ENC	Locations
Scorpionman Chitin ¹	3	1	Abdomen, Arms, Chest, Legs
Giant Scorpion Chitin	5	2	Abdomen, Arms, Chest, Legs

¹This is armour made from the chitin of a dead scorpionman and may stack over any natural armour the wearer has.

Helmets

Armour	AP	ENC	Locations
Giant Scorpion Chitin	5	2	Head

Close Combat Weapons

Weapon	Handedness	Damage Dice	STR/DEX	Size	Reach	Combat Manoeuvres	ENC	AP/HP
Desert Lance ¹	Single	1D10+1	5/5	L	VL	Impale	2	4/10
Jambiya	Single	1D4+1	-/-	S	S	Bleed	-	6/8
Khopesh	Single	1D6+1	13/11	M	M	Bleed	2	6/8
Tail Sting	None	1D4	-/-	M	M	Impale, Inject Venom	3	4/8
Tulwar	Single	1D8+1	15/13	L	M	Bleed, Impale	2	6/12

¹This weapon may be set against a charge.

Ranged Weapons

Weapon	Handedness	Damage	Damage Modifier	Range	Load	STR/DEX	SIZ	Combat Manoeuvres	ENC	AP/HP
Recurve Bow	Double	1D8	Y	175m	1	13/11	H	Impale	1	4/8
Silk Sling	Single	1D8	Y	200m	1	-/11	L	Stun Location	-	1/2
Throwing Blade	Single	1D6	Y	10m	-	11/13	M	Impale	2	6/8

SHARKFOLK

The Oanni are the last of the major species of Rardarri, though they live in the ocean that encompasses the continent rather than upon its shores. There are many types of marine humanoids, such as the mermen but the most prevalent race in the southern and western seas are the sharkfolk. Named for their unique kinship with the swimming predators, whereas those living in coastal communities threatened by their predilections name them Sea Devils. Fortunately their dependence on living in the sea has prevented the race from engaging in anything more than sporadic raids on the surface world.

Physiology

Despite their close association and affinity with their predatory brethren, sharkfolk share few, if any, physical similarities with those animals. While sharks have a calcified, cartilaginous bone structure, the sharkfolk have true bones throughout their body. They are representatives of the group known as tetrapods, though clearly a very advanced form. This is further borne out by their having six digits on each limb, a characteristic that separates them from most other vertebrates.

Another strong difference between the sharkfolk and sharks is that the former have a primitive swim bladder arrangement, whereas sharks have none at all. The sea devils have an air sac that is connected directly to the mouth allowing them to gulp air and hold it to remain buoyant. This is termed a primitive feature because most fish have an enclosed swim bladder that is regulated by chemical reaction alone.

Air in this bladder plays no role in respiration and in practice need not even be 'breathable'. This feature places limitations on the sharkfolk because they must remain fairly close to the surface of

the sea to replenish their air supplies. The irony of this dependence on the hated realm of air is something that the sharkfolk do not like to consider too deeply.

Their own spoken language is composed of clicks, whistles and hoots that are similar in many ways to the language of the whales and dolphins. This language has great carrying power in the sea and conversations can be conducted over dozens of kilometres – though it is worthwhile noting that over such distances the communication is almost invariably a poetic performance rather than an exchange. Above water it only has the carrying power of a human voice.

Sharkfolk Languages

Some sharkfolk are perfectly capable of learning to belch the words of air breathing creatures by expelling air from their swim bladder. This ability is normally only known by priestesses, slavers or diplomats, trained as part of their Language (Other) skill.

Landsmen attempting to comprehend the sharkfolk's natural language also requires specialised training or magic to understand. Whilst the listener may figure out what is being communicated, it is nearly impossible for a land based humanoid to speak back in the same language, since most species lack the correct epiglottal and nasal passages to reproduce the whistles and buzz-like clicks. Interpreting the long-range 'deep song' of sharkfolk is often not possible, the sophisticated kennings, alliteration and alien concepts proving impenetrable.



Senses

Like their living totems the sharks, sea devils have excellent sensing capabilities when within their natural element. Their eyes are large and forward facing and when in the darkness and murk of the ocean can distinguish objects three times as far as a human may underwater. This large size makes them perfect for gathering light in dim conditions but on land it is a very real disadvantage, rendering them almost blind on clear days. The glare of the full sun reduces everything to a painful haze.

Night on land is somewhat different. Here the sun cannot blind them and although they still do not see as well as when in water, their distance vision becoming blurry, they will usually co-ordinate attacks to coincide with overcast nights and new moons. They can see clearly to around 20 metres, can distinguish colour and are sensitive to movement.

For hearing, the sharkfolk have a 'sound chamber' that is rather like a fluid filled sack. This is used both to transmit sound by strong muscular distortions, much like a drum being struck, as well as to receive sound through the dense medium of water. They have no external features like ears, receiving the transmission of sound waves directly on the sides of the face and throat. This pressured vessel is perfect for sensing sounds transmitted in the water, to the extent that the 'deep song' can be sung over dozens of kilometres and be heard with perfect clarity, not unlike the sounds of whales. However, outside of densely surrounding water this organ is far less effective.

Hearing in the air is reduced to a fraction of normal and conversations between members of a band on shore must take place close together to allow any communication at all. Sharkfolk compensate for this deficiency by using extensive body language to allow their messages to be understood.

Lateral lines run along both flanks of their body from the neck to the hips that collect mechanical information from the water around them. These amazing structures, completely useless out of the water, give them such detailed and sensitive information concerning pressure. With them the sharkfolk are aware of the most subtle of water currents, meaning that any creature attempting to slip through their realm even by stealth or magical means has very little chance of actually doing so.

By far the most effective sensing organs the sharkfolk possess are connected to their sense of smell, even though this too is completely ineffective out of water. Located in their snout are a number of secondary channels that serve a minor function of allowing some direct diffusion of oxygen from the water to the brain. However the major purpose is to channel liquid through a series of highly delicate organs.

These organs are so effective that they can pick up the scent of a few blood drops over distances up to two kilometres away. So sensitive is this detection that they can even tell what species is

bleeding. At much closer distances body sweat, dissolved smells of immersed clothes and even saliva can be detected downstream of a current.

Blood Sense

Any sharkfolk within one kilometre of a scene where blood has found its way into the sea *will* smell it and they will usually follow the scent if the blood comes from an air breathing creature. In this way, a great number of sharkfolk may arrive at the scene of a sea battle in a comparatively short space of time.



Habitat

Generations ago, great invasions took place along the coasts of the world and the sea devils rose in kingdom after kingdom to attack, destroy and despoil. Much of what is known about these creatures comes from that time and these histories are still much in dispute. Scholars debate the nature and origins of sharkfolk, some claiming they are the product of evil magical experimentation, whilst others say they are merely a product of natural evolution.

The truth may never be known but many things have been revealed about the sharkfolk, concerning their habits and choice of environment. Sharkfolk are an extremely social species. They are never found alone although their communities are often isolated if located near remote islands or undersea ridges.

Over the centuries their civilisation has made them dominant in their domain, granting them exquisite sensibilities for the subtle, precise and beautiful. When the great invasions took place centuries ago, war raged along every coast. Driven to retaliation, magically augmented land armies penetrated the homes of the sharkfolk and destroyed all they found there, casting them back into the deeper ocean. The current numbers of sharkfolk are therefore a mere fraction of what they once were, though their population is gradually rebuilding, the priestesses long dreaming of waging genocide on the surface folk again.

Intelligent creatures seldom visit the sharkfolk's ancient homes, some hidden so far down in the depths that the rays of the sun cannot hope to penetrate. Aquatic sages who have braved such expeditions tell of strangely beautiful, cyclopean cities, filled with sediment and coral growths that are slowly choking the alien structures of strange geometry. Any view of the sharkfolk that is one of simple brutal violence and ignorance fails to take into account the once inordinately refined nature of their society.

Sharkfolk are now wandering nomads, establishing temporary camps on the undersea terraces, located near the edges of land

shelves. They rarely stay long in one place, following fish migrations or moving on so as to not overgraze the local ecology. Sometimes they spend time at a ruin, clearing fallen rock and transplanting entire coral beds to access the primordial temples of their forebears.

Occasional treasures are sometimes recovered from these sites, which whilst not rich are of great scholarly interest. Statues carved from vividly coloured coral. Coins of soft precious metal beaten into disturbingly shaped necklaces and bracelets or crude jewellery crafted from materials obtained from the sea such as pearls of the greatest size and richest colour, as well as amber exposed by coastal erosion. Unless the sharkfolk are willing to trade such items with the surface races, most of these treasures are generally left inside the great buildings as offerings to the gods, before the clan moves on.

Sharkfolk Society

Sharkfolk are organised into petty kingdoms, which lay claim to lengths of coastline, or are located on mid-sea ridges that connect island chains. Each kingdom recognises others and will generally respect the borders if the neighbouring kingdom is strong. However, members of other kingdoms who trespass with no permission are fair prey and the standing law of eat or be eaten is applied to others of their own kind without distinction.

The ruler of such a realm has total dictatorial authority over all who reside in his kingdom and retains this until he is bested in battle. He and his close retinue of priestesses, personal bodyguards, a few of his visiting barons and a modest force of warriors often reside in a crude subsurface settlement at the centre of their territory. From here the king issues commands to his people and is ready to respond if the kingdom is invaded.

The settlement is often a natural wonder constructed within magnificent coral beds, bizarre rock outcroppings or intricately woven mazes of sea plants. In addition, the sea devils also like to bring tribute in the form of scavenged detritus from the world above. They prize intricate carvings from sunken ships and put strong timbers to many uses. From raids on coastal settlements, they drag back carved stone blocks, bricks, hewn wood and, naturally, the bones of their victims.

Beneath the overlord who commands the kingdom are a number of barons, each one ruling over one of the small clans of migrating sharkfolk. Baron is the pinnacle of social advancement unless the ruler of the kingdom is slain or overthrown. For the sharkfolk, there is only one common right and that is the right to strive to be more dominant in their strict structure.

The group is always more important than the individual and the individual is found wanting if they cannot defend themselves. 'Eat or be eaten' they are told from an early age and those that cannot withstand the pressures of constant competition, infighting and literal political backstabbing are sacrificed to this principle: being consumed raw and screaming by their vanquisher.

The laws of the sea are written in blood. From the humble coral to the mighty shark, everything has its place in the food chain. The wise treat those below them on this inviolate ladder with contempt fit only for the contents of a larder and those above them with debasing unctuousness, highly toned survival skills and a burning desire to best and claw their way to that higher rank.

As a deeply religious and lawful society, the sharkfolk have many rituals that are performed with unfailing dedication and regularity. For example, when eating, they always note that the victim is an aspect of one of their gods, *It That Is Eaten*, keeping the sacrifice of this inferior life in their mind as they rip it to shreds with their magnificent teeth.

The real ritual associated with food occurs when there are many sharkfolk eating. All food is shared and is passed naturally up the hierarchy, juniors making way for seniors and only when all of the superior-ranked individuals have added their bloody lacerations to the corpse does the right pass back down the line again.

Greeting and departing are two rituals that are paramount in virtually all sapient creatures and the sharkfolk are no different. When first meeting the dominant creature looks at the less dominant, who custom dictates, must avert their eyes. Any other action is considered a challenge. When meeting a stranger the local is allowed the dominant role. They speak first, effectively challenging the interloper to identify themselves and their business. The stranger by custom averts their eyes and may even angle their body in a submissive posture, then naming themselves and the territory or kingdom they are from. Failure to adhere to these roles inevitably results in combat.

Returning allies are expected to show initial submission in the group and then to relate in detail everything they have been doing whilst away. Thus the taboo on secrecy is dealt with and the community as a whole absorbs the experiences and information, in theory becoming stronger. Information in but one head is at risk.

When departing it is customary to outline where the individual or group is going, what they are planning to do and provide a general impression of how they are going to achieve their goals. This seems but a sensible wilderness precaution – to the sharkfolk, however, it is a central part of recognising everyone is expendable. Those departing might never return. That loss is not a disaster but not having some general idea of their intentions and direction is. Every departing group provides vital information to the community merely by announcing their intentions.

The death of an individual sharkfolk is never a tragedy. They died because they were inadequate, for there is no place for sorrow or pity in the heart of the sharkfolk. Where practical, the corpse will be eaten by the rest of the community in a kind of 'wake'. This cannibalism is considered natural and desirable as the body is now a thing to be eaten. Anything else would be waste.

However, it would be incorrect to say there is no ceremony within this. After a challenge, those present partake of the remains in

an uplifted mood. They have just witnessed natural justice being done and they are joining in saluting the victor by tasting the vanquished's blood.

Conversely, if the individual died in a battle that was not a challenge the mood is often less joyous. This typically means a hated air breather, a demon, has killed them and this can be a terrible blow. The talk around the quickly appearing bones at feasts of this nature revolves around planning the kind of revenge raid that will be necessary. In both cases the ritual lasts as long as the eating and no more, and then the bones are unceremoniously left to drop to the inky blackness of the deep sea.

These are the only kinds of death ritual possible – no sharkfolk ever died of old age.

One other ritual is worthy of note and this is the one unfailingly performed by hunting parties as they emerge from the sea into the hateful realm of air. When first emerging onto dry land the sharkfolk party stops and conducts a simple ritual designed to protect them in the evil realm. They appeal to the gods to grant them favour and to give them the strength to strike down the demons they battle. This ritual uses spoken language and some simple dance movement for, given their poorer hearing in the air, little information can actually be conveyed.

Religion

The primary pantheon of the sharkfolk is headed by three deities; *It That Is Eaten*, represented by a giant jellyfish, *She Who Teaches*, symbolised by a squid-like creature and *He Who Eats*, who is represented as a gigantic prehistoric shark. Other, lesser deities are known but these relate to environmental effects such as warm water currents, tidal disruptions and disturbances like volcanoes and so forth.

This trinity of gods forms the model for the entire sharkfolk view of existence. In their minds these three simple forces exemplify the correct mode of all things in an ordered, logical and hierarchical world. 'Good' to them means that everything fits into this model and those that buck the model, dispute it, or avoid it by being in another realm are 'evil'.

Each deity has their images used in architecture, in object d'art, weapons and are central figures in any storytelling the sharkfolk engage in. Of the three, *He That Eats* is the dominant one. His primary desires – to eat, survive, reproduce and dominate – are taken as the template for society as a whole.

Females provide all religious leadership in sharkfolk society. They administer the ancient rites, interpret the will of the gods, conduct all teaching and hold the ancient secrets. Females alone may ascend the ranks of the religious hierarchy standing, ultimately, in power second only to the king. The position of high priestess is a solitary role. She stands beside the king and advises him in all matters, directly issuing edicts down through the lower ranks of the

priesthood and, since they are the educators of the whole society, the system is perpetuated.

Below her are the priestesses. Most travel with the wondering clans, assigned to the retinue of a baron. Each like their mistress, counsel their powerful male counterparts on the historically and socially correct way to act in all matters.

Sharkfolk society mimics their creation myth in that the males play out the role of *He Who Eats*, maintaining their positions of dominance by strength, brutality and single-mindedness. The females are always there, never safe by any means but always advising, directing and correcting. Since their society is heavily influenced by religion, the magic of the sharkfolk is limited, in the main, to the divine and as the priesthood is exclusively female, magical ability is locked firmly into their fins. It is true that the males may also acquire magic but few pursue this line of power as it is seen as the domain of the priestesses.

This picture may tempt some to believe the society of the sharkfolk is matriarchal. Certainly the females wield enormous power, without doubt far more than enjoyed in many other societies but the cultural evolution of the sharkfolk has them locked into the dominance of the *He Who Eats* model. It is a matter of eat or be eaten so the positions of power held by everyone on that society, females in equal measure to males, are only as powerful as their last battle. That the females advise the males on how to conduct their daily activities is undoubtedly true but even the priestesses themselves consider they are a part of the main body of government and society. They stand beside the important members of the group – the males.

Hierarchy of Dominance

Movement in the male sharkfolk hierarchy from warrior through to king can only occur in one way – by challenge to the next member above on the ladder of authority. These challenges typically involve battles to the death and witnesses are invited to watch in public arenas.

Females, just as males, also improve their social rank in the community by challenge. Sharkfolk cows with an aptitude for the religious teachings may confront a member of the first tier of the priesthood. This challenge and the subsequent ones to gradually ascend over the years to the ultimate rank of the high priestess, rarely include physical combat but instead may take the form of elaborate recitations from the common body of religious law (that may well take days to retell), complex intelligence or predictive puzzles and even duels using Divine Magic.

In all cases the loser of these challenges is either killed or sacrificed to *He Who Eats*. Society as a whole lauds the winner of the challenges, accepting them immediately as the more 'worthy' to hold position, instantly dismissing the loser as an object now united with *It That Is Eaten*. The vanquished sharkfolk is immediately forgotten as an individual, as if they had never existed. This system holds true right

up to the king and high priestess who achieve their positions of power through the death of countless others on their climb and who maintain their positions by besting regular challengers.

If the current holder of an important rank dies of natural (or unnatural) causes, then the immediate subordinates are offered the chance to challenge each other for the position. If only one claims the right, then they are promoted by default, much to the disappointment of the clan.

As a final observation on this outlook on life, the sharkfolk are completely communal when it comes to food. They always share a kill between members of the hunting party and the community. This apparent paradox is explained in terms of the group being more important than any individual. Certainly any individual may strive and excel and climb the ladder but, ultimately, all members of the society are expendable. The sharing of food ensures that the whole body of the kingdom is kept healthy. Sharkfolk who failed in this sharing behaviour would be traitors to their peers and would be challenged immediately by an endless succession of outraged onlookers until they were eliminated.

Defenders of the faith

Immediately below the king and the high priestess are the royal bodyguards. These powerful warriors are few in number, usually no more than a couple of dozen in each kingdom. Their primary role is to protect the king and his high priestess.

The king, without fail, maintains a large herd of mating cows to further his obviously superior line whilst, for her part, the high priestess may deign to produce eggs for other sharkfolk, especially any member of the bodyguard who distinguishes himself. However, despite the fact that the bodyguards are the best warriors of the kingdom, they are forbidden to issue challenges. Only barons are permitted to issue those against the king, although nothing prevents a member of the bodyguard resigning his post, challenging a baron for his clan and, if successful, then making a bid for the throne. This often inevitable event is not seen as any form of disloyalty.

In addition to acting as proxy for the king, the bodyguard act as the religious enforcers for the high priestess. In sharkfolk society, this strict adherence to the order and structure of the world is paramount. The guard are constantly alert to rumours of any deviance from the 'truth' – signs of independent thinking and the like that clearly indicate sickness in the mind of the individual concerned.

This sickness they, and the rest of the community, are not squeamish in cutting out. Given that success in their society means aggression, ambition and a merciless willing to sacrifice others, the kind of behaviour they are alert for can be generally termed as weakness. The ministrations of these defenders of the faith are seen not only as normal but necessary. Secrets are not only hard to keep, they are also held as universally undesirable and pointless. Something

known by one sharkfolk and not shared with the group is seen as the ultimate disloyalty and a form of mental illness.

Rarely, mentally unstable individuals might flee the kingdom, voluntarily becoming exiles. These events are exceedingly rare but clearly must occasionally happen as a part of the expansion throughout the seas of the world. Naturally, such exiles are reviled and destroyed if located by other sharkfolk.

Methods of Warfare

Fierce warriors, the sharkfolk are dangerous foes in the water, their fins and tails permitting them to out swim their enemies or drag them into the depths to drown. Few humans are ever foolish enough to engage the sea devils in their native environment. Unfortunately though, despite being marine creatures, the sharkfolk possess an ability to leave the sea for short periods of time (up to one hour per two points of the sharkman's CON), allowing them to make raids on the villages and towns of surface dwellers.

Raiding parties are occasionally sent to the surface world to gather victims to be sacrificed or eaten at a sharkfolk festival. Sometimes they go to steal particular items requested by the priestesses, or merely to exact revenge on a fishing community who mistakenly catch and kill a sea devil in their nets.

Whatever their reasons, the sharkfolk are a constant fear for coastal communities. Whilst some towns erect fortified walls to keep out the monsters, other more pragmatic villages instead make offerings of livestock, or worse, to the raiders in order to avert sharkfolk attention to other neighbouring settlements. This is a slippery path, since such communities soon fall under the sway of the priestesses and are slowly corrupted to the worship of the sharkfolk pantheon, out of fear of worse things happening.

Large scale invasions have not been seen for centuries but the number and frequency of coastal raids is growing.

Raiding Parties

A typical raiding party will be composed of four to eight warriors led by a lieutenant. These teams conduct patrolling activities around the seas currently occupied by the clan. The baron sometimes mounts quick raids on sailing ships to collect 'trophies'. In this way the dominance of the baron is maintained and young warriors are tested, thus increasing the overall strength of the community.

Raiding parties have a number of standard formations they commonly assume. First and foremost is the 'two high, six low' tactic whereby two members of the party engage the enemy initially, while the remaining six stay at a greater depth to circle behind unnoticed before attacking the enemy from the rear. Closely following this is the 'two forward, six back' tactic that resembles the first but has two junior members of the party at least 50 yards ahead, with the rest of the team fanned out. Any contact with an enemy by the leading two sharkfolk allows the trailing members to effect an overlap as they come forward.

Variations on these themes would be familiar to any student of naval tactics with 'line ahead', 'line abreast' and so on being easy to identify. In all cases the purpose of these tactics is to generate the opportune overlap of their enemy, the goal being to stop the enemy and engaging with a small element of the party while the rest continue to sweep around into the flanks and rear.

Often a raiding party will include a very junior priestess. She is often part of the leading elements of these overlap formations so that she can use her powers to further confuse, disrupt and hold up contacted enemies. Upon contact with a foe she will immediately start casting spells and, like the rest of her species, she is likely to slay first and ask questions later.

The Warband

Warbands will have roughly 20 to 40 warriors and at least a senior priestess under the command of the baron. Each warband is divided into three to five parties, as described previously, each under the command of a lieutenant.

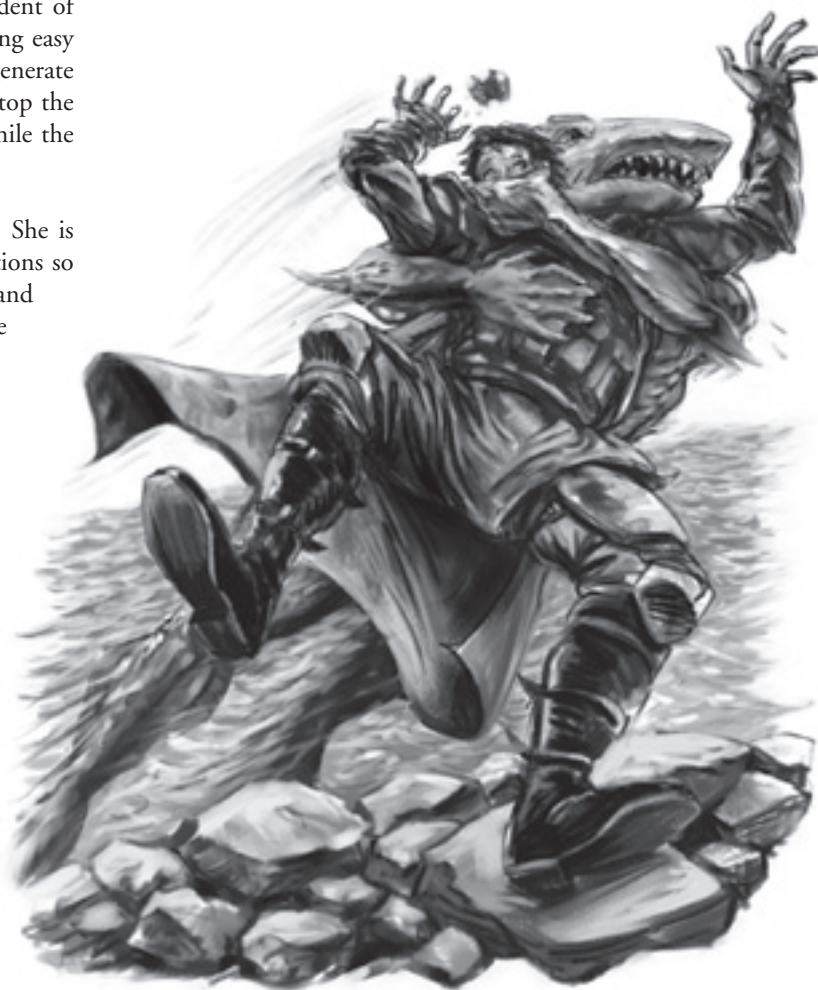
At sea, the warband uses similar tactics to the raiding party but on a larger scale. On land, all parties will land simultaneously along a beach, led by their lieutenants and then conduct their dry land rituals in these groups. Once the rituals are complete they strike inland towards pre-designated targets.

Military decisions concerning targets on shore or aboard a ship are made before the sharkfolk emerge from their realm. Such decisions are arrived at solely by the baron, with some advice from his senior priestess and are then communicated to the lieutenants, who in turn tell their warriors. Deviations from these plans, unless circumstances produce extremely favourable opportunities, are not tolerated.

Their plans will never call for actions that are beyond their capabilities and they never consider any target so valuable that they willingly order their warriors to 'fight to the last fin'. By the same token they are not squeamish about creating plans that call for potential casualties and these arouse no particular feelings of fear or recrimination. But they are cunning enough to know that whilst death is nothing to fear, death for no reason is simply a waste. If a battle is going badly for a warband, they will have a contingency plan calling for a retreat, doing so in an orderly fashion.

Stalking

These natural predators have colouring that makes for excellent camouflage in the ocean; dark on their dorsal surface and lighter on their bellies. This makes them hard to detect when stationary on the bottom and leads them to their preferred attack mode while in the water of striking from below. When in bands it is not uncommon for them to use their advanced tactics where one or two members of the team will swim high, where they are visible,



while the rest lurk lower down ready to attack when the victim is looking fearfully upwards.

Movement is what gives them away when being viewed from above but the sea's natural opacity means that in anything other than the crystalline waters, such as those in the Fang Straights, they are virtually invisible when any deeper than around five metres. Again, using this as a tactical advantage when attacking boats they will often send one or two members close to the surface on one side of the vessel while the others keep as low as possible until they spring from the waves to attack on the other side.

Sharkfolk Heroic Abilities

Sharkfolk are highly intelligent creatures, fully capable of developing their own unique skills and talents to better suit their physiology and habitat. The following Heroic Abilities may only be taken by sharkfolk who meet the prerequisites. Note that Heroic Abilities in *Wraith Recon* are purchased with the accumulation of Improvement Rolls, not Hero Points. This includes the Heroic Abilities in the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*.

Leaping Attack

Requirements: Swim 90% or higher.

Improvement Rolls: 8.

Duration: One leap out of the water.

Sharkfolk warriors often learn to perfect their attacks from the water, using their strong tails to propel themselves out of the sea to strike suddenly and without warning. Using this ability permits the sea devil to launch himself up to a maximum height of three metres out of the water, enough to clear the gunnels of small ships and often gaining automatic surprise if they land adjacent to an enemy.

Resist Drying

Requirements: Resilience 70% or higher.

Improvement Rolls: 8.

Duration: One hour per point of CON.

Whilst death itself holds no particular fear for the sharkfolk, suffocating in the alien realm of the air filled surface world is a terrible fate. Some sharkfolk learn or develop the capability to carry small amounts of water within their bodies to keep gills wet, thus prolonging their endurance when launching attacks on the surface world.

Combat Advantages

Being naturally powerful creatures, the sea devils are effective combatants on land. In the sea this strength is more pronounced, combined as it is with their webbed limbs and tail, allowing them to thrust, parry and propel their weapons with surprising force and accuracy. Except for unarmed combat the weapons used by sharkfolk are almost exclusively of the thrusting or piercing sort. The muscular tail is fully capable of propelling them every bit as fast as sharks and is even capable of launching them clear into the air. With this advantage a sea devil will often 'charge' with a thrusting attack, using the momentum gained from their tail to increase its damage.

The much feared blood frenzy of the sharkfolk has often been likened to a berserker rage and to a certain extent this is true. When the frenzy comes upon a sharkfolk it is virtually impossible for it to stop fighting until all foes are dead. This rage can occur only once in a given day, due to the enormous mental and physical strain it puts on the body. It is often supposed that the frenzy is greatest when sharkfolk blood is in the water, although if it were true then every public challenge in their society would soon degenerate into an orgy of slaughter and this clearly does not happen.

The triggers for the frenzy are complex but can be honed to the following factors;

Sharkfolk Blood Frenzy

Immersed sharkfolk who suffer a wound in battle may freely enter blood frenzy. Only those who wish to resist the temptation must roll dice, an unopposed test of their Persistence. Success allows them to retain their intelligence.

Blood frenzy can be a useful advantage but it often exposes the user to additional risk. The frenzy lasts a number of rounds equal to the sharkfolk's CON. During this time they must only spend Combat Actions on attacking or moving towards combat. Spellcasting, parrying, evading and anything else is forbidden, all thoughts of self preservation washed away in a red haze.

In return however, the sea devil no longer suffers pain or fatigue and is immune to mental control. During this time they are immune to *all* the detrimental effects of Serious Wounds, although a Major Wound will still incapacitate them. The frenzied sharkman always gains the opportunity to perform a Heroic Last Action as long as it involves ripping out the throat or entrails of his killer.

Once the frenzy finishes the injured sharkfolk automatically gains a fatigue level of Exhausted.



- ☉ Blood frenzy only ever occurs when the sharkfolk is submerged in water, never whilst on land.
- ☉ The sharkfolk has itself been wounded.
- ☉ The more blood there is in the water, the greater the chance of the sharkfolk losing control of itself as the lust to kill overtakes it.

Fighting the Sharkfolk

The light-intolerance of the sharkfolk is often exploited by their victims by perpetually having burning braziers on deck with flash powders or other bright light sources handy, so that in the event of an attack the flames can be used to blind them. On land a strong source of light such as a bright lantern can turn a determined assault into a hesitant mass. A direct beam of light into their eyes will often cause them to cease what they are doing and attempt to cover their eyes, dropping their weapons.

Magical light is vastly more effective in this regard. Not only is a clear white light particularly painful to them but the knowledge that it comes from the perverse source of arcane magic fills them with dread. Even a simple light spell may cause all attackers within its area of effect to flee.

Being marine creatures, the sharkfolk cannot stand fresh water. They sometimes make short excursions into estuary zones but only at times of high tide and certainly never deeply into the river proper. Fresh water has the effect of leeching the natural mineral balance out of their skin and harming their gills, to the extent they actually experience a 'burning'. Full immersion into fresh water causes sharkfolk extreme pain and they will do anything to escape it. If held in this salt-less environment for more than a few minutes they will writhe in agony, screaming, and will eventually die. Veteran sailors know this and will always tend to keep buckets of fresh water on deck for this precise purpose. When a sharkfolk party boards a ship, being doused with a bucket of water is the fastest way to get them to retreat.

Arms and Armour

The favoured weapons of the sharkfolk across all classes and sexes are the trident and knife. Since the only metals that they can work undersea are the soft ones – gold, silver and copper, which they beat to shape – most weapons are comprised predominantly of long sections of bone, sharpened corals and the woods and vines of sea vegetation. As a consequence, sharkfolk weapons made of natural substances have one Armour Point and Hit Point less than their terrestrial equivalents.

Lacking the facilities to create the kinds of temperatures required to produce complex metalwork, most sharkfolk are forced to loot metal weapons from the surface realm or subjugate a coastal community to fashion such items for them. Unless the metals used are immune or protected against seawater however, these weapons obviously do not last long due to the corrosive effects of the salty environment.

Second to the trident is the net. These are made of finely woven seaweed, weighted to allow throwing.

Out of the water these dry and become hard and brittle after an hour. For longer range attacks they also use a heavy crossbow of their own design. This uses bone as its primary construction material with toughened sinews for string. Like their nets, these crossbows lose their power and the strings become brittle in the open air unless kept damp with seawater.

If disarmed of trident, net and crossbow, sharkfolk are completely at ease conducting unarmed combat using strong hand-claws, foot-claws and their multi-layered, razor-sharp teeth.

Few sharkfolk wear armour. Whilst swimming the natural hindrance of water grants a great deal of protection, so armour is not particularly necessary (see Unusual Combat Conditions, page 92 of the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*). Indeed, utilising such protection would only hinder the buoyancy and swimming skill of the wearer. On dry land however, this lack of armour is a weakness, which is only partially offset by the sea devils unhindered speed and aggression.

CHAPTER FIVE

CULTS AND MAGIC



Nuera is a magical world where priests can call down the wrath of their gods, shamans can summon the powerful spirits of the land and sorcerers can weave awesome spells of raw power. Many mighty artefacts remain from the time of the gods, from weapons of frightful destruction to temples, which float above the ground. Magical and supernatural creatures also abound.

Despite these miracles however, mystical knowledge is not widespread amongst common folk. Although the occasional hedge wizard or witch might know a smattering of Common Magic, such skill is not available to the general populace.

The high arts are jealously guarded. Divine Magic, Sorcery and Spirit Magic are restricted to traditions passed down from shamans, priests and wizards to their apprentices. Outside of established cults and traditions, such magical skill is extremely rare.

Cults in Nuera

Within the world of Nuera belief in the gods, spirits and past heroes, both major and minor, is omnipresent. No one can question the existence of the divine or their scope of supernatural power and many of the world's peoples are driven in everything they do by their chosen religious or philosophical teachings. Faith is a powerful tool; a reminder that these beings saw fit to grant life and society to mortals in order them to work in their collective names.

In each cult following there are three main types of supplicants – the lax, the faithful and the fanatic. Each variety of follower serves the cult in their own way and such devotion is rewarded in a different manner. Technically not every cult necessarily possesses all three types of devotee and these attitudes are more social traits than cult ranks.

Those who are lax in their worship are primarily followers of their divinities in name only. They might attend the occasional service on a religious holiday or make minor prayers in times of need but they primarily live their lives without the faith in mind. In general, most folk are lax members of their local cults, in order to fit in socially.

Faithful cult members are those who remember and hold dear the teachings of their organisation. They are loyal followers, often donating time and money to help support their cult and try to represent what their sect embodies. In return for this higher level of devotion, the faithful often gain access to blessings or knowledge withheld from the less fervent.

When devotion becomes the central motivation of a cult member's life, they cross from being merely faithful into fanatics. Fanatics are totally devoted to the principles of their cult, serving the will of his leaders or deities – nothing else matters in the slightest. Fanatics are the most influential type of cultist, perhaps even dangerous, and are found at the heart of most secret societies and religions throughout Nuera.

Cult Structure Differences in Wraith Recon

Since access to magic is more limited than that presented in the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook* a few changes have been made to better fit Nuera. Use the following revisions to represent the structure of cult membership.

Firstly, the strength of an Adventurer's faith or loyalty is not necessarily an indicator of cult rank or magical ability. The depth of this attitude should be represented as a Passion. There are no limits to the number of cults joined, save that nobody can be a fanatic of more than one faith. An Adventurer can even join conflicting antagonistic cults, using one faith as a cover whilst continuing covert membership of another.

Attitude	Required Passion Value
Lax	None
Faithful	50%
Fanatic	80%

Secondly, since there are relatively few priests, shamans or sorcerers in Nuera, cult membership is not an indication of magical ability. Only those specifically trained as magic users during Adventurer Generation (such as Priest, Shaman, Sorcerer, Warlock or Warpriest) gain powers.

Thirdly, the ranks and progression of cult members vary slightly.

Cult Rank

Cult Skill Requirements	Priest/War-Priest Rank ¹	Sorcerer/Warlock Rank	Shaman Rank ²
None	Neophyte	Novice	Aspirant
5 at 50%	Initiate	Brother	Kupua
4 at 75%	Acolyte	Adept	Yachak
3 at 100%	Cleric	Wizard	Angakok
2 at 125 %	Hierophant	Mage	Babalawo

¹ For the purposes of learning and recovering Divine Magic, treat Neophytes as Lay Members, Initiates and Acolytes the same, Clerics as Rune Lords and Hierophants as Rune Priests.

² For the purposes of Shamanic abilities as regards the Spirit Walking skill and binding limits, treat Kupuas as Followers, Yachak as Spirit Worshippers, Angakok as Shaman and Babalawo as High Shaman.

Changes in Magical Terminology

As part of generating a more atmospheric setting, the Divine Magic skills of Pact (Specific Theology) and Lore (Specific Theology) have been renamed to Piety and Invoke respectfully. These names are slightly more intuitive to the high fantasy feel of

Wraith Recon.

Additionally the names for the different types of magic can be adjusted by a Games Master to something more specific for Nuera.

Art	Required Skills	High Magic	Common Magic
Divine Magic	Piety (Pantheon or God), Invoke	Miracles	Blessings
Sorcery	Grimoire (Specific Order), Manipulation	Spells	Cantrips
Spirit Magic	Spirit Walking, Spirit Binding	Fetishes	Charms



Standard Divine Magic

Certain *miracles* are common to all divine cults, reflecting common rites, magical approaches and so on. Rather than list all of these common spells on a cult-by-cult basis, they are listed here.

Behold
Blessing
Consecrate
Excommunicate
Extension

If a divine cult has the entry 'Standard' as part of its Higher Magic description then all of these miracles are available to cult priests.

Innumerable Religions

Across the continent of Rardarri are scattered disparate cultures, many of which are independent of national borders. The deities of these societies serve the populace which form them, no matter how their society is structured. Neither race nor profession preclude religious belief.

Since the majority of cultures in Nuera are polytheistic, most folk believe in a multitude of divine beings and can be members of multiple cults. There is nothing to hinder such practice, indeed it is socially acceptable – even necessary – to grant religious and philosophical freedom. The ability of priests to join different cults is an entirely different matter. Usually a priest can only draw upon the powers of the pantheon and never outside of that faith.

The following sections of this chapter look at the major cults and religions of Rardarri, giving details about their members and habits. Listed are the philosophies of the organisations, as well as a detailed list of sins. Also included are the magical powers given to those trained as priests, sorcerers or shamans. Although only a brief overview, they are some of the largest and most influential cults in and around Dardarrick.

THE DARDARRIAN TRINITY

'Too strong is the will of men when working against those of the gods; but stronger still it becomes when obeying them.'

— Ancient All Father Proverb

Arguably the oldest and most worshipped pantheon of Dardarrick, the deities of the Trinity are those which have most strongly guided the religious development, and indeed history, of the Lion of Rardarri. Formed of three gods known as Praxious, Matriarias and the All Father; the Trinity currently holds pre-eminence, although individual sects have fluctuated in their popularity.

A worshipper of the pantheon is automatically considered to be a lax member of each of the three faiths and – when not specifically proscribed – can freely attend services and participate in religious celebrations.

Priests dedicated to one god are capable of learning and recovering the Divine Magic of the other two gods in the Trinity as if a priest of two ranks lower. Such 'loaned' miracles have a Magnitude limited to half the priest's Piety. For instance a Cleric with Piety (All Father) could cast Initiate level miracles from either Matriarias or Praxious.

Details of each god's faith and powers follow.

The All Father – The Creator

The All Father was said to be the first god to come to the barren world and see it as a blank canvas, on which to create his masterpiece. He walked the world and drew upon it where he believed his design would come together. When he was ready to begin, he sent his will into the infinite planes seeking out other deities to come to help him create the world. With these arrivals came Matriarias, drawn to his side and with her he sired Praxious his flawed but ambitious son.

At first the new deities partook of the All Father's vision, raising mountains, seeding forests and building places for newly fashioned races to settle and grow. Yet when creativity was stifled by the All Father's design, discontent soon spread amongst the gods who began to feud, spurred on by Praxious, the creator's own son. When war broke out it took all of the All Father's strength and diplomacy to eventually bring a truce, allowing the gods offspring to rule their own destiny in exchange for the All Father relinquishing control.

As protective of the world as he is of its inhabitants, the All Father is a warm and loving god that shelters his folk and respects the creations of his godly peers. He does so by teaching his followers that all life is precious and must be protected. He defends the sanctity of his original idea through the tenets of his faith and the true followers of the All Father detest violence and will go to great lengths to stop others from harming the innocent. No one is infallible however and even the All Father has been forced over the ages to set aside his own teachings to bring order back to his creation.

The All Father represents the better nature of all sentient life, the will and the wish to do better for children and families. His followers are often generous and loyal to their acquaintances, making sure that neighbours are aided before seeing to their own needs. Nothing is more sacred to an All Father worshipper than setting himself in the way of danger targeting others.

The Path of Righteousness

The leader of all the gods and the creator of all civilisations, the All Father is the most commonly worshipped god in Dardarrick because of his strong convictions toward doing the right thing for the whole of society. He is set above the rest of the gods but his priesthood uses their authority fairly and without guile. He has few requirements of his worshippers:

- ☛ **Defend your Home and Neighbours:** Do not seek conflict; it is better to be the shield than the sword.

- ☛ **Magic should Serve the People:** Magic is a gift that should be studied and used for the growth of the community, not the strength of the individual.
- ☛ **Be Loyal to your Rulers and Elders:** They have lived and learned, and so you should learn from them to better teach those that come after you.

The Hierarchy of Sins

- ☛ **Starting a Conflict:** Worshippers of the All Father consider it to be a terrible crime against the faith to take offensive actions that are not directly tied to the defence of another. Some consider any military action that is not a border defence to be a transgression against the All Father's teachings.
- ☛ **Abusing Magic:** Magic was part of a deal made by the All Father with all of the world's mortals. Using it for selfish or ignoble reasons is a vile act that worshippers should avoid at all costs. The abuse of magic is never thought of in a good light; it is a sign of moral weakness.
- ☛ **Betraying Your Rightful Rulers:** One of the greatest divine tragedies in pre-history was when Praxious tried to go against the All Father's wishes. The idea of betrayal is an anathema to the All Father and anyone who willingly goes against the right and just ruler of a culture commits a crime against him.
- ☛ **Allowing Others to Suffer:** When someone is in pain and suffering, it is the All Father's belief that they should be given care and aid, even at the cost to the worshipper themselves. This goes for enemies as well as allies. There are some worshippers that take this tenet of the faith as an excuse to dispatch wounded enemies; whereas most believe it to mean the benign treatment of prisoners.
- ☛ **Allow Harm to Befall a Child:** The defence of the innocent is at the heart of the faith and nothing is more innocent than a child. Any faithful member of the All Father's church must never stand by idly when a child is put into danger. It is considered one of the most damning sins and many clerics and paladins will quickly set aside their lean toward defence to bring a sinner of this law to justice.

Worshipper Attitudes

The following are general attitudes of the three types of follower in the All Father faith.

The Lax – Most of the population of Dardarrick are worshippers of the All Father and the majority fall into the category of lax believers. Lax worshippers are generally good people that would go out of their way to help their friends, families and neighbours but not likely if it would risk their own safety or comfort level. They live their lives with the idea that everyone should have the same sorts of freedoms that they do but will not readily defend that belief.

The Faithful – The truly faithful members of the All Father's church are stalwart defenders of their community and often volunteer their free time on the city watch or guard. Clerics seek out those who need their shield to hide behind and are

well-liked amongst the people of their community. Some faithful in the priesthood disapprove of the use of violence even to defend others, preferring to use magic and diplomacy to aid the weak.

The Fanatic – There are two types of All Father fanatics; the pacifists and the martyrs. Pacifists believe that any use of force is an offence against the All Father, who is the only being that can punish wrongdoers. Martyrs believe that the All Father will forgive them of their sins of violence and offensive behaviour so long as they target those with evil or worse intentions. Both camps of fanatics are dangerous; the former mostly to themselves and their own allies.

Priest Membership

Only males may become priests. Joining the cult as a neophyte priest usually occurs just after the applicant's rite of manhood. It requires no skills or financial contributions, just turn up to the local temple to swear an oath to follow the tenants of the faith, after which the applicant is housed and supported by the place of worship. Since places may be limited, a test of Lore (Dardarrick) between the candidates is sometimes needed to qualify. Neophytes study the faith and history of the All Father but during this time gain knowledge of only the cult blessings.

Becoming an Initiate requires knowing five cult skills at 50% or better. In the initiation ceremony the priest must make their first dedication of POW to the god and may begin to learn the cult's miracles.

Further progression requires the minimum cult skill requirements as illustrated in the Cult Rank table at the start of the chapter, combined with a 'test of faith' orchestrated by the upper echelons of the faith. This normally places the priest in a morally grey situation where their cult ethics are stretched to breaking point. No priest is specifically aware of forthcoming trials or sometimes of even being tested. Promotion comes when superiors deem a candidate ready.

Blessings

Bearing Witness, Countermagic, Dullblade, Golden Tongue, Parry, Spirit Bane, Understanding.

Miracles

In addition to the Standard miracles, the cult provides Alter Target, Disarm, Fidelity, Harmony, Mindlink, and Shield.

All Father Miracles

Fidelity

Duration Special, Rank Cleric, Touch

The caster entrusts someone with the tenacity to stay loyal to the cult, no matter the distraction. Whilst the caster maintains the spell (not recovering or releasing it), the target (who must be willing)

cannot betray his duties to the cult for any reason. Bribery, threats, torture or even magical persuasion (of equal or lower Magnitude) will fail in the face of Fidelity. Although this magical stubbornness could lead to unnecessary violence, it allows the cult to keep its secrets and safeguards without fail.

Harmony

Area Special, Duration 15, Rank Acolyte, Resist (Persistence)

Harmony affects everyone within an area whose diameter is equal to the Magnitude of the spell in metres. It automatically dismisses all Demoralise and Fanaticism spells and anyone who fails to resist is prevented from performing a violent action or expressing anger until the miracle expires.

Cult Skills

Courtesy, Culture (other), Influence, Language (other), Oratory, Persistence, Piety (All Father).

Matriarias – Goddess of the Home and Hearth

Matriarias was one of the last gods to come to Nuera. She had little to do with the creation of the world, leaving such matters to her peers. Instead, she did her best to offer hospitality, enchanting the All Father to share her bed, from which their son Praxious was begat. Once war broke out amongst the heavens, anyone that came to her for shelter was helped and healed – no matter who or what they were.

After the All Father declared an armistice, Matriarias became an ally to all. Everyone suffered losses in the war and the hearth goddess made it her mission to mend as many of them as she could. Occupying herself with putting right the gods, her worshippers had to do her work in the world of mortals. The wake of the war would have been worse if it were not for the faithful of Matriarias.

Matriarias's followers are dedicated to the safety and generosity that one can find inside a welcoming home. Her temples are hostels, her shrines located over the mantles of hundreds of cottages and longhouses across the lands. Worshippers dedicate their lives to helping others and setting up peaceful places where anyone can get away from the dangers of the world outside. Although they do not have many friends in the more selfish or violent faiths, worshippers of the hearth goddess are rarely turned away in civilised communities.

The Path of Righteousness

Matriarias is the goddess of compassion, welcome and hospitality. Her soup can warm the bones of the frostbitten, the smell of her baking bread can bring the dying back from the brink and a fireside song from her lips could put a dragon to ease. She is very popular in Dardarrick and the few civilised villages in the Wildlands. She asks only these things of her worshippers:

- ☉ **Share what you have with those that do not:** You must always give what you can to those less than fortunate than you.
- ☉ **Hospitality is Inviolable:** Should you allow someone into your home or shelter, they must be treated as an honoured guest and not harmed in any way.
- ☉ **Treat all those who Require Succour:** Anyone, friend or foe, who needs help or attention should be treated to the best of one's ability.

The Hierarchy of Sins

- ☉ **Locking the Main Entrance:** Matriarias teaches her followers that their homes are the temples and shrines of the faith and locking the front door to her holy places is like taking the sword from a war god's paladin. No faithful worshipper would dare lock or bar the entrance to where they are currently staying.
- ☉ **Showing Greed over Charity:** The world provides enough for Matriarias' followers and choosing to hoard things that others would find more useful is a sin against her beliefs.
- ☉ **Starting Conflict in Another's Home:** The home is taught to be the safest place for all who come under a peaceful banner. Any worshipper that dares to start a conflict under an invitation of hospitality risks the wrath of the hearth goddess and her followers.
- ☉ **Allowing the Wounded to go Unhealed:** Matriarias could never stand by and watch others suffer during the War of Creation and she expects the same empathy and care from her worshippers. Any follower of Matriarias that dares let a wounded creature or being to go without healing – even mundane first aid – is committing a heinous sin against her faith.
- ☉ **Use of Ingested Poisons:** Food and drink are sacrosanct in the faith of the hearth goddess and to ever use them in a hostile way is a crime against her beliefs. Anyone found using food or drink to deliver poisons or toxins can be expected to be excommunicated, before being handed over to the authorities.
- ☉ **Harming an Invited Guest:** An invitation to one's home is the single most important facet of trust and honour a worshipper of Matriarias can offer someone. To break the sanctity of such an offer with violence is punishable in the faith by excommunication for a common member; for clergy the punishment is death.

Worshipper Attitudes

The following are general attitudes of the three types of follower in the Matriarias faith.

The Lax – Most Dardarrians keep a small blue candle burning over their hearth to honour the goddess, even if they do not hold her teachings as laws in their everyday lives. She has a very large following in dwarven communities but most do not hold by her tenets *all* of the time. It is very easy to help those you invite into your home but most lax worshippers are not ready to throw wide their doors and let any strangers come and eat at their tables.

The Faithful – The faithful of Matriarias are some of the finest people of Nuera to ever come across when hungry, tired or wounded. They will gladly give anything of their own that they do

not need to a troubled wanderer and wherever they are staying is as good as a church for those who need blessing or healing. They can be very defensive of their beliefs and if one asks an offender to 'go outside' they should be ready for one hell of a fight.

The Fanatic – A plentiful number of Matriarias' worshippers become fanatics over the course of their lives; as they see the world get darker and more violent around them they turn to their goddess' teachings to get them through. Most fanatics of the faith are vagabonds and nomads with little to show for themselves, choosing instead to give everything to others in order to help make the world a better place. Fanatical champions of Matriarias seek out troublemakers and those who break hospitality specifically to challenge them in open combat – culling their kind from society one at a time.

Priestess Membership

Only females may become priests. Joining the cult as a neophyte priestess usually occurs just after puberty. It requires a gift to the local temple of something fashioned by the applicant, or a performance of an artistic skill such as singing or playing an instrument. If a position is available, the applicant is housed and supported by the place of worship whilst undergoing tuition. Since places may be limited, a test of a cult skill between the candidates is sometimes needed to qualify. Neophytes study the customs, skills and blessings taught by Matriarias.

Becoming an Initiate requires knowing five cult skills at 50% or better. In the initiation ceremony the priestess must make her first dedication of POW to the goddess and may start learning her miracles.

Further progression requires the minimum cult skill requirements as illustrated in the Cult Rank table at the start of the chapter, combined with a celebratory ceremony to which the entire temple and its guests are invited, the priestess providing all the food and entertainment for the evening to prove the worthiness of her advance. At the higher ranks, such celebrations often draw in connoisseurs from far away.

Blessings

Demoralise, Endurance, Heal, Light, Repair, Second Sight, Warmth.

Miracles

In addition to the Standard miracles, the cult provides Bless Home, Comfort Song, Heal Mind, Heal Wound and Sleep.

Matriarias Miracles

Bless Home

Duration Special, Rank Initiate, Ranged

This spell blesses a dwelling. Whilst the caster maintains the spell (not recovering or releasing it) the dwelling is made immune to harm of any kind and will withstand fire, flood, storm and

earthquake. Direct damage will not affect it and all within its walls will be held safe.

Comfort Song

Duration Special, Rank Acolyte, Touch

This spell has a Duration, in hours, equal to one tenth of the caster's Sing skill. Whilst in effect, a number of recipients equal to the Magnitude touched by the caster, feel no pain and any detrimental effect of a Serious or Major Wound *previously* sustained may be ignored; although the damage itself is unhealed and the victim can still die of blood loss or shock. Instant death is not affected. Any further wounding will negate the spell on that recipient. At the end of the spell the pain returns and an unopposed Resilience roll, depending on the nature of the wound, may be required to remain active or conscious.

Sleep

Duration Special, Rank Cleric, Resist (Persistence), Touch

Instantly sends the target to sleep unless they attempt to resist. Failure results a deep slumber that lasts for a number of hours equal to the spell's Magnitude, during which time they cannot be awakened. If the spell is successfully resisted then the target suffers a number of levels of Fatigue equal to the spell's Magnitude divided by two, for the spell's Duration.

Cult Skills

First Aid, Healing, Insight, Piety (Matriarias), Play Instrument, Seduction, Sing.

Praxious – The Brazen God of Freedom

Praxious was born into the world, the golden son of the All Father who could do no wrong. At first he enjoyed the freedom of running unfettered across the world but soon he grew tired of seeing the same things everywhere – limited in scope and creativity. He wished to implement his own conceptions but such ideas were at odds with his father's plans. Frustrated with the patriarchal authority he began to petition the other gods with his thoughts, spreading discontent and a desire for liberation, propagating a war in heaven.

Praxious ignored the All Father's demands to conform, enjoying too greatly the chance to pit his strength against that of other deities. When that soured, he descended to Nuera and turned the newly formed races of the world against their makers, igniting the flames of conflict. Seeking to champion mortal-kind against their makers, Praxious wished to prove his superiority over the gods. Yet ultimately as race after race suffered devastation, his allies abandoned him and the son was forced to submit to the will of his father, chastised, his golden aura tarnished by the stain of his acts.

Ever since the Dawning, the prodigal son has been a thorn in the All Father's side. Still somewhat rebellious, he always speaks out against perceived weakness or repression, yet keeps his darker side under control until accumulated power triggers his violent, ambitious streak. Yet these antisocial traits have served the Dardarrian people frequently throughout history, giving them the

strength to throw off the shackles of slavery or foolish autocracy. Hence Praxious always keeps his place as a balance against blind conservatism and stagnation.

The Path of Righteousness

The god of freedom and revolution, Praxious was the first to rebel against the All Father in pre-history. He is a warlike god that has always believed in the symbiosis between strength of arms and strength of faith. Due to recent events, his worship has become secretive in Dardarrick – but seems to be strengthening in Lorn. He demands the following:

- ☉ **The Weak Should Not Rule The Strong:** Any laws or leaders that say or show otherwise must be discarded for the betterment of the world.
- ☉ **Death to Undeath:** Undeath is ultimate slavery, a bondage which can last for eternity. The living dead should be destroyed wherever they can be found.
- ☉ **Force others to help themselves:** Charity undermines self-sufficiency and leads to weakness.

The Hierarchy of Sin

- ☉ **Suffering the Risen to Exist:** Praxious teaches that undeath is a vile condition – false strength given to failed flesh prevents the soul to achieve liberation. Any worshipper of the Brazen One that sees an undead creature must do what it can to destroy it utterly. This is why the faiths of Praxious and Mortessal are never at peace with one another.
- ☉ **Following the Orders of the Weak:** Praxious went so far as to stand against the will of the All Father because he felt his decisions were meek and poorly thought out. Brazen worshippers are expected to never follow blindly those who are considered weak or inferior. This is often determined by physical strength alone but magical or spiritual prowess can figure into this mentality as well.
- ☉ **Doing Something for Another Unpaid or Unrewarded:** Charity work is something that the weak use to stay alive in a world that would otherwise devour them and Praxious teaches that nothing is truly free. The spoils of war are bought with strength and sweat and the idea of giving anything away without some kind of recompense is sinful. Even if that price is paid without the payer knowing, it *must* be paid.
- ☉ **Refusing to Preach the Brazen Ideal:** All members of the Brazen One's religion are not only expected to serve him and his ways loyally but they are also to try to evangelise to others about it. A faith is only as strong as its congregation and adding new members to Praxious' is key to his eventual domination of Rardarri. Any faithful follower who goes 13 days without preaching the ideas of Praxious to another, will need to give himself three lashes in contrition for his 'fear' or 'laziness'.
- ☉ **Being Defeated in Single Combat by an Outsider:** Strength of faith and strength of arms are considered synonymous in the church of Praxious and deadly challenges between single combatants are commonplace. When these duels take place between a Brazen follower and an outsider, it is a shameful sin to be defeated by someone who does not have the strength of Praxious behind them.

Worshipper Attitudes

The following are general attitudes of the three types of follower in the Praxious faith.

The Lax – At the time of the Theocracy controlled by Hierophant Tomar, most of Dardarrick's population could be considered lax worshippers. At first they willingly attended masses and holiday gatherings but by the end of his dictatorship, most only paid lip service to the Brazen One in order to avoid his templars' wrath. Now that Dardarrick is no longer controlled by a Hierophant and the cult has been repressed by order of the king, there are few lax worshippers left – most have either become faithful cultists or only attend the more acceptable faiths of Matriarias and the All Father. However, with the threat of invasion by undead, many folk are once again praying before Praxious's shrines.

The Faithful – Those who are members of the Cult of Praxious within Dardarrick are risking a great deal to call the Brazen One their patron god, so they must have more than a little faith in his teachings. They are almost always physically powerful and many of them live martial lives in town watches and the armed forces. What he loses out in compassion, Praxious makes up for in physical power and prowess.

The Fanatic – Many of the current Praxious worshippers in Dardarrick are fanatics. They follow the words of the obsessed Tomarsson; meeting secretly in hidden places and offering bloody sacrifices to the Brazen One to appease their current situation. These devotees might practice their religion in secret to avoid the All Father's spies but many of them are ready to fly their colours – damned be to anyone who would say otherwise.

Priesthood Membership

Members of either sex may become priests, although few go far without acquiring a ruthless determination. Joining the cult can be done at any age and all are welcome, requiring only to swear a damning oath to serve the faith's principles. Applicants are taught at the place of worship but must support themselves and live elsewhere whilst undergoing tuition. Such training is harsh, many candidates dropping out due to the physical demands or becoming critically injured or even killed. In the turbulent days of the Theocracy, often less than half of all neophytes remained in the priesthood. Neophytes study the customs and skills important to Praxious, especially combat and the cult blessings.

Becoming an Initiate requires knowing five cult skills at 50% or better. In the initiation ceremony the priest receives a brand of Praxious' holy symbol on a secret place upon their body. They must make his first dedication of POW to the god and begin to study his miracles.

Further progression requires the minimum cult skill requirements as illustrated in the Cult Rank table at the start of the chapter. Actual recognition of worthiness to be elevated requires the priest to defeat or overthrow his superior in a challenge. This can be a martial test or a political one, depending on the circumstances. If

the challenge fails there is no animosity, since such things are an expected part of the faith. However, all challenges are expected to be done openly with witnesses – secret coups are frowned upon, as they lead to murder or other less savoury acts, which threaten the unity of the cult itself.

Blessings

Bludgeon, Detect Undead, Disruption, Fanaticism, Protection, Strength, Vigour.

Miracles

In addition to the Standard miracles, the cult provides Channel Strength, Dismiss Magic, Soul Sight, Spirit Block and True Mace.

Cult Skills

Athletics, Brawn, Combat Style (any), First Aid, Influence, Piety (Praxious), Resilience.

LORNISH ANIMISM

The Lorn Hegemony was originally created by hobgoblin tribes, who turned their backs on the dictates of the All Father, preferring to form an empire based on domination rather than peaceful cooperation. In their spread down from the Whinaugh Range the hobgoblins brought their own religious practices with them, which over time were acquired by the peoples they ruled over.

Lornish animism is a shamanic tradition, which started by paying respect to the dangerous spirits of the world. These were originally mountains, storms and glaciers but have now expanded to include others such as the turbulent seas, forest fires and diseases that blight croplands. According to the original hobgoblin beliefs, all the great spirits of the world pay homage to 'The Mighty One' – the original shaman from before time, when all races were but a single race. It is his will and drum that guides the spirits, sending misfortune to those who do not respect the laws of tribe and the authority of the patriarchs.

Although shamanism is considered by many Dardarrians as a primitive throwback, the Hegemony has evolved the cult, granting it a great deal of sophistication in urban centres, where worshippers venerate the spirits of dead ancestors, calling upon them for aid during times of strife. Ancestor worship is so prevalent in Lorn, that every town and city is filled with extensive necropolises, the majority of which are better built and decorated than the homes of the families that revere them.

Shamans fulfil a number of positions within the society of the Hegemony. Those attached to remote rural tribes guide their people in the ancient traditions, venerating the nature spirits that inhabit mountains and wilderness. Shamans in towns where nature has been displaced by agriculture and architecture are appointed as ancestor guardians; one per private necropolis if the family is wealthy and large enough to support the shaman, or several if attached to a civic necropolis, such as one belonging to a guild or city ward.

A warband, or Century as they are known in the army, is usually assigned at least one shaman to grant it magical support in battle – often more depending on the magical opposition it is facing and the number of shamans available to the tribe which fielded that unit. It is the shamans who care for the great spirit, which resides in the battle standard of each warband and produce the fetishes sometimes given to the unit commanders.

The Path of Righteousness

With so many diverse spirits that can exert control over a family or tribe, there are few firm rules universal to Lornish Animism. Depending on the type of spirit, they might demand the following:

- ☉ **Respect the Homes of the Spirits:** Whether it be the spirit of a mountain or the soul of a hero bound within a battle banner, the location or item where it resides should be treated with the greatest deference.
- ☉ **Feed the Spirits with Mana:** The authority and status of the spirit should be increased wherever possible, by telling tales of its achievements, by making sacrifices to it and by forming pacts with it.
- ☉ **Resist the Tyranny of the Trinity:** It was the All Father who tried to expunge all conflict from the world; however without struggle there would be no clear authority and no way to enforce rule. It was Matriarists who tried to seduce the Mighty One into abandoning the veneration of spirits for the soulless art of sorcery; yet it is sorcery that has caused the greatest disasters the world has experienced. It was Praxious who crushed all resistance to the Trinity; but became a beast who slew innocents in his passion.

The Hierarchy of Sin

- ☉ **Enslaving Spirits without Reprieve:** No worshipper should keep an unwilling spirit bound. If a pact is formed with a spirit it should be honoured, else face the turning of other spirits against them.
- ☉ **Allowing a Sacred Spot to be Polluted:** Be it a spirit inhabited waterfall or the necropolis of a patriarchs family, the home of spirits should not be polluted or harmed in any way. Deliberate defiling of such places result in severe punishments due to the risk of its spirit withdrawing from contact and refusing to aid shamans.
- ☉ **Forgetting to Propitiate the Spirits:** Spirits who are ignored tend to become resentful towards those that reside within their region or are belatedly remembered and called upon. A mountain spirit may drop a few rocks from its slopes as a warning, perhaps creating a landslide later in anger. Whereas ancestor spirits may curse their offspring.

Worshipper Attitudes

The following are general attitudes of the three types of follower in the Praxious faith.

The Lax – The majority of Lorn are considered to be lax animists and ancestor worshippers. They perform the annual celebrations to propitiate great spirits of importance to their settlement or family but do little more than pay lip service to lesser spirits that

have little direct bearing on their lives. This amounts to minor acts of superstition, laying out offerings of food or avoiding spots considered sacred.

The Faithful – Faithful worshippers are generally limited to members of warbands who form pacts with their military standards and family descendants of a particularly revered ancestor. Warriors who venerate the hero bound within their banner protect it with their lives, preventing any harm to befall it. Ancestor worshippers often volunteer to place themselves on offer to host ancestors called back to the land of the living.

The Fanatic – Few fanatical animists exist. Those which do are most often hermits who protect sacred areas home to important spirits, for example a fanatic may guard an abandoned necropolis from looters (or perhaps the despoilers from the anger of the spirits within). Sometimes they become vengeance seeking hunters who track down those who abuse or destroy spirits.

Shaman Membership

Within Lornish cultural traditions only males may become shamans. Every autumn the young boys of a clan or family are taken to the Festival of Dead Return, when the gates of the underworld open and ghosts roam the world. During this celebration, pre-pubescent boys are taken to a nearby necropolis or burial ground and requested to dance for the ancestors, closely observed by the shaman.

Boys who draw more attention from the wandering spirits, whether due to their high POW and CON, or the beauty of their dancing, are taken by the shamans as aspirant apprentices. The families are forbidden to prevent this subornment, indeed having a son inducted into the retinue of a famous shaman is seen as a great blessing.

Aspirants spend their time learning about the spirit world, the types of otherworldly beings that inhabit it and minor charms of benefit. Once the youth has improved five of the shamanistic cult skills to 50% they are permitted to attempt a graduation test. This involves summoning and binding their first spirit into a fetish. The shaman in attendance will not save the aspirant if he gets into trouble, thus the test is often a fatal experience. This harsh trial is a lesson in the dangers of the spirit world, helping to teach wary respect to the over ambitious.

Those that succeed are promoted to the rank of Kupua and begin to nurture relationships with spirits revealed to them by their masters. Their responsibilities are to the local community, casting charms and dealing with minor spiritual nuisances. Once four of their cult skills reach 75% they are permitted the chance to find their fetch. This takes the form of an extremely difficult quest, culminating in a challenge against one of tribe's or families' spiritual enemies. Failure generally results in the shaman's death.

Those shamans clever or powerful enough to survive not only gain a fetch but are also recognised as Yachak. With their additional strength, Yachak assume the essential roles of necropolis keeper, tribal guide or banner tender. They not only keep the spirits under their control happy, or at least passive, but they also create powerful

fetishes to augment important leaders in their community. After long years of faithful service, those shamans who master three cult skills at 100% may qualify for entry into the Circle of Angakoks. Membership is dependent on successfully performing a major quest, for example the binding of a great spirit, the freeing of a sorcerously entombed ancestor, or the recovery of a legendary fetish.

The power of Angakoks is such that they do not perform mundane services for the community. Rather they work together to preserve the shamanic cult traditions, warding it from the corrupting influences of Dardarrian sorcerers or foreign gods. If necessary, the Circle of Angakoks occasionally gather together to awaken (or bind) gargantuan spirits of mountain or storm for the protection of the hegemony. Such rituals take months of ceremonial preparations but once completed, result in titanic effects.

Only a handful of shamans ever achieve the skills necessary for recognition as Babalawo. These individuals usually retreat to locations inaccessible to mortals (like mountaintops or long forgotten burial grounds) and wander the hegemony in their spirit form; sensing the subtle manipulations in both the spirit and material worlds and guiding key individuals to counter threats they perceive.

Shamanic Rank Abilities

Rank	Max Number of Bound Spirits	Spirit Walking Abilities
Aspirant	None	Detect presence of spirits
Kupua	¼ of CHA	See and identify spirits
Yachak	½ of CHA	Communicate with spirits
Angakok	¾ of CHA	Enter the Spirit Plane
Babalawo	Entire CHA	Draw others onto the Spirit Plane

Charms

Befuddle, Countermagic, Frostbite, Heal, Host, Second Sight, Warmth.

Fetishes

Shamans of the Lornish tradition may summon Ancestor Spirits, Guardian Spirits and Nature Spirits. They also have knowledge of how to summon Air and Earth elementals. The cult destroys Disease and Curse spirits when found.

Cult Skills

Dancing, Insight, Lore (Spirit World), Perception, Singing, Spirit Binding, Spirit Walking.

MERSMERRO – SCALED LORD OF THE SWAMPS

When the All Father opened the 1,000 portals across the cosmos, Mersmerro was one of the divine beings who answered the call. The Scaled Lord arrived wearing the mask of the Prey, setting

Lornish Shamanic Cult Charm

The following charm is specific to Lornish shamans and generally only used on the battlefield (see Banner Spirits) or in defence of a necropolis or family shrine.

Host

Area Special, Duration 5, Magnitude 1, Progressive

All willing cult members within the spell's area form an ethereal bond to a specific spirit. This bond allows the spirit to freely draw upon the Magic Points of its faithful followers, taking at least one Magic Point when the spell begins. In exchange the magical ability or effect of the spirit affects everyone with whom it has established a bond.

For example, if a shaman casts a Host spell between a Guardian spirit and 10 warriors that venerate it, the spirit will protect all of the warriors but draw upon their Magic Points if attacked in spirit combat or magically damaged. Likewise if Host was cast on an ancestor spirit, it could grant its skills to the participants.

Nothing prevents the spirit from draining all the Magic Points of the participants. The radius of the area is equal to the Magnitude of the spell. In rough terms the spell affects the following number of participants at each Magnitude:

Magnitude	Participants
1	5
2	15
3	30
4	50
5	80
6	Over 100



itself to the task of shaping the southern regions of Rardarri to its preference. When it had finished Mersmerro gave birth to a myriad of offspring, scattering them across the swamps and marshes.

When the King of Beasts arrived to protest this usurpation of his authority and the Sea Gods complained at the pollution of their saline waters, Mersmerro changed its mask to that of Predator – setting his sights on hunting the creatures of both the land and sea. Its progeny, those that wriggled, those which crawled and those which walked on two legs, were the Scaled Lord's first worshippers and they arose in droves to defend the swamps against the interlopers who would crush them.

The battles raged but none could withstand the scaly folk, who spread from their marsh homes, marching forth across the land

Banner Spirits

Within the hegemony, each mercenary warband or army century has as its focal centre a banner inhabited by an ancestor or totemic spirit. The spirit may have been the founding commander of the unit or a tutelary being important to the clan, which raised the troops. Whatever its origin the spirit is bound into the war standard, which acts as a fetish.

In normal daily routine the banner is treated with respect, kept clean and polished (or perhaps blood spattered depending on the unit), with occasional sacrifices to honour the spirit within. During battle however, the shaman assigned to the unit frees the spirit from the banner and casts the Host charm. This allows the spirit to affect or protect the entire Century, if the spell is cast at a high enough Magnitude.

In these circumstances, banner spirits become clearly visible to those able to perceive magic, squatting or spreading over the entire Century. Depending on the opposition faced, this can make the spirit the target of direct magical assault. To withstand such barrages, the spirit draws upon the magical strength of the unit members, using their Magic Points to restore its own. If two Lornish warbands meet each other in combat, it is not unusual for the conflicting banner spirits to begin Spirit Combat, the loser fleeing back to its fetish as the troops collapse around it.



and swimming the wide ocean, protected by their thick skins and poisonous bites. The deities who had assaulted Mersmerro faced defeat and approached the All Father to negotiate a settlement. With the tide turned Mersmerro donned its Prey mask and peacefully retreated into the fetid mud, leaving dominion of the dry lands to the dirtwalkers and the cool depths to the sea beings. The marshes and swamps would ever remain a buffer between the two kingdoms, even though Mersmerro's children thrived in both realms.

Worship of Mersmerro is different from any other type of faith. It is a cyclical belief system that has its holiest of clergy change from introverted 'prey' aspects that build villages and create community to 'predator' crusaders that believe their god can only be sated through the vanquishing of lesser beings that were not born with scales and fangs. The entire kingdom of Torres is the home and central source of the Mersmerro faith, as it is covered in the marshes and swamps that the Swamp Lord once slithered and swam in before the Dawning. Most of the Torresh population are faithful members of the faith; many of which hunt down non-believers as part of their holy right, once the mask turns to that of Predator.

The Path of Righteousness

The lord of all swamps, marshes and wetland jungles, Mersmerro is a nature deity that is tied to the plants and animals of these places. There are few temples or shrines to the god due to the slow sinking of such places into the mud or being slowly overgrown during the adoption of the Predator Mask. Heavily adorned priests and storytellers carry the faith with them, travelling by boat or riding reptiles native to the region. He is the patron god of lizardfolk, saurians, troglodytes and crocodilians, only the serpentmen have become apostate to his rule. He asks of his followers:

- ☉ **Choose a natural path:** Prey or predator. Prey worshippers must work for the community and the people, predatory followers must seek battle and conquest over 'infidels'.
- ☉ **You must risk life and limb to appreciate a foe:** Ranged combat is forbidden if the weapon is not thrown or puffed. No bows or crossbows but blowguns and javelins are fine.
- ☉ **Do not hunt for sport:** Always use some of what you kill or capture.

The Hierarchy of Sins

Seeking Conquest When the Mask is Prey Ascendant: During the months or years that the high priests shows Mersmerro's mask is that of the Prey, anyone found starting a crusade will be flogged and ordered to make amends with the community.

- ☉ **Forging Peace When the Mask is Predator Ascendant:** While the high priests show the Swamp Lord's mask to be of the Predator, all faithful worshippers found to be playing the role of Prey will be fed to his children (crocodiles).
- ☉ **Unnecessarily Harming a Child of Mersmerro:** Crocodiles, lizards, serpents and dinosaurs are said to be the direct descendants of the Swamp Lord, his children on this world. Worshippers that are caught bringing them to harm without good reason are de-toothed painfully and ritually, making them eternally into 'Prey'.
- ☉ **Dishonouring a Foe through Infidel Combat:** Mersmerro teaches that the body of his worshippers is their temple and that anything worth doing is worth doing with the burn in their muscles and the aches in their bones. 'Infidel combat' is any form of ranged warfare that does not use the muscle or soul to propel the attacks; magic and thrown weaponry are fine but the use of bows and crossbows is punishable by severed fingers.
- ☉ **Dishonouring the Art of the Hunt:** Hunting for food or supplies is a necessity in the swamp, especially when on the path of the Predator. Sport or trophy hunting that does not see further use out of the kill is a sin. Worshippers caught doing this are tied to a black oak in the swamp and left for the natural beasts to punish accordingly.
- ☉ **Taking Action at MIDDAY:** Mersmerro was known to bask in the high sunlight every day, meditating in the warmth to reinvigorate themselves. Worshippers of the Swamp Lord are expected to do the same or at least take on a half-hour of inactivity each day at noon to symbolise this period of holy rest.

☉ **Failing to Bless Any Live Meal:** Many of Mersmerro's worshippers are carnivorous, frequently hunting and consuming live prey. Those that do must always say a quick blessing either before dining or before the hunt begins to give the spiritual portion of the meal to the Swamp Lord. Failure to do so is said to bring about spiritual emptiness and physical intestinal distress.

☉ **Acknowledging the Equality of Any Foreign God:** Mersmerro is a proud and narcissistic god that rightfully believes in its own superiority after defeating so many foes from before the Dawning. Any worshipper of Mersmerro that acknowledges any other god's faith to be an equal peer of the Swamp Lord – even in jest – will find his life forfeit in the eyes of his brethren.

Worshipper Attitudes

The following are general attitudes of the three types of follower in the Mersmerro faith.

The Lax – Due to the zealous nature of most Mersmerro worshippers, the faith does not normally tolerate lax followers. When someone begins to pay homage to the Swamp Lord, they are often brought deeper into the fold and forced to abandon other beliefs out of fear of their fellow congregation members!

The Faithful – Those who account themselves among the faithful to Mersmerro are devout in their following of the tenets and codes laid down by the high priests. They are considered highly conservative, perhaps even fanatic, by many outside faith. They gladly follow the path of Prey or Predator as needed or directed and believe that physical strength and spiritual power should be shown to the world whenever they can, making them dangerous to those with little cultural understanding.

The Fanatic – Many of Mersmerro's worshippers fall into the role of fanatic solely because of their willingness to do morally questionable things in the Swamp Lord's name. Crusading jihads, village genocides, humanoid sacrifices; all of these things have precedence found in the core of Mersmerroism. These oftentimes troublesome practices separate the 'chosen few' in the congregation from merely the devoted.

Priesthood Membership

The religious leaders of Mersmerro are known as druid-priests, or more simply druids. Their faith comprises of the following ranks:

Druid Rank	Max Dedicated POW	Regain Divine Magic ¹	Spell Rank Equivalent ²
Neophyte	None	Cannot	Not Applicable
Initiate	¼ of POW	Piety test the day after at a shrine or temple	Initiate
Ovate	½ of POW	Piety test a day after whilst within wet lands	Acolyte
Druid	¾ of POW	Piety test an hour after whilst within wet lands	Rune Lord/Priest
Archdruid	Entire POW	Piety test an hour after no matter their location	Rune Lord/Priest

¹ Failing the test as an Initiate requires waiting another day. Failing as a higher ranked cult member requires returning to a shrine or temple to pray for the return of the miracle.

² This refers to the cult rank required to gain access to particular Divine Magic spells in the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*.

The priesthood of Mersmerro is open to all races and sexes, even those that are not scaled, although non reptilian races will find problems progressing to the higher druidic ranks. Prospective candidates for adoption as neophytes are given a rather off-putting test, being slung into a pool of crocodiles or similar scaled creatures. If the candidate emerges from the enclosure unharmed, they are considered blessed by Mersmerro and welcomed into the priesthood. The impartiality of the testing druids is sometimes questionable, the crocodiles being fed before favoured candidates are tested and starved for those candidates they dislike. Failed aspirants often sport terrible wounds that are respected as a mark of courage, even if they do denote failure.

Neophytes spend several years leaning the cult blessings and practicing the knowledge necessary for priesthood. When five of the cult skills have been raised to 50% the Neophyte is considered ready to attempt the Rite of Dominance, which involves journeying into the wetlands to locate a scaly beast of worthy challenge, such as a large crocodile, dinosaur or something similar. The neophyte must conquer the creature and return within a week riding the monster. Failure to locate a suitable animal indicates Mersmerro's will that the neophyte must wait another year before trying again. Being killed, and probably eaten, expresses Mersmerro's displeasure with the novice priest.

Success not only allows progression to the rank of Initiate but also gives the priest a mount, which will serve them for life. Initiates are used as scouts and messengers by the cult, as well as expendable assets in times of war. They continue this active service until four of their cult skills achieve 75%. At this time they are sent beyond the swamps and marshes to travel amongst unbelievers. This quest has no set objective beyond simply learning about future enemies. However, those Initiates who return without in-depth cultural or geographic knowledge are considered failures, as are those who become corrupted by foreign lifestyles or faiths. Updating the cult's knowledge of the world outside Torres is rewarded with advancement to Ovate.

Ovates serve their communities as spiritual advisors and helping folk to live in balance with the local ecology. Those that continue to improve their cult skills become eligible for progression when

three cult skills reach 100%. To prove their worthiness they are set a task dependent on the Mask of Mersmerro at that time. The Prey Mask requires that a new shrine or temple be built – a not infeasible task considering the destructive nature of the wetland environment on most buildings. The Predator Mask necessitates leading a significant raid against heathen worshippers, usually resulting in the destruction of a town or several villages and the taking of captives for eating or sacrifice.

Promotion to Druid places the priest in the highest echelons of the cult. Druids act as the political advisors for clan and tribal leaders, in effect controlling Torres using their network of messengers to coordinate national policy. Of course factions exist within the cult itself, which hinder unified action but the druids are the real power behind the unofficial theocracy. Those druids who excel at the political level, advancing two skills to 125%, have gained so much influence that they are given the title of Archdruid, a priest beloved of Mersmerro and his people.

Blessings

Bandits Cloak, Beast Call, Bestial Enhancement, Clear Path, Heal, Mobility, Water Breath.

Miracles

Rather than receiving the Standard miracles, the cult instead provides Absorption, Beast Form (Crocodile), Command (Reptile), Consecrate, Cure Disease/Poison, Drown, Entangle, Fog, Rain and Spirit Block.

Mersmerro Miracles

Drown

Instant, Ranged, Rank Druid, Resist (Resilience)

Failing to resist the spell fills the victim's lungs with thick liquid mud, causing them to immediately begin asphyxiating. At the start of each round the target must make a further Resilience roll and suffer the effects described on page 54 of the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*. Whilst drowning, any other roll the victim makes in order to perform an action, must also be less than or equal to their Persistence skill else the attempt automatically fails due to panic. Unless the victim can breathe water or has a compatriot able to magically shift the mud, the spell is almost invariably fatal.

Entangle

Area Special, Duration Special, Rank Ovate, Ranged, Resist (Evade)

This caster brings to life an area of vegetation, which writhes about seeking anything within reach to grasp and slowly rip apart. The spell affects all plants and trees in an area whose diameter equals the Magnitude of the spell in metres. Anyone who fails to dive clear becomes entangled in the limitless vegetation and cannot move clear of the area. At the beginning of each round the victims receive 1D3 damage, applied to every location accessible to the

plant growth as foliage strangles, rips and penetrates. The miracle has a Duration of half its Magnitude in rounds.

After the spell expires, victims must still break free of the entangling growth, requiring an unopposed Brawn test each round until success.

Cult Skills

Influence, Oratory, Persistence, Piety (Mersmerro), Ride, Stealth, Swim.

THE THOUSAND BEAST GODS

One of the most worshipped pantheons of Nuera, the Thousand Beast Gods comprise of all the mammal, bird and insect demi-gods in the world. Drawn from across the planes, these beings answered the call of the All Father and brought their children with them. Dwarfed in power and scope by other mighty deities, the 1,000 beast gods gathered themselves into a single court, electing one of their number to represent them in the world. Thus was created the title of the King of Beasts.

The original name of the petty godling who became the King of Beasts, has long since been forgotten, along with the animal he brought to Nuera. With the combined might of the 1,000 behind him, he was soon recognised as a ruling power, laying claim to the populating of the world. This authority was upset when Mersmerro decided to lay its eggs and gave birth to a swathe of new creatures with scaly skins and fangs. Demanding these new species to be removed, the King of Beasts was ignored by the Swamp Lord, causing the outraged god to summon a host of animals and march against Mersmerro. Countless species and their demi-gods died in the conflict until ultimately, the King of Beasts was forced to capitulate.

In the ensuing peace, to fill the gaps opened in his ranks, the King of Beasts was forced to create new creatures, blending hybrids and chimeras from the remnants of species near extinction. He even meddled, blending creatures with people, soon after scorpionfolk and goblinoids began to spread through the deserts and mountains of the Wildlands.

Cult members of the Thousand Beast Gods tend to be devotees that believe that every (non-reptilian) creature of the world is holy and that animalistic instincts are gifts. The King of Beasts forms the conduit for the miracles granted by the godlings and his worship thrives wherever there is a great deal of natural hunting and herding. He obeys not the laws of mankind and expects his supplicants to follow in his paw prints, restricting most worshippers to those of more primitive cultures.

The Path of Righteousness

Tribal god of all savage things, the King of Beasts is known to look after those who give in to their baser natures as often as he protects those who hide and seek shelter from his other followers! He is a mysterious being that is said to have a small piece of every creature in him and his shrines are often mounds of trophies and sacrifices made by his worshippers. He is very popular with the savage tribes

of the Wildlands. He does not ask anything of his worshippers but there are rules to follow in his faith:

Do not Hesitate to Kill: Kill for food, respect or territory – never for enjoyment or robbery.

All Life has Needs: Natural instincts cannot be ignored for the sake of so-called civilisation.

The Weak must Follow the Strong: If you are strong, take over the weak; if you are weak, find the strong to take care of you. Do this for protection and survival.

The Hierarchy of Sins

Trophy Hunting: To kill without reason is unnatural and disrespectful of the King's creations and doing so just to have some kind of keepsake will anger him. It is not wrong to take trophies from other kills; just the killing solely for trophies.

- ☉ **Burying the Dead:** Lions and bears are as much part of the King of Beasts's kingdom as maggots, worms or flies and placing a corpse in the ground to hide them from scavengers and carrion eating predators is denying them a potential meal.
- ☉ **Denying your Instincts:** The animal urges that sometimes come over a person are reminders from the King of what he wants from his worshippers; denying these urges is ignoring the King of Beasts himself. Instincts can be sated in odd or interesting ways but they must not be put off forever.
- ☉ **Obeying a Weak Leader:** It is the natural order of things to have the strong rule over the weak. Any worshipper of the King of Beasts who willingly obeys the commands from a weaker leader is fighting against the way things are supposed to be. It is alright to recognise one's position as weaker when a follower, just not in a leader.
- ☉ **Putting the Laws of Man above the Laws of Nature:** Civilisation's laws were created to reign in those people that cannot thrive outside of city walls and village barricades. Obeying them in situations where instincts are calling to a worshipper is a major travesty and many King of Beasts priests consider it an offence worth cursing over.

Worshipper Attitudes

The following are general attitudes of the three types of follower in the Thousand Beasts Gods cult.

The Lax – Surprisingly, there are not that many lax members in the scattered tribes that worship the King of Beasts. Most worshippers are faithful by habit, not choice. Those followers that are lax in their worship are often those who have moved away from the tribal lands and are somewhat ingrained into civilised society.

The Faithful – Those who are faithful to the ways of the King of Beasts live in wild places surrounded by good hunting grounds and tribes of followers they control with an iron command. They live to perform the duties of the animal kingdom; breed, hunt, play and kill. These devoted followers do not recognise the legal

rights of others and are actively chaotic in their lives. Leaders of many Savage Tribes in the Wildlands are faithful worshippers, especially those who are very successful in the inter-tribal wars of that area.

The Fanatic – There are few King of Beasts fanatics in the world; most of them have pulled far away from civilisation into the deep wilderness. They are beings of instinct and passion that have little need for spoken language any longer, preferring the company of animals and monsters to those of humanoids. If they are gone long enough they seemingly become animals themselves, obeying only what the King placed in their souls.

Priesthood Membership

There is little in the way of formal religious structure in the Thousand Beast Gods cult.

Following the call of the King of Beasts, those listening to their instincts, seek out a priest in the cult and become Neophytes. There is no test needed, simply the desire. They are taught the simple rules of the cult and its associated blessings.

Progression up the ranks after that point simply requires the requisite skill values and physically fighting, and beating, a member of that rank for acceptance. Reaching the rank of Initiate allows the worshipper to start learning cult miracles. Responsibilities are generally whatever the priest decides is fitting.

Blessings

Beast Call, Bestial Enhancement, Coordination, Mindspeech, Mobility, Strength, Vigour.

Miracles

In addition to the Standard miracles, the cult provides Aphrodisiac, Beast Form (any bird, insect or mammal), Command (any bird, insect or mammal), Heal Wound and one other spell dependant on the animal taken as the worshipper's personal totem. For example Scorpionfolk priests gain Cure Poison, whereas wolf worshippers may receive Fear.

King of Beasts Miracle

As the ruler over the Thousand Beast Gods, the King of Beasts grants this particular spell.

Command (Creature)

Duration 15, Ranged, Rank Acolyte, Resist: Persistence

While the spell lasts, the caster takes over the actions and will of the fixed INT creature specified by the caster. Thus many varieties of spell exist. The caster must be able to see the creature and if it leaves the caster's sight then the spell is automatically broken until the caster comes into view again. The caster can affect one creature for every point of Magnitude for the spell. Whilst under the caster's control the animal will perform whatever actions the caster declares and will refrain from causing the caster any harm.

Cult Skills

Athletics, Evade, Piety (Thousand Beast Gods), Stealth, Survival, Track, Unarmed.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAGNUS

The Brotherhood of Magnus are a sect of warlocks; military sorcerers specialising in offensive magic and weapon use. Specific details about membership and rank progression within the Brotherhood are described in the chapter concerning Dardarrick. However, the spells available to each rank are covered here, as are the cult skills. Although Sorcery and Manipulation are specifically identified as being two of the skills required to advance ranks, sorcerers still need to meet the other minimum skill requirements as indicated in the Cult Rank table.

The Brotherhood studies the grimoire known as the Arcanum Magnus. Nothing prevents Brotherhood sorcerers from learning other grimoires but the Arcanum Magnus is their primary focus. Within it is held the following magical knowledge:

Cantrips

Bladesharp, Detect Magic, Detect Spirit, Disruption, Heal, Mobility, Protection.

Spells

Danger Sense, Enhance Dexterity, Enhance Strength, Spell Resistance, Spirit Resistance, Treat Wounds, Wrack.

Miracles

Danger Sense - Concentration - This spell grants its targets a supernaturally attuned awareness that could protect them from ambush or other unknown dangers. For every 10% of the Grimoire skill the recipient gains a +5% bonus to Perception and Evade. The bonus for Perception is applicable only when the recipient is being careful to look for enemies, traps or other forms of threat.

Cult Skills

Combat Style, Evade, Lore (Strategy and Tactics), Manipulation, Persistence, Resilience, Sorcery (Arcanum Magnus).

MORTESSAL – QUEEN OF DEATH

The All Father knew that his design for Nuera could not be complete if it were built without some kind of ending to its cycle of life, allowing renewal and growth. Though many deities answered his invitation, none save Mortessal, a demoness who had journeyed long in the darkness between worlds, had any experience bringing death and decay, so lacking other takers she was assigned the dominion of guardian of the dead. Slipping silently into the world upon his request, Mortessal brought death and darkness to Nuera, preventing the world from becoming an immortal place of wearisome stagnation and madness.

The other gods did not take well to her arrival, especially when she began to cull their growing flocks. Although the King of Beasts saw

Famous Dardarrian Grimoires

The Dardarrian Mages Guild allows study of the following grimoires, each one forming the particular focus of the provincial guildhall which owns it. The first was Elementary Exertions, written by the wizard Baestra in 687 YBD as an introduction to basic sorcery. Subsequent tomes were titled in jest, forming a tradition within the guild.

Individual grimoires are used as the curriculum for wizards seeking to specialise in that type of sorcery. Although the original volumes are owned by mage halls scattered across Dardarrick, the University of Wizardry in Graenwich has copies of each, for ease of study and backup in case of (un)natural disasters.

Elementary Exertions: Cantrips – *Becalm, Befuddle, Chill, Disruption, Push/Pull, Repair, Warmth.* Spells – *Glow, Mystic Vision, Neutralise Magic, Spell Resistance*

Evolutivity Excogitations: Cantrips – *Beast Call, Bestial Enhancement, Coordination, Heal, Strength, Vigour, Water Breath.* Spells – *Haste, Shapechange (Fish, Bird, Reptile, Mammal)*

Eidolon Execrations: Cantrips – *Bladesharp, Bludgeon, Countermagic Shield, Disruption, Light, Protection, Second Sight.* Spells – *Attract (Undead), Banish, Protective Ward, Sense (Undead), Spirit Resistance*

Excellent Exculpations: Cantrips – *Bearing Witness, Countermagic, Demoralise, Detect Enemy, Glamour, Goldentongue, Second Sight.* Spells – *Intuition, Project (Sight, Hearing, Touch), Telepathy*

Ethereal Evulgations: Cantrips – *Babel, Bandit's Cloak, Befuddle, Boon of Lasting Night, Golden Tongue, Second Sight, Slow.* Spells – *Phantom (Odour, Sight, Sound, Taste and Touch)*

Existential Exclusions: Cantrips – *Chill, Clear Path, Endurance, Extinguish, Ignite, Push/Pull, Warmth.* Spells – *Adjure (Air, Food, Water, Sleep, and Aging)*



no harm in what she was tasked to do, many of the other deities despised her role, instead wanting their children and followers to live forever. The War of Creation saw their faiths clash terribly and the overwhelming collaboration of powerful gods inflicted terrible losses upon the Queen of Darkness. Faced with expulsion back into the void, Mortessal made a hard choice in order to survive the conflict – she brought the dead back to Nuera, replenishing her ranks of minions with an endless supply of fallen warriors. This won her the battle but at a terrible price; releasing the knowledge of undeath upon the world. A curse which once revealed could not be hidden again.

Mortessal's worshippers are low in number and many do so behind closed doors and in secret. She is considered a baleful goddess, reviled for her desperate act of self preservation, despite the need for death in the world. Her faith teaches that death is the ultimate fate of life and that her place in the divine ranks is vital to stop the doom of immortality. Only her most devoted followers are granted eternal 'life' to help defend her shrines in case of attack. Her clergy, whilst beneficent and compassionate, is generally treated with suspicion.

The Path of Righteousness

As the goddess of night and death, Mortessal happens to be a favourite amongst the dark elves and other nocturnal species. With her faithful so low in number, she accepts this worship despite its more diabolic connotations. Her temples are usually mausoleums or graveyards, many of which possess extensive underground crypts and catacombs. They are frequently guarded by soulless undead minions that her priests have created. Her cult is viewed as a necessary evil in Dardarrick, paradoxically because they serve as guardians against necromancers. It suffers antipathy with the church of Praxious. Usually her followers are not asked to do much:

- ☉ **Protect Mortessal's Legions:** The armies and heroes raised by the goddess to protect her temples and faith should be defended at all costs. Each undead being sacrificed their chance to journey to an afterlife to serve Mortessal faithfully. Such sacrifice must not be wasted.
- ☉ **Destroy the Hostile Undead:** Undead which mindlessly threaten or predate on the living must be destroyed at all costs. Only the worshippers of Mortessal are best trained to understand the dangers involved.
- ☉ **The Body is only a Tool:** After the soul departs, the discarded dead body can still serve usefully.
- ☉ **Preventing Desecration:** Nothing should disturb the sleep of the dead and their possessions.

The Hierarchy of Sins

- ☉ **Never Create an Undead against their Will:** Only the most loyal and devoted of Mortessal are permitted to enter undead service to her faith. No one should be compelled to take this path.
- ☉ **Allying with a Praxious Worshipper:** Praxious takes a very firm stance against the faith of Mortessal, believing that any form of undeath is unacceptable. Followers of Praxious are an antagonistic enemy of the cult, who have long persecuted the Queen of the Dead, ironically permitting the spread of necromancy.
- ☉ **Allowing the Dead to Return to Life:** The dead must be allowed to rest in peace and not be brought back to life. The dead should stay dead and not take up space allotted to new births, or pestered by shamans or necromancers wishing to speak with the departed – such things only bring grief.
- ☉ **Looting Bodies:** Stealing from the dead causes distress to the shade and may even propagate its return as a vengeful spirit.

Worshipper Attitudes

The following are general attitudes of the three types of follower in the Mortessal faith.

The Lax – Although the dead themselves are sometimes celebrated with festivals and holidays, nobody offers the same consideration to the Queen of the Dead – thus there are NO lax worshippers in this faith.

The Faithful – Those who hold the Queen of Darkness as their patron goddess are rarely welcomed in society. Those few that do are generally morticians, grave diggers, executioners and compassionate euthanasia givers. The rare temple meetings tend to be dour affairs, discussing the necessity and forms of death.

The Fanatic – The worshippers of Mortessal that follow her tenets without waver and serve as her temple guardians, are on a lifelong quest to achieve immortality as a member of the undead legions, which keep tomb robbers and necromancers at bay. Some fanatics however lose sight of ethics, seeking to grant premature, yet kind-hearted deaths to plague victims or aged geriatrics. Others raise excessive amounts of undead, crossing the line and descending into outright necromancy.

Priesthood Membership

Membership in the cult of Mortessal is so limited that the priesthood has little formal structure. Anyone wishing to join is eagerly snapped up and given as much tuition as the temple or shrine can provide. Like other religions, neophytes are taught the cult skills and blessings. Save for the rank skill requirements there are few actual tests to prove a priest's devotion to the cult, as simply being a member is trial enough. However, promotions generally occur after the priest has performed some particularly unusual quest or feat, fighting off a raiding party of Brazen Priests for example.

Cult responsibilities vary according to the location of the temple and its purpose. An ancient necropolis occupied by an eternally waiting legion of the dead, may require only protection against grave robbers. Whereas a local graveyard may need the services of a grave digger or someone with whom the recently bereaved may talk.

Blessings

Bandit's Cloak, Becalm, Boon of Lasting Night, Demoralise, Hand of Death, Second Sight, Spirit Bane.

Miracles

In addition to the Standard miracles, the cult provides Dismiss Magic, Fear, Raise Undead, Sever Spirit, Spirit Block.

Mortessal Miracle

The Queen of the Dead grants this particular spell.

Raise Undead

Duration Special, Ranged, Rank Acolyte

This spell creates a skeleton or zombie, example statistics provided on pages 178 and 183 respectively of the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*. One undead is created for each point of Magnitude assuming that relatively intact bodies exist to be raised. The creature remains animated for a number of hours equal to the overall Magnitude of the spell; at the end it collapses. During this time the undead are under the control of the caster.

Cult Skills

Combat Style, Influence, Insight, Lore (Undead), Persistence, Piety (Mortessal), Stealth.

CHAPTER SIX

THE WORLD OF NUERA



BASIC INFORMATION

Nuera is made up of six continents; two large temperate landmasses, three smaller ones that lay closer to the equator of the world and one frigid polar land mass at the realm's magnetic south. Each of these continents is covered briefly in the sections that follow but the following are all important facts about Nuera that will help define it for layers.

Celestial Bodies

Nuera is a world with one sun, two moons and a plethora of star constellations. The moons are called Yvesa and Osayo. The first is a huge blue-purple object that dominates the sky, taking a month to orbit the world, whereas the second is a small, almost black object, which is only seen as it passes before its sister moon.

In the star speckled heavens there are 19 major constellations. Although their names may change between cultures the symbolism does not. Many schools of astrology claim that the constellation that crowns the heavens at the moment of birth combined with the location of the moons will affect the blessings and fates of the newborn.

The Dardarrians know the constellations by the following names. Those born under a particular sign are granted a gift and Games Masters should allow their Adventurers to roll once on this table to see what boon they receive.

Time

The Nuera year is 308 days long. Within Dardarrick every seven days is called a week and four weeks make a month. Dates are either tracked by the number of the day in the month, the 13th of Shadestime for example, or the precise day name, week name and month. Other cultures possess their own names for the days, weeks and months but generally retain the same divisions.

Birth Constellation Effects

Roll	Constellation	Birth Gift
01–05	Beast	Unless attacked, animals remain passive towards them.
06–10	Chariot	Increase Movement by +2m.
11–15	Darkness	Gain the Dark Sight attribute.
16–20	Death	When <i>inflicting</i> a Serious or Major Wound, the opponent suffers a –20% penalty to Resilience tests to stay conscious or avoid death.
21–25	Dragon	Gain (or increase) 1 AP of natural armour.
26–30	Fertility	Increase Hit Points on all locations by 1.
31–35	Fire	Ignores negative effects from exposure to cold environments.
36–40	Harmony	Gain +20% to Influence tests when averting conflict or negotiating settlements.
41–45	Health	Gain natural immunity to disease.
46–50	Ice	Ignore negative effects from exposure to hot environments.
51–55	Lightning	Add +3 to all Strike Rank rolls.
56–60	Luck	May re-roll one dice roll each day.
61–65	Mage	Increase Magic Points by half.
66–70	Sea	Unless weighted or held under the surface, cannot naturally drown.
71–75	Spirit	Gain ability to see spirits and ethereal undead.
76–80	Stone	Immune to magic, both beneficial and detrimental.
81–85	Strength	Increase Damage Modifier by one step.
86–90	Tree	Reduce any Fatigue Level penalties by half.
91–95	Wind	Reduce damage from falling by half and increase maximum jumping distance by half again.
96–100	Choose Birthsign.	

Day	Dardarrian Name
1	Wineday
2	Lawday
3	Cropsday
4	Scribesday
5	Beastday
6	Kingsday
7	Godsday

Week	Dardarrian Name
1	Moonbirth
2	Moonfull
3	Moondie
4	Moondark

Month	Season	Dardarrian Name
1	Spring	Thawing
2		Greening
3		Blooming
4	Summer	Sunning
5		Burning
6	Autumn	Goldentime
7		Harvesting
8		Browning
9	Winter	Darkening
10		Hearthing
11		Freezing

Weather

The weather of Nuera is notable for its extreme savagery. Winds are strong, rainfall heavy and the temperature variation between summer and winter dramatic. In the far southern oceans the sea freezes in late autumn, not melting again until mid spring and sending icebergs floating north. Winter in the mountains of Rardarri blocks passes with snow and the glaciers crawl down into the shivering valleys.

Around the equator it becomes so hot in summer that humans can barely survive, incapacitated by heat exhaustion. In drier lands summer is a time of danger, wildfires spontaneously breaking out and burning their way across entire countries. This pervasive heat brings a season of violent storms and typhoons, which scythe the seas clean of vessels foolish enough to risk the waters and in turn drop torrential rains onto the continents, bringing floods and inundations.

Why Nuera's weather is so vindictive is beyond most folk who consider it a normal part of life. Learned sages say it is due to an ancient cataclysm which threw the world into an eccentric path about the sun but what caused the gods to punish Nuera thusly remains a mystery.

THE CONTINENTS

The following entries briefly discuss the geography and major points of interest found on each continent of Nuera. More specific information on the countries within Rardarri can be found in later chapters.

Rardarri

The larger of the two major Nueraen continents, the landmass lies slightly north of the equator and ranges from the subtropical in the south to the boreal in the north. The land is geographically divided into several sections by natural features. Each of these has evolved over the centuries into their own cultural entities, dominated by races adapted to the terrain and climate.

Across the northern reaches of Rardarri lay a great range of mountains, named the Claws, which in the sub arctic environment are home to hundreds of glaciers and high altitude lakes. As the continent is geologically sloped from north to south, most of the rivers which run off these impressive peaks drain through the central regions before ultimately arriving in the vast swamps of Torres.

The central section is the kingdom of Dardarrick – the great Lion. Below the Claws for the most part, it is made up of rolling forested foothills leading down into grasslands, scattered rivers cutting vast valleys across the terrain. Much of southern Dardarrick comprises of temperate wetlands leading to the marshes and swamps of Torres. The Walker River, the greatest confluence of the continent, neatly cuts Dardarrick in half as it travels from its many sources in the mountains down to a vast estuary in the far south, where it empties into the ocean.

The eastern side of the continent is under the authority of the Kingdom of Lorn. The oldest nation on Rardarri, its landscape shows the wear and tear to prove it. There are vast swathes of deforested plateaus covered in weathered stumps and deep grottoes where resources have been strip mined from the ground by industrialisation. The northern third of Lorn is dominated by mountainous Claws, some of which form part of the coastline; treacherous cliffs called the Whinaugh that spill into the surf hundreds of feet below their peaks. A single wide river, the Mettanbaugh, runs from these highlands south and eastward into Dardarrick to become the Redwater River and eventually into Torres.

The southern chunk of Rardarri that is the 'kingdom' of Torres is covered almost completely by marshes, swamps and waterlogged forests. It is the emptying point for the continent's rivers and a depressing landscape. The muddy tracts of what little farmable land are used as paddies for rice or plants that thrive in the waterlogged fields and every metre of solid ground is used to build upon. It is however, home to some of the most rare and interesting flora

and fauna that the continent has to offer. The farther south the more lush and tropical it becomes, eventually transforming into ancient mangrove jungles that are unbearably hot and humid in the summer months.

The remaining one-third of the continent, all of the west, is collectively called the Wildlands. Not a kingdom to speak of, the Wildlands are vast areas of dusty savannas and deserts, with few rivers to provide water. The grasslands survive thanks to yearly monsoons that arrive soon after the blistering heat of summer. The southwest is dominated by the tallest peaks on Nuera, called the Godsreach Mountains. At the centre of the range lies Venghattermount, the tallest summit known. Its name means 'Fang of the World Dragon'.

In addition to the major kingdoms of Rardarri there are numerous minor states. These independent lands are scattered across the continent, sometimes entirely encircled by larger nations but more often found on the borders between them. Some band together for mutual protection, a few are client states of the major powers and others are small, weak and at the mercy of their larger neighbours. Most are not worth conquering, being too poor to represent worthwhile targets or have a military strength out of proportion to their size and potential value, making conquest a pointless exercise.

Uramandi

The second largest continent of Nuera, this enigmatic land is known to outsiders as Uramandi, after the Empire that legendarily rules over it. It lies in the southern hemisphere of the world, nearly perfectly on the opposite side of the globe as Rardarri, surrounded by tumultuous waters and deadly currents, making it nigh impossible to sail to without magical aid of some kind.

Little to nothing is known about the ancient and powerful Uramandi Empire, or the land they live upon. Ships that have survived the deadly coastal reaches have reports that the continent looks green and vibrant, with several shoreline cities that bear spires reaching to the heavens. This cannot be verified however, as no ship has returned from landing on the continent.

Parennax

Located directly upon the equator of Nuera, this small jungle continent is encircled by small islands and treacherous coral reefs. It is difficult to sail in the waters surrounding Parennax without having intimate knowledge of the area, giving those who live upon the island archipelagos extreme privacy if they chose not to lead visitors to navigable straits and safe anchorages. During the typhoon season many of the outlying islands are inundated by huge waves and the continent itself is beaten by hammering rainstorms.

Most of the people that live on Parennax are of reptilian races, adapted to the tropical heat and tough enough to survive predatory fauna. A great civilisation of serpent worshipping sorcerers are said to live in the jungle flanked mountains in the centre of the continent, whilst the simpler archipelago folk live

a nomadic lifestyle, wandering from island-to-island in shallow-hulled ships.

Sando

Sando is a small, flat continent covered mostly by ashen wastes and scrub lowlands at the feet of three active volcanoes, surrounded on all sides by solidified lava fields and pumice-sand beaches. It is a harsh, dangerous place that few journey to without good reason. The three volcanoes – Buertan to the north, Muarte to the southwest and Countar to the southeast – mark the three fortress cities of the Kingdom of Aphaxus. The island is home to fire giants and all of their ilk, the only place on Nuera where such creatures can survive in comfort.

A few tropical jungles maintain a tenacious hold in the nutrient rich soils, cyclically dying and returning after being smothered by poisonous fumes or ash, or washed away in mudslides that frequently occur during the monsoons. The flanks of each volcano are terraced to provide arable land, the few places safe from being regularly buried but even these are constantly being repaired from frequent ground tremors.

The geological formation of the continent, together with the occasional vomiting of lava, provides a unique source of metals and minerals that the inhabitants exploit; mining valuable seams with slave labour and forging the materials into armour and weapons of surpassing quality. Such activities do not come without risk however, many times over the centuries individual volcanoes have erupted so violently that the cities have been destroyed or buried. Indeed, each fortress has been rebuilt on the ruins of the last, reputedly creating vast subterranean warrens filled with long forgotten riches and craftsmanship, haunted by the shades of those who died alongside their treasures.

Zritec

Inhospitable to common travellers, Zritec is a tiny continent covered in craggy mountains and un-traversable valleys. Although not as magnificent as the ranges on Rardarri, the mountains of Zritec form a mazelike mass of steep sided ridges, which away from the coasts quickly become a bone dry wasteland of scree, boulders and razor sharp protuberances. Disturbingly, the rift-like valleys are sometimes found littered with humanoid bones and the odd insubstantial fragment of spider web.

The strange valleys often trap and funnel winds, turning them into deadly sand filled zephyrs capable of lacerating skin, or if the winds are strong enough, blasting gales carrying gravel. These bizarre air currents have eroded the valleys into fantastic shapes, smoothing rock faces into polished waves and curves. Save for occasional sheltered areas, where scrubby vegetation capable of surviving the arid conditions eke out a living, the only life stays close to the coasts.

Despite the barren landscape, the continent is the home to seven noble houses of the dark elves, each claiming segments of a vast

underground world of complexes and connecting tunnels excavated beneath the mountains over centuries. Not a kingdom so much as an anarchic collection of feuding noble bloodlines, the dark elves are constantly fighting and squabbling amongst one another for territory.

Whilst the surface of Zritec is impenetrable to anyone not skilled in mountaineering and survival, a number of sea-level caverns exist, that allow small watercraft to be rowed into the lower reaches of the underground civilisation, potentially granting access to the ancient tunnels that travel under the mountains.

The Winterlands

A large expanse of arctic wastes, the Winterlands are several small landmasses all connected by a sheet of kilometre thick ice and snow. It never thaws at the southern pole of the realm and the cold there is fatal to anyone not suitably protected. The Winterlands are home to several creatures and races that thrive in cold climates but none numerous enough to form anything beyond small nomadic clans.

During the height of summer the outermost edge of the sea ice melts, drifting northwards as great icebergs. At this time a ship can reach the continent to trade with the devolved locals or hunt the wildlife. Once autumn returns however, the temperature plunges and the sea begins to freeze again. Unlike the rest of Nuera that suffers its most violent weather during the summer months, it is winter that brings the most destructive storms known. Winds rarely drop below gale force and if blown chunks of broken ice fail to kill a struggling traveller, the wind chill will.

A high number of dragons nest on the continent to raise their young, feeding on the seals and whales that thrive along the coast. Legend tells of half buried mountain range in the far south, secreted within which is a valley warmed by volcanic springs. The tales say that it is the home of the gods, though which ones nobody knows.

THE NUERAEN OCEAN

Three quarters of Nuera is covered by its ocean. Although certain areas of the ocean are named by locals, the whole of it on its own is simply known as 'the Sea' or 'the Ocean'. There are ancient writings that call it 'the Forever Blue', which leads some to using that nomenclature. Unless discussing a specific area of water, the ocean is not normally named by marine based cultures.

The ocean water of Nuera is highly saline, making it impossible to use for drinking purposes but extremely well suited for buoyancy. Certain coastal plants have adapted to use it as a resource but non-oceanic animals will find that it is toxic.

Some of the specific areas of the Ocean are noted on the following list.

Black Channel – The rocky stretch of water between the southwest islands of Parennax and the eastern shore of the Uramandi Empire. It is actually named for the deep colour of the water and the black sands of its bottom but most believe it is more to do with the bleak chances anyone has of successfully sailing its length. The currents of the Black Channel are treacherous and storms are frequently funnelled between the two land masses.

Blooded Harbours – Small recessed portions of the northwest coastline of the Wildlands, each of the Blooded Harbours is a sheltered inlet protected against gales blowing up from the Fang Straits. Small fishing villages exist in these harbours, every one allegedly aligned with a different savage tribe further inland. Although ostensibly vulnerable to pirate raids, strange things lurk in the bottomless depths just off the coast and unwelcome vessels often wash up on the pebbled beaches as bloody flotsam.

Fang Straits – The area of coral-laden waters between the western shore of the Wildlands and the northeast islands of Parennax. It is dangerous and foolhardy to sail the straits without an experienced sailor who knows the location of its hidden reefs. The wrecks of countless ships litter tiny atolls revealed at low tides, either run aground by foolish captains or left to drift after the crew was abducted by the sea devils that live under the surface.

Hoarfrost Channel – The thin but turbulent waters between the southern edge of Uramandi and the Winterlands. Some of the most dangerous waters of the world, most of the channel is frozen solid for much of the year and filled with drifting icebergs for the rest. Mountainous seas swell through the channel driven by the constant winds at that latitude. If that was not bad enough, great leviathans swim its waters – often finding ships an irritation or potential source of food.

Hyrric Tempest – The hundreds of kilometre wide hurricane that ravages the northern pole of Nuera is called the Hyrric Tempest. It is considered non-navigable and any ships that have sailed into the grey-black fogs and lightning storms have been swallowed up, never to be seen again. Some claim that there might be a land mass at its centre but this has not yet been verified.

Salt Bay – The solitary stretch of coastline owned by the kingdom of Dardarrick, Salt Bay is located on the northern side of Rardarri and frequently freezes during the winter. It is the location of Dardarrick's only port of Pierceling, protected by dozens of naval ships and artillery towers built into the cliffs that loom over the tenacious city. The bay received its name from the huge crystalline salt deposits that have formed upon the northern cliffs of the Dardarrick mountain ranges from the constant spray of the thunderous surf, a resource which supplies over half of the continent's salt.

Sailing the Open Waters

Using the huge expanses of the Ocean for travel and trade has pushed the naval technologies of Nuera to a higher degree than some overland techniques. Huge galleons and fast clippers use

magic and skill to cross weeks or months of open water at a time and naval captains do everything they can to keep their crews happy and healthy between long trips.

The largest and most active navies in Nuera are those owned by the archipelagos of Parennax, the kingdom of Aphaxus and the numerous ports of Lorn. Between them these fleets monopolise the sea based trade of Nuera.

Although only accessed through the Salt Bay, the Dardarrian trading fleet based in Pierceling has recently entered the field, determined to claim its own segment of international trade. Guarded by a sorcerously enchanted armada of frigates, the fleet has begun searching out new lands and cultures with whom to establish trade and diplomacy. The handful of safe harbours along the Salt Bay coast have been dedicated to docks, wharfs and shipyards used to maintain and mobilise the ships. Industrialising the construction process, several dozen ships are built every year, to prepare the Dardarrian navy for possible conflict against its trading rivals. The waters of the bay are patrolled by ballista-mounted cutters while flying wyvern cavalry soar out from their flat-topped rookeries scouting from the air.

The saurian pirates from Parennax use magnetic lodestone compasses and elaborate centuries-old maps to plague trading vessels that venture into their coastal waters but fortunately lack the endurance to strike at the shoreline towns of Rardarri. They sometimes attack the metal hulled fire giant ships from Sando. These are dangerous targets but well worth the risk if successful. Likewise they relish the cargos carried by Lornish vessels which are hard targets, blessed as they are by priests and defended with crews of hobgoblin marines. The saurians use small, swift ships designed to get the pirates into range to board the enemy but magical aid is never out of the question.

Aphaxian galleons are huge ships capable of carrying at least half a dozen fire giants and 50 of their dwarf slaves, along with their precious cargo. Their ships are made from forged metal, making them terribly slow and un-maneuvrable should combat ever occur but the existence of several fire giants on any vessel can make for an interesting naval engagement when they begin to throw flaming balls of pitch upon their enemies.

The Hegemony of Lorn's navy is considered to be the most powerful fleet in the world. Although the southern waters around Lorn and Torres are well-patrolled by Lornish clippers and war galleys, the existence of the Hyrric Tempest makes naval journeys to the north dangerous to risk, leaving their ships too weary and damaged to possibly put up a fight with any Dardarrian vessels.



Longer trips around the southern and western end of Rardarri are possible but travel through the sharkfolk infested Fang Straits and past the savage waters of Blood Harbour are less than appealing to the Lornish commodores. Rather than mount a direct naval assault, the kingdom of Lorn uses its navy to protect its own trading vessels; especially those heading back and forth from Sando and Zritec.

RECENT TIMELINE OF NUERA

The ancient history of Nuera is swathed in mystery; as no records exist from before The Dawn. However legends abound of cataclysmic events, battles against gods and even the creation of new species. Whether these things ever happened has long been argued by sages but the fact remains that only since the dawn have the sapient races made records and begun to rule themselves.

Date	Description
0 YBD	The Dawn. The gods lift the veil of ignorance and grant the power of magic to the races of the world for their promise to rule themselves and form civilisations. Each is given their own region of Nuera to settle and a period of peaceful cooperation ensues.
50 YBD	Snaggletooth Lorn, a hobgoblin chieftain, unites the tribes of his widely scattered mountain folk under a banner of xenophobia and pride, conquering the low lying lands of Dar through strength of arms and magic. The newly formed hegemony is named after its hobgoblin warlord and other races turn their backs on the kingdom for its betrayal of harmony.
72 YBD	The Sando volcanoes erupt all at once with the arrival of demonic spirits; the efreets forge the triumvirate kingdom of Aphaxus as the ash settles, enslaving the fire giants to their will and placing their leader on the onyx throne.
90 YBD	The swamp lands of Torres become trading partners with the Aphaxusians, exchanging food for military arms. Despite their differences, they become allied in the face of increasing Lornish colonialism.
208 YBD	Driven to despair by the hobgoblins maltreatment of humans living under their rule, a peasant leader named Darrick begins an uprising against the Lornish hegemony; the rebels flee westwards into the Dar hills, forming a small independent nation named Dardarrick, in honour of their leader who dies in the exodus.
211 YBD	Dardarrick negotiates with the lizardmen of Torres for economic support and begins to move southward along the rivers to secure supply routes they predict they might need if Lorn retaliates.
222 YBD	The First Lornish War falls upon the eastern boundary of Dardarrick. Lornish shock troops, cavalry and battle priests smash deeply into the region, inflicting huge casualties.
230 YBD	The wizard Magnus leads an arcane counter-offensive against the occupying Lornish forces, delivering a blow against their religious leaders and winning the war. King Saerdsson of Dardarrick is killed, leaving his infant heir unable to rule. Magnus creates the Pillars of Dardarrick, an honourable council of newly made nobles to uphold law until the boy comes of age.
243 YBD	The Second Lornish War against Dardarrick which nearly succeeds in crushing the rebels. The Dardarrians are only saved when Magnus and his most powerful sorcerers exchange their lives for a spell that rips a vast chasm in ground, swallowing the cream of the Lornish army.
277 YBD	Angered by the continual trickle of defecting humans fleeing to the freedoms offered in Dardarrick, the warlord of the hegemony launches the Third Lornish War. The campaign is inconclusive, both sides suffering huge numbers of casualties – a loss Dardarrick can ill afford.
300 YBD	The first mogul from the Wildlands, a titan called Granix, leads a huge army against Dardarrick's tenuous western border, razing the city of Pyr to the ground. The Brotherhood of Magnus sends a mystic assassin on a suicide mission that kills Granix and the loss of his leadership causes the horde of savage tribes to break apart.
315 YBD	Saurian pirate ships from Parennax first begin to raid trading vessels off the shore of Torres. The lizardmen request magical aid from Dardarrick but the fledgling kingdom is forced to refuse as its shaky defence against the constant border raids relies on all its wizards. This rejection drives a wedge between Dardarrick and the Torresh.
362 YBD	Around the western, southern and eastern coasts the sharkfolk rise from the seas massacring and enslaving thousands; the sea devils establish permanent forts from which they launch attacks kilometres inland.
367 YBD	Fearing total genocide, the desperate nations of Rardarri sign a peace agreement and cooperate to free their coastlines; despite possessing no shoreline of their own, the Dardarrians create vast spells capable of allowing an army to breathe beneath the waves and under their protection the Sea Devil civilisation is utterly destroyed.
428 YBD	The first Zriteci ships land at Torres and Lorn; dark elves refugees from House Xuan make a new home in the catacombs of the Lornish port of Darkenholme.
435 YBD	A great plague breaks out in Lorn and sweeps across Rardarri killing three quarters of all humanoids; later that year a vast Zriteci armada en route to Rardarri is sunk in an unseasonal typhoon.
501 YBD	The self-styled River King Uesificus begins to convey neutral trade amongst all the Rardarri nations from his riverboat fleet; the unification helps to stabilise the continent.
624 YBD	The archipelago pirates of Parennax are brought under the rule of the serpent worshippers residing in the deep jungles of their continent; unfortunately the now unified fleets are sent out to seize control of the Ocean.
700 YBD	The Wizard's Guild of Clawspire discovers the first Omnicix crystal and starts to investigate its incredible sorcerous abilities.
810 YBD	The Aphaxusian King Bandovaur attempts to usurp the power of the efreets; he fails and is magically bound above the onyx throne, eternally burning in agony as a lesson to his successors.
814 YBD	Lorn attacked by Aphaxusia, which devastates much of the lowlands with forest fire which causes irreparable damage.

Date	Description
821 YBD	Finally expelling the giants, Lorn sends a fleet to exact reprisals but the entire army is trapped and immolated by lava flows.
978 YBD	Now little more than a corrupt clan of mercantile thieves, the greed of the Rardarri riverboat peoples goes too far and both Lorn and Dardarrick purge the waterways of them.
989 YBD	Bereft of the river traders subtle diplomatic manipulations, tension begin to rise again between Lorn and Dardarrick as the Lornish begin to openly speak against the teachings and honour of the Dardarrian people.
992 YBD	Mercenaries of many species begin sudden hit and run assaults on farms and mills along the eastern border of Dardarrick. When captured they give up Lorn as their employers. Dardarrick sends 10,000 soldiers into Lorn and the Fourth Lornish War begins.
995 YBD	Dardarrick troops attempt to secure the Walker River and sea access, after Torres refuse to aid them in their war against Lorn; they fail disastrously, losing most of their ships.
1,001 YBD	In a strategic reversal, Lornish forces claim nearly half of eastern Dardarrick due to martial superiority and a lack of battle priests in the Dardarrick soldiery.
1,004 YBD	Worship of the All Father in Dardarrick declines and is set aside due to promises made by the growing cult of Praxious. Fanatical priests join the ranks of the army in staggering numbers.
1,006 YBD	The Grand Cleric of the All Father is murdered by 'Lornish' assassins in the capital of Dardarrick. A charismatic leader named Tomar begins to call himself 'Hierophant' and preaches to the masses about the might of Praxious.
1,010 YBD	The Brazen Legion of Praxious crushes the Lornish troops on Dardarrian soil, following their dispirited route back into Lorn; civilian casualties are particularly high and the hobgoblin warlord Guntheor II of Lorn signs a surrender to stop the sudden and horrible suffering of his people.
1,055 YBD	The Hierophant Tomar claims the throne of Dardarrick and decrees the kingdom belongs to the Praxious church; All Father temples and shrines are razed and open worship of the All Father becomes a flogging offence.
1,060 YBD	Dardarrick is called a theocracy by the masses; Torres suffers greatly from evangelising Praxious pilgrims from the north.
1,161 YBD	Hierophant Tomar dies, leaving his congregation in the hands of Hierophant Tomarsson. Tomarsson gives speeches about Dardarrick superiority and the common folk love him – despite public relations elsewhere.
1,184 YBD	The Pillars of Dardarrick name a new king and King Archiveldt takes the throne. Archiveldt is well-loved and makes wondrous leaps in public opinion of his rule. Tomarsson quickly becomes less important to the common people in the wake of Archiveldt's ascension.
1,190 YBD	SpellCom is formed by the Pillars of Dardarrick to help defend the kingdom, based around much of the powers and abilities discovered in the Omniciex; wizards are trained in sorcerous reconnaissance and coordinated battlefield artillery, to keep track and remotely eradicate dangers the kingdom could be subjected to.
1,200 YBD	Warlord Guntheor V of Lorn disappears mysteriously and Hierophant Tomarsson leads an unauthorised xenophobic crusade against the Lornish hobgoblins, conquering parts of the Claw Mountains.
1,201 YBD	Recalled to the capital, Hierophant Tomarsson is publically censured and removed from power; the King reinstates the worship of the All Father as the primary religion of Dardarrick; the Pillars of Dardarrick and SpellCom begin creating the Wraith Recon organisation.
1,203 YBD	Taking advantage of the new stretch of coastline he now owns, King Archiveldt pays generous reparations to the conquered hobgoblin tribes and suborns them into the defence of the kingdom; Dardarrick begins intensive construction of fleet facilities around Salt Bay.
1,205 YBD	Guntheor V of Lorn reappears, a changed and frightening figure; Lorn shuts its borders to as a series of internal purges 'strengthen' the autocracy and defences of the hegemony; demands are made for the return of the subjugated stretch of the Claws.
1,207 YBD	The savage and eternally quarrelling tribes of the Wildlands begin to rally under the flags of several mogul khans, launching raids into Dardarrick; a number of lizardfolk mercenary companies sign their banners over to Lorn; a significant rise in undead encounters occurs all across Dardarrick, Torres and the Wildlands; Wraith Recon begins sends out teams to investigate but discover nothing.
1,208 YBD	An undead dragon – the first of its kind on Nuera – ravages several eastern Dardarrick fortifications; Lorn denies responsibility but Dardarrick declares war anyway; armies on both sides begin mobilising and Wraith Recon strike teams begin a campaign of sabotage.
1,209 YBD	Current Day

CHAPTER SEVEN

DARDARRICK



Ostensibly the most powerful kingdom on the continent, Dardarrick – the Lion of Rardarri – is the central focus and primary setting for *Wraith Recon*. The following section is a guide to a kingdom whose future hangs in the balance. Teetering on the edge of a razor, one side is victory and the survival of their advanced way of life, the other is a slow defeat by gathering enemies on all sides; it is up to *Wraith Recon* to make sure on which side they fall.

THE HISTORY OF DARDARRICK

Located in the region below the Claw Mountains, Dar was a peaceful land of forested hills and open plateaus that spread from Goldpan river in the west to the sandy shoreline of Rardarri's eastern coast. It began as a series of small villages and their surrounding farms but over time gradually swelled into many towns and several cities; the largest of which lay in the east of the province and was called Graenwich.

From Graenwich the peaceful families of Dar tried in vain to defend their lands from expansionist hobgoblin forces mustered in the mountains by a chieftain called Snaggletooth Lorn. Although the teachings of the All Father spoke that the mortal kingdoms should not war, the warlord ignored the gods decree and invaded anyway. The hobgoblin assault took the Dar people by surprise; none had skills or knowledge to defend themselves and the land was overrun brutally fast.

The following century and a half placed the central and eastern peoples into a subservient role to anyone of hobgoblin descent, forcing them to become stiff-backed labourers, peasants in the newly created hegemony of Lorn. Yet stalwart believers in the All Father stayed faithful. The Dar remained vigilant and shouldered the weight of their problems knowing that their salvation would one day come.

Declaration of Independence

Deliverance, when it came, took the form of Darrick, the first battle priest of the All Father, who preached freedom and called upon the strength of the people to create an uprising against Lorn's legacy. After months of preparation he created an exodus 10,000 strong which fled west to found a nation free from Lornish authority. The

hegemony were unwilling to let their people go however, pursuing the rebels to Graenwich where they made a stand. The fighting was terrible and Darrick never left the front lines, battling the Lornish to a standstill until he suffered a terrible and mortal wound.

Darrick's death was the single act that steeled the Dar forces to victory. In the nine days following his demise, the vengeful uprising managed to defeat the hobgoblin troops, chase them north back to the mountains and reclaim the central hills for the free peoples of Dar.

By public acclaim Darrick's right-hand banner man throughout the whole ordeal, Reginald Saerd, took up the throne and was made king of the new nation. At his coronation, historians quote him as saying, *'Dar owes its life to its favoured son and it shall always be ruled in his name. This kingdom shall always bear his honour; this kingdom of Dardarrick.'*

King Saerd struggled to retain the kingdoms' independence against increasingly savage Lorn raids. The worship of the All Father became more prevalent as temples and shrines devoted to him were built in the few towns under Dardarrian control. The kingdom quickly spread south into wetlands of Torres; at first using military leverage to try and gain access to rich hunting grounds full of water fowl but quickly turned to diplomacy to sway the opinion of the local lizardmen clans. The reptilian confederation of Torres had long been suspicious of Lorn expansionism and willingly negotiated pacts to supply food and Aphaxian weapons.

Dardarrick spent 14 years under King Saerd's ideas that integrated faith, magic and race-independent nationalism into its people's lifestyles. He sheltered his peoples from the harsh fact that the Torresh were slowly training new armies to conquer them. He made sure that they were well fed, educated in the mystic arts if they wished to be and protected by both soldiers and priest of the All Father. Flooded by a steady stream of defectors from the oppressive rule of Lorn, which still held the east firmly in its grasp, Graenwich grew to enormous expanse and other large cities began to spring up across the burgeoning kingdom. Facing growing infirmity he passed the crown to his heir, Argayn Saerdsson, who took up the responsibility.



The Lornish Strike Back

On the first springtime thaw of 222 YBD, the Lornish army began their war-priest assisted march upon eastern Dardarrick. With deliberate brutality the Lorn claimed a large portion of the kingdom and several towns were razed. Belatedly reacting to the invasion, King Saerdsson put on his armour and led his royal knights to battle.

The First Lornish War raged for eight bloody years, turning kilometres of eastern Dardarrick and western Lorn into churned up fields, burned forests and besieged forts. Thousands of soldiers, priests and innocent civilians on both sides of the war were lost and no end seemed possible. Although the two sides seemed evenly matched, the Dardarrians could not replace their losses as quickly, dooming the kingdom if the conflict continued. King Saerdsson turned to his closest arcane advisors, led by High Wizard Magnus, for a plan.

Magnus organised his magical brethren, assembling a concentrated force of all the wizards in the kingdom to create a collection of the most powerful items and enchantments they could fashion and with them armed Saerdsson and the royal guard. The handful

of surviving warlocks, combat trained wizards, were assigned to the unit, Magnus believing that a spearhead charge of arcane augmented might of a scale never before seen could break Lorn asunder.

In a mobilisation that would later be called 'Saerdsson's Spear', the forces of Dardarrick sundered the battle-toughened lines of the Lornish allowing the Dardarrians to assault and butcher the war-priests behind them. With most of the Patriarch General killed in the slaughter, warleader Turien of Lorn was forced to surrender else face complete annihilation.

A New Hope

The victorious did not come without cost. King Saerdsson was mortally wounded in the glorious charge and soon succumbed to his injuries, which defied all magical healing. When he died, he left his son Weiran in the hands of his advisors, forcing Magnus to become the boy's foster parent.

To prevent political instability the wizard formed three organisations, each would have equal say in Dardarrick's future until the heir was old enough to claim the throne. Known as the

Pillars of Dardarrick they consisted of the Privy Lords, the Voice of the All Father and the Brotherhood of Magnus.

The Privy Lords were Dardarricks most trusted nobles, those with the greatest political and military skills. The Voice of the All Father was an elected conclave of high priests. The Brotherhood, founded by Magnus himself, were the most powerful sorcerers of the Mages Guild, not only responsible for the policing of Dardarrick's wizards and warlocks but training them in sorcery too, a form of magic little known or practiced amongst the other races.

With the Pillars' founding, Dardarrick gradually grew in power and strength. Surviving the Second Lonish War only by an act of self sacrifice by Magnus and his most powerful wizards, the elite Lorn regiments were swallowed up by a titanic rift opening up along the line of the Eastermarch, a natural feature that remains part of the border to this day. The Third Lornish war so greatly sapped the strength of both sides, that Lorn finally abandoned its attempt to reclaim the nation. A generation later Dardarrick was forced to divert its attention to the west, repulsing raids from a vast horde of savage scorpionman nomads flooding out of the Wildlands.

The knowledge and power of the Mages Guild also increased, its greatest achievements culminating in 367 YBD when it finally replicated the coordinated ritual techniques used by the wizard Magnus to open the Eastermarch Rift. After years fighting against the Sea Devils, the nations of Rardarri allied themselves to throw the sharkfolk back into the seas from which they had emerged. The guild used its recovered knowledge to create spells enabling thousands of soldiers to breathe beneath the waves.

Discovery of Ancient Secrets

However, it was not until 470 years after the Pillars were created, in 700 YBD, that a major find near Clawspire revolutionised the scope of sorcery in Dardarrick forever. A long period of peace and prosperity had given way to many new facets of science and exploration of Nuera. Guildmaster Baestra had been heading several exploratory missions into a deep catacomb that incomprehensively seemed to date from before The Dawning. Her guild wizards had been scrying into every nook and pitfall they could in order to fully understand the nature of the subterranean complex. During the explorations they found a chamber, in the wall of which was half buried the first of the inordinately powerful *Ommiciex* crystals.

The gemstone was a perfectly transparent diamond, the size of a pair of linked fists, which seemed to do odd things to the magic cast on it, even though it radiated none itself. After months of experimentation the Mages Guild discovered that the *Ommiciex* was a powerful divination device.

If a shard was cleaved from the crystal it remained in sympathetic resonance with the other part, transmitting sound between the two, no matter the distance separating them. More tests revealed that other senses could be transmitted and, far more importantly, magic too. A sorcerer casting a spell through the crystals did not

have to account for the distance between the two – as if both shared the same location. A second shard split from the gemstone amazed the wizards by acting as a third node in the same network.

Seeing great possibilities that the crystal could be used for, the guildmaster gave these diamond shards to the king as a safety precaution, whilst the rest of the *Ommiciex* crystal was taken to the guild's citadel in Graenwich and kept under strict guard and constant supervision in order to better protect the king. No matter where he went or what he was doing, the mages would be able to watch over him and answer his questions with no one any the wiser. The *Ommiciex* proved to be the most ingenious communications system known to mortal beings.

Shadows in the Borderlands

Nearly 300 years of relative peace passed for Dardarrick whilst the Lorn Hegemony recovered from a series of disasters brought about with a war with the Aphaxusians. Magical and technological advances turned the Dardarrick into a powerful and stable nation. The populace enjoyed an easy life with plentiful food and no shortage of pleasurable activities. Culture and engineering flourished, aqueducts constructed to provide fresh, clean water in most major cities; schools in every settlement and impressive fortifications built back from the borders so as not to aggravate their eastern and southern neighbours; although artillery-laden watchtowers were built along the border to the Wildlands, which seemed a constant source of raids.

During this age of wonders however, rumours began to trickle in from the eastern and northern border towns. The Lornish people had a different view of Dardarrick; one born of bitter jealousy and spite, fuelled in part by the long standing enmity from events centuries before and also because of the luxurious life Dardarrians enjoyed compared to the harsh labour of the resentful humans and other races across the border.

What few traders who travelled between the kingdoms quickly brought word of Lornish anti-Dardarrick sentiments with them and any Dardarrian living within a day's ride from Lorn began to sleep with crossbows loaded at their windows and armour ready to don. The powerful army of Dardarrick readied themselves in several strongholds along the eastern border, further increasing tensions.

In the winter of 992 YBD, Dardarrian wizard messengers began to send word of burned farms and looted granaries back to the guild. Witnesses spoke of shadows that left havoc in their wake and within days several plantations were ablaze. These 'shadows' were lethally quick and efficient; using alchemist's fire and minor spells to great effect upon the hapless farmers and fields. Warlocks were eventually used to set a trap and capture several of the perpetrators, mercenaries of various species, who claimed they were in the pay of Lorn.

Disgusted by his neighbour's actions, King Saerd IV had been pushed too far. Mobilising the Dardarrian legions garrisoned on the

border, he bid them invade Lorn, disregarding the cries for peace from the worshippers of the All Father. Ten thousand pikemen, crossbowmen and a regiment of legionary warlocks marched across the border, starting the Fourth Lornish War.

A Rude Awakening

Arrogantly believing in their own superiority, the Dardarrians were bloodily defeated by waves of heavy cavalry wearing Aphaxusian-made armour, whilst assassins struck down Dardarrian leaders, shattering morale. Despite their training and advanced equipment, the Dardarrian forces broke and were butchered in the rout. Followers of the All Father claimed that he had withdrawn his support of such a foolish offensive action, causing much conflict over whether piety was more important than loyalty to the king.

King Saerd IV turned to his neighbours in the south and requested that Torres give aid to the war, if only to avoid it bleeding over into their lands. Recalling a refused request made by the lizardfolk for aid against the pirates of Parennax a few centuries earlier, Torres paid back the slight. Angered by the pettiness, Saerd sent troops down the Walker River to secure it so that Dardarrian troop ships could reach the sea and land an army on the coast of Lorn. The move was disastrous. Not only were the regiments lost, swallowed up by the swamps but the aggressive act turned the Torresh people even farther away from Dardarrick, forcing an otherwise neutral nation to look upon them as enemies.

The venerable warleader Guntheor took advantage of the open border and led an invasion deep into Dardarrick. With lizardman mercenaries hired from the swamps of Torres, Lorn pushed the defenders back to the Walker River. In one fell swoop half of Dardarrick was occupied by enemy forces, its capital of Graenwich under siege and the people of Dardarrick began to know the fear of impending defeat.

The Rise of Praxious

In the light of how the All Father had abandoned them, an unexpected wave of desperation was taken advantage of by long hidden cultists of the ancient and once-forbidden Praxious the Brazen One. New converts flocked to the cult, finding strength and renewed faith in the ranks of its bronze-masked evangelists.

Proclaiming how their god would win this war and blaming the cowardly weakness of the clergy of the All Father, the cult sent bronze-armoured champions and zealous battle priests by the dozen to the front lines and over many months began to score successes against the forces of Lorn. Each victory brought more converts to the Brazen One, till the Pillars of Dardarrick were forced by public opinion to advise the legitimisation of the cult.

After High Cleric Hindersson was found in the temple of the All Father, assassinated by an 'obvious' Lornish spy, the people bayed for blood and King Saerd IV had no choice but to appease his people, naming Praxious an official church in Dardarrick. The morning after this proclamation was made, Tomar the Hierophant

of Praxious, demanded the newly vacant role of high priest in the besieged capital. The king, beset by enemies and scrutinised by allies, reluctantly agreed and gave the mantle of faith to Tomar.

Given access to the Pillars' financial resources as the highest leader of faith in the kingdom, Tomar used the coffers to hire a shipload of Parennax mercenaries. Putting these scaly sell-swords into a single legion led by warlocks and war-priests, Tomar urged the Brotherhood to give them free access to the battlefield; to which the aging Archmage Brinnan begrudgingly agreed.

The regular army parted to allow Tomar's legion into the war torn front and marvelled at the might of the Praxious worshippers. The followers of the Brazen One and their magic wielding brothers-in-arms began to cut a swathe through the Lornish as if they were conscripts instead of hardened soldiers. The worshippers fought with zeal and fanaticism as if their faith itself was being tested and they offered no mercy to the Lornish.

Faced by the murderous fanatics, Warlord Guntheor II and his 'immortal' hobgoblin bodyguard turned and fled, sealing the doom of the Lornish army. Reaching the raging river, which denoted the border between the two nations, only a fraction of the routing troops managed to cross before the bridge collapsed, trapping the majority of the hobgoblins, humans and lizardmen on the wrong side. In desperation the Lornish army set up impromptu defences in the ruins of the town that had once served Sentinel Keep. It did not save them and from that day forward the river was renamed the Bloodwater.

Led by the Hierophant the butchery did not stop there. Once the bridge over the river had been repaired the Brazen Legion continued its crusade into Lorn, leaving a bloody trail of destruction that did not spare soldiers, livestock or civilians. Facing the complete devastation of the hegemony Guntheor was forced by his own chieftains to sue for peace.

The Consolidation and Usurping of Power

With the surrender of Lorn the war had ended but trouble in the kingdom was only just beginning. The return of the fanatical Brazen Legion was a joyous event in Dardarrick. After nearly a decade of occupation, most common folk were happy to receive the aid of Praxious to help rebuild their homes and, in turn, help the Brazen Priests to construct new, domineering temples in honour of the victory given them. The faith of the All Father could only look on in dismay as they were ostracised.

The massive wergild, paid by Lorn as part of the reparations was channelled through the Hierophant Tomar's own coffers, enabling the priests to grant disproportional aid to faithful worshippers. The funds were also used to bribe officials or hire House Xuan assassins. Over the course of half a century, the Cult of the Brazen One slowly corrupted the government, then placed the blame on the recently crowned King Saerd V via an efficient rumour mill operated by the temples.

Eventually in 1,055 YBD the wizened Hierophant called for a 'gathering of the pious' outside the royal palace. Thousands of commoners, craftsmen, soldiers and noble folk – all worshippers of Praxious – assembled at the Graenwich palace, whereupon Tomar denounced the young monarch and declared his own sovereignty over the kingdom of Dardarrick. The sudden coup was successful and Tomar took up the crown. King Saerd IV was allowed to live by the 'mercy of Praxious' but exiled to a distant monastery.

In five short years the Hierophant consolidated his control over the Pillars of Dardarrick, inserting 'faithful' officers at their heads and making the kingdom his personal theocracy. The High Temple of the All Father was torn apart and rebuilt in brass and bronze, dedicated to the church of Praxious. All other shrines and churches were similarly torn down and replaced, and anyone found worshiping the All Father are beaten or flogged in public places by templars of the Brazen One. Slowly an undercurrent of discontent grew but none would raise hand or thought against the holy one.

Pilgrims of Praxious were sent southward into Torres and westward into the Wildlands to preach and evangelise the way of the faith. Those who went into the Wildlands never returned, almost certainly killed or captured by the savage tribes that ruled there. Torres however, proved to be a different sort of challenge. Pilgrims were often met with stubborn defiance wherever they went but following the martial teachings of the Hierophant, they used violence and magic to try to show the superiority of Praxious; only increasing the steadily growing feelings of antipathy as clan after clan were forcibly converted, then magically enslaved to the will of Praxious.

When the Hierophant eventually died of extreme old age in 1,161 YBD giggling in derangement, it is said a demon arose from the underworld to claim his soul.

The Tarnishing

Tomar's young child was bequeathed the kingdom. A different sort of leader, Hierophant Tomarsson pulled back his father's pilgrims and missionaries immediately, claiming that only Dardarrick should be 'saved'. Instead of preaching expansion or domination to the masses, he spoke gently of repairing old wounds and raising Dardarrick to new and wonderful heights. He gave the people the leader they *wanted* to follow instead of the leader they *had* to follow. Tomarsson puts more emphasis in keeping the people happy and once more the common folk of Dardarrick believed in the government and were happy to know that their kingdom was ruled by 'good people'.

They might have been pleased with the change in regime but they reality of the situation was dire. Incursions by savage Wildlands tribes began growing in frequency and ferocity but Tomarsson claimed that they were nothing to worry about. Lorn remained a cold and smouldering pit of resentment. Torres was still licking wounds caused by the first Hierophant's pilgrims and relations

with them could only be called 'caustic'. Although Dardarrick flourished and thrived once more, the world looked upon it from all sides with hatred.

With inexorable slowness, over the next 20 years the house of cards began to topple. One after the other, Fort Vigilant and Westwatch were overrun by scorpionmen, forcing the western border back to the Goldpan River. Yet the Hierophant refused to send an army to drive back the nomads, instead keeping the troops close to Sentinel Keep, fearing that Lorn was growing too strong. A not unreasonable fear for soon after the new ruler of the hegemony, Warlord Guntheor V, refused to pay any further tribute stating that 'Dardarrick had drained the blood of Lorn for long enough'.

In the south the lizardfolk were growing restless; freed from the spiritual domination of the missionaries' attacks were starting to occur on shrines and small temples of the Brazen One, priests slaughtered and templars sent to chastise the apostates vanishing into the marshlands never to be seen again.

Unable to keep all these stories repressed, the smooth facade of lies began to crack. Taxes were raised to make up the shortfall once provided by Lornish reparations. But to keep the people happy he taxed the nobles more severely forcing them to near beggary. Sensing a return of All Father worship, the Brazen Priests began even more draconian measures rooting out heresy. Civil war loomed on the horizon.

Fearing the future, several higher officers within the Pillars utilised a long forgotten right of their collective organisations – the ability to name a new heir to the throne when no one of noble blood sits the royal throne. As that the theocracy of Praxious ruled from the High Brazen Temple and not on the royal throne, the Pillars could enact this right and hoped to turn Dardarrick from the brink of disaster. Several officers faithful to the Brazen One were eliminated by those loyal to the kingdom, not the church, and research into the noble bloodlines began.

Return of the King

Over 125 years of theocratic rule ended when Guildmaster Arcos, High Archmage Daramin and Chief Unionist Oruzach came forward with the new royal king of Dardarrick. Descendant of one of the heroes of the First Lornish War, the abruptly crowned King Archiveldt immediately proclaimed that the Hierophant would remain his chief advisor and that together they raise the kingdom of Dardarrick to new heights. Not wanting to harm his reputation, Tomarsson agreed and openly spoke well of their new king – even though secretly he was already scheming against the new ruler.

The purged Pillars of Dardarrick upheld the king's will and many of the harsher laws from Tomar's era were repealed or mitigated. The commoners of Dardarrick trusted their new king and secret groups of All Father worshippers surfaced to rebuild some of their temples and churches. Seeing a happier populace, Archiveldt saw

no threat in having two religions to draw strength from and lifted the ban on outside beliefs. Tomarsson and his followers roared their disgust at religious freedoms but this was drowned out by the cheers of the crowds that loved Archiveldt and his policies.

The Brotherhood of Magnus replaced the Brazen templars in watching over the king again, believing that they could better protect his rule with new innovations in magical studies and tactics they had been experimenting with. The original Omnicix diamond had been cut into several pieces but it became obvious that it was of little use if the shards were distributed widely, the transmissions of each would swamp everybody carrying one. Eventually a wizard wondered if more than one gem had been entombed in the ancient complex, his diligence paid off when a second was located. After this the Brotherhood began full scale mining operations to see how many more could be found.

The precious gems were rarer than hoped but each new one discovered allowed the wizards to create a new and separate communications net, which could be supervised by a single mage. One net was used to protect the king and allow him secret communication with the mages guild. Whilst one of the three shards of the original crystal was used to form a ring for the Hierophant to wear, allowing the Brotherhood to spy on his activities.

New crystals were handed directly to a secret cabal within the Brotherhood dedicated solely to innovative uses of the Omnicix. Calling this group Spellcaster Command, or SpellCom in common parlance, those who carried the shards could be looked in upon, sent messages to or even have spells cast through the crystal to aid the wearer. It revolutionised Dardarrick's ability to scout, spy or issue military commands.

A Brazen Operation and Encore

Just as Dardarrick began to see real improvements to its government, Lorn suffered a terrible loss. Warlord Guntheor V disappeared heirless from his fortress in Lorn's capital of Moratlis and the Patriarch Generals fell upon one another in a civil dispute for the throne.

Hierophant Tomarsson instantly called upon his dwindling faithful to mobilise against the Lornish once and for all, preaching that Guntheor was taken by Praxious to give them a chance to finally topple their kingdom's enemy, exterminating them once and for all. In a show of defence King Archiveldt addressed the masses to contradict what the Hierophant was saying. He silenced his 'advisor' and quoted the All Father's scriptures, finally showing his true faith for what it was. By quashing the invasion of Lorn, the church of the All Father was reinstated as the chief religion of Dardarrick.

However, over the course of several months Tomarsson continued to hold masses, whipping up the faithful of Praxious with hateful

attacks on the All Father and planting the seeds of a genocidal crusade against the hated hobgoblins. His actions were observed via his Omnicix ring but before the king could organise support to remove the Hierophant from office, Tomarsson left the capital at the head of his followers.

Knowing that the garrison of Sentinel Keep would be ordered to prevent his crossing into Lorn, the Hierophant marched his fanatical army north, swelling his force with increasing numbers of the faithful who shared Tomarsson's hatred of the Lornish overloads. Girded by his own arrogant self-belief the high priest took his army straight up Claws Falls River into the mountains, clearing the range valley by valley.

Not expecting an invasion, the goblinoids of The Claws stood no chance against the army of fanatics, murdering and pillaging in the name of Praxious. After several ill considered battles, the surviving natives fled. Flushed with success Tomarsson reached the hitherto inaccessible Salt Bay, which he claimed for Dardarrick, before turning east and working his way deeper into Lorn. Perhaps fortunately for the hobgoblins winter fell, forcing the Hierophant to establish a base at the edge of the gradually freezing sea. Here he established the fort of Pierceling which he used as winter quarters for his army, which by foresight was well supplied with food and goods looted from the Lornish tribes they had defeated.

When wizards of the Brotherhood arrived to escort him to the king, Tomarsson acquiesced with enthusiastic joy, sensing an opportunity to overthrow Archiveldt when the people heard of the victories that Praxious had granted them. To his surprise the Hierophant was stripped of his title as Leader of the Faith and banished from Dardarrick. Confiscated of his title, wealth and even jewellery, and given a choice of directions of where to leave the kingdom, Tomarsson marched westwards closely guarded by a unit of Royal Bodyguards, who were later all found dead with no sign of the Hierophant.

A Naval Opportunity

Seeing the tactical advantage of their arcane spying, the Arcanist General of SpellCom, a mysterious figure Raspeng, brought forward an idea on how to use the Omnicix to a greater degree to the leaders of the Pillars.

His dream was to create a military organisation of secret operatives trained as elite soldiers that could perform duties that the common military could not. Using the connection of the shards with the Omnicix at SpellCom these teams could move in and out of territory, both foreign and domestic, with ease. Moving in secret in this way, their activities would be precise and untraceable back to the king – as if ghosts performed the deeds. Although unavailable to give his consent to the idea, the Pillars believed the king would agree to the concept and the Wraith Recon organisation began to take shape behind closed doors.

King Archiveltdt meanwhile took advantage of the large expanse of coastline and mountains that had fallen into his hands. In a masterful act of diplomacy, Archiveltdt paid the displaced goblinoid tribes a huge compensation, whilst encouraging them to transfer their loyalty to Dardarrick. Faced with returning to a Lorn ripping itself apart in a civil war, or reclaiming their territory for a change of allegiance, the tribes swore fealty and began aiding the construction of a full port at Pierceling. Within two years Dardarrick was building its first fleet and learning the skills of sailing.

Awakening Evil

Exactly five years to the day of his vanishing, King Guntheor V returned to his palace in Lorn; much to the awe and shock of his people. Unleashing a powerful magic he was never known to have before upon the unfortunate Patriarch General that sat in his throne, Guntheor reclaimed his rule and immediately closed all border travel between Lorn and Dardarrick. A new force of Black Knights guarded the crossings and soon demonstrated their ruthless authority.

As if his return was a trigger for troubles abroad, the Pillars began to take note of increasing problems and threats to all sides.

A lizardman leader named Bloodak took the throne of Torres, uniting the hitherto loose federation of lizardfolk and their scaly kin into a more autocratic kingdom; bringing a new and predatory fanaticism to the kingdom. The sharp-toothed zeal in his aspect of saurian gods made the people of Torres hungry for long-awaited revenge upon Dardarrick.

Sightings and encounters with horrible undead creatures all over the continent gave rise to rumours of a new and dark deity in Dardarrick, perhaps even the machinations of the now missing Tomarsson and his hidden cult. Indeed there was no way to know how many faithful Brazen One worshippers still lurked unmasked within the kingdom's governmental hierarchy.

The Wildlands had been a worry for centuries, although any attacks from there were small and easily scattered but the ascension of new and powerful leaders in their tribes seemed to give them more credence. Scorpionmen nomads that would sooner kill and eat one another were all of a sudden working under the same banner and a mysterious force seemed to drive them toward the edges of Dardarrick. Having not seen a full nomadic horde march against them for centuries, the western military fortifications prepared for the worst.

All of these things when combined with the frigid silence of Lorn put Dardarrick's leaders at great unease. At an impasse, Archiveltdt was presented with the Wraith Recon concept. The king yielded to the idea of putting the teams together and when Raspeng explained that the first Wraith Recon teams would be ready for deployment in less than 30 hours, the king was shocked, then grudgingly accepted the need. From that point onwards the covert nature of Wraith Recon was given royal sanction.

Currency

Dardarrick uses gold for its currency with three denominations; the bit, the crown and the lion. For working out prices for equipment in other RuneQuest II rulebooks assume a bit is worth a copper piece, a crown is equal to a silver and the lion is the equivalent to a gold coin.



Enter the Dragon

Within one year the Wraith Recon managed to stop two Wildlands khans from rising up, sank a Parenax pirate frigate before it could attack trade ships outside of Salt Bay and mapped out remote parts of the Torresh riverbed network. All of this – and the world was none the wiser. Lorn remained a mystery however. No Wraith Recon team had been sent over the eastern border, the Pillars not wanting to risk stirring up problems with Dardarrick's oldest enemy.

In 1208 YBD, on the anniversary of Guntheor II's surrender to the Brazen Legion a great beast was sighted flying along the eastern border of Dardarrick. The creature, a terrible undead dragon of bone and rotted sinew, descended riderless upon the border towns of Dardarrick and unleashed pure death upon them. Nothing was spared its necrotic breath and when it was done with the farming and plantation villages it moved to the military fortifications. Hundreds died in just a few twilight hours only to rise up as the undying damned to plague the few survivors. As quickly as it arrived the fell beast flew into the darkness and vanished.

Dragons had been outlawed in warfare by mutual treaty for many centuries due to their threat to civilian lives and King Archiveltdt was horrified to think that Guntheor would stoop so low. As he read countless reports from the eastern side of his kingdom being left in ruin, he grew angrier. The threat of Lorn unleashing such devastation again could not be permitted. The Dardarrick army mobilised and marched towards the border but all remained quiet on the eastern front.

Wraith Recon was called for, armed with lethal sorceries and given *carte blanche* to achieve their objectives no matter the cost. If the enemy was not going to play fair, then it was time to fight dirty... very dirty.

IMPORTANT SITES IN DARDARRICK

These are the major settlements of Dardarrick. There are hundreds more of smaller towns and villages found throughout the kingdom but they are not important enough to list here.

Graenwich, Royal Capital of Dardarrick

The capital city of Dardarrick, Graenwich is a massive walled metropolis that has existed for over a millennium. It has been the home of the royal palace of Dardarrick and seat of the Dardarrian Throne for as long as the city has stood and is the heart of the kingdom's government. Dozens of kings and queens have called Graenwich home over the centuries.

Graenwich is an advanced city with dwarven-made stone walls five metres thick surrounding it on all sides. Huge gates open to the north and south roads and a 100 metre wide portcullis can be drawn across the river harbour to keep hostile ships from docking at the city. Seven tall towers topped with enchanted trebuchets overlook the surrounding lands and two score of ballistae are placed amidst the battlements of the wall; all defences added after Graenwich was freed from Lornish oppression ages ago.

Once inside the city, Graenwich offers all of Dardarrick's splendours in one form or another. Along its magically cleaned cobblestone streets (a common punishment for delinquent wizarding students at the Guild) are hundreds of shops and crafting houses, artiste galleries, smith forges and sprawling cottages and dormitories. Silks from Parennox, Torresh

cypress timber, dwarven forged weaponry; all of these things and more can be found in the market streets of Graenwich.

The five largest building complexes in the capital make up the northwest quarter of the sprawling city. The area covers nearly three square kilometres of city and is referred to as 'Royal Quarter'.

First and foremost is the towering royal palace; its protective walls holding in a beautiful courtyard and chapel to the All Father. The palace itself is an enormous collection of towers and halls, complete with stained glass windows 10 metres tall that depict the various kings of Dardarrick. It is made up of over 100 separate rooms aside from its massive banquet hall and throne room, whose balcony overlooks the palace wall into the main square of the city.

Next largest within the Royal Quarter is the army's Grounds Martial. A campus of smaller linked buildings, stables and storehouses, the Grounds Martial is where the royal guard of Dardarrick live and train. Platoon and legion leaders of the other branches in Dardarrick army also have quarters here but it is primarily used to house the 1,000 veteran warriors and war-priests that protect Graenwich and the royal family.



Situated closest to the river in order to pipe in running water to use in their machines, the Forge of Engineers guildhall is a clanking and banging building that belches smoke and soot from its 13 huge chimneys at all hours. Behind its iron-shuttered windows and wrought portcullis lie a dozen forge workshops and several testing grounds for new mundane or mechanical apparatuses, many of which end up in the hands of the Dardarrick populace. There is a hidden 13th workshop beneath the others where secret projects are undertaken, some for use by the Wraith Recon teams between special missions.

Built like a gigantic schoolhouse, the University of Wizardry is the home and headquarters of the Mages Guild. It is a simple enough building on the outside, all of its marvels are contained within. With a staff of 50 wizards teaching its students, the University is a constant site for magical wonders and manipulations. Other than the marble and glass graduation hall, only students and teachers are allowed into the University.

Constructed to be a single hexagonal tower of over 20 floors, each one as large as a modest sized cottage, the Brotherhood's Tower – or Spire of Magnus as it is also known – is an ominous and looming sight that looks over the entirety of Graenwich. Its cold grey surface is made seamless through magical manipulation and a dozen balconies sprout from its sides to allow for warlocks and archmages to gaze upon the world. The tower is said to have a dozen basement floors digging deep into the bedrock of Nuera but only the highest ranking Brotherhood members could confirm this.

Population: 50,000 (60% Human, 20% Dwarf, 10% Elf, 5% Lizardman, 5% Miscellaneous).

Government: The decisions and rulings of King Archiveltd and the Pillars of Dardarrick. Faction leaders hold localised power but collectively bow to the crown.

Defence: Large army of professional soldiers, warlocks and supporting priests. City watchmen are well paid and trained to arrest. Some noble families hire mercenary or professional protectors.

Commerce: Nearly any good or service can be made available. Taverns, inns, temples and common areas can be found throughout the city.

Organisations: Numerous temples and service-based guilds form individual factions. The three Pillars of Dardarrick and the Church of the All Father are the most powerful factions within the city.

Pierceling, Port of Salt Bay

Named after the canal connecting it to the rest of Dardarrick, Pierceling lays nestled along a section of the grinding pebble beach between the Salt Bay sea and the Claw Mountains above. It is a bustling town devoted to the ships it produces and handles, with a sprawling collection of wharfs, dockhouses, taverns, shops and homes, nestled tightly together on the narrow strand and climbing up the near vertiginous cliff faces. Although originally only settled by the huge number of craftsmen and builders sent to construct the naval dock yard, a thriving town

has expanded with staggering rapidity to support the growing military presence.

Aside from the few dozen of military ships that protect to dockyards, the port is used for commercial vessels as well. In the spring and autumn months trading galleys and other merchantmen can always be seen rowing or sailing across the bay towards the harbour, before passing between the surf pounded ballistae sea towers rising on either side of the breakwater opening. As the kingdom's only port it handles all sea trade, what there is with hostilities so high.

Pirates or enemy vessels would be foolish to attempt a naval attack upon Pierceling. Surrounded by looming cliffs on three sides, the only approach is through an artificially narrow channel which only local pilots know by heart. Other than the sea towers, the enfiling cliffs have been hollowed out to make positions for large war engines designed to throw various types of ammunition, from ubiquitous rocks to red hot iron balls. Even the harbour breakwater wall is fortified and possesses a complex gate that can be adjusted for the height of the water – since in the winter Salt Bay freezes over, technically permitting an army to attack on foot across the ice.

The civilian portion of the town is based on oceanfront commerce. Cargo handled by the shipyards is ferried under the Claw Mountains using an underground series of canals fed by melt water from the peaks above. The massive engineering project took several years of hard labour and coordinated magic to excavate but eases the transport of goods, which previously necessitated porting them over the mountain passes. The canal joins the Three Falls River on the other side of the range, where special cargo boats transfer goods to and from the kingdom's riverside cities. Everything now uses the canal, even troops sent to relieve the Pierceling garrison.

The salt cliffs that surround the city and bay are the chief domestic resource of the city, seconded by fish and whale oils. The white, crystalline surfaces of the hard mountain cliffs are covered in constantly regenerating salt deposits that are scraped off and pressed into salt bricks before being sent elsewhere for various uses. It is not easy or pleasant work to endure and few salt 'miners' perform the duty for more than few seasons before moving on to a different career.

Population: 15,000 (70% Human, 15% Hobgoblins, 10% Dwarf, 5% Miscellaneous).

Government: The naval personnel of Pierceling are part of the military command under Admiral Brinetalon, who answers to the Pillars of Dardarrick. The civilian population are ruled by the Dardarrian crown through the local magistrate, Burgo Denesson.

Defence: The town is defended from all oceanic threats by the Dardarrian Armada and the 14 artillery positions built into cliffs and breakwater towers. In addition, wyvern and griffon rookeries supply aerial cavalry for long range patrols and communication. The town has a modest watch made up of local volunteers and retired soldiers, which can be supplemented by marines.

Commerce: Primary export is salt mined from the bayside. Foreign imports can be found in several shops but the city is designed more for export.

Organisations: The Dardarrian Armada, the Seafarer's Guild, Merchant's Row and a number of privateer crews hired to work for Dardarrick make up the major forces at work in the city. There is a small but popular temple to the sea gods located on the northern edge of town dedicated to safe sea travel.

Fisherslane

'The town on the lake' is another name for Fisherslane. A small city by Dardarrick's standards, it is roughly a kilometre across its widest point and does not have city walls, never being rebuilt after its devastation in the Fourth Lornish War. Streets of hard-packed clay arrange the city in a semi-circle around the southern banks of Lake Pale and several acres of plantations spread out from its edge. It is a farming community that has always used the lake as a recreation as well as a resource – but no longer.

With the recent savage dragon attacks on settlements upriver on the Dawn, the lake docks and beaches are no longer safe. Formerly home to dozens of fishing and houseboats, the lakeside is now patrolled by soldiers and vigilant citizens in search of the risen dead that have washed downriver. A week after the attacks the first undead crawled out of the lake to attack the city, catching it by surprise but now Fisherslane keeps a constant guard against any remaining creatures that might wash up to threaten them.

Population: 2,000 (60% Human, 20% Elf, 10% Lizardman, 10% Miscellaneous).

Government: Legal and civil matters are adjudicated by the local Dardarrian magistrate, Freidrich Woodsblud.

Defence: A company of 120 trained Dardarrian soldiers under the command of Captain Yelias Russkoff protect the town from external threats and undead rising from the lake, although about a third are casualties. A small and publicly organised town watch monitors crime.

Commerce: Formerly strong fishing and farming exports have been stifled due to the increase in undead threats. Unsurprisingly prices have now risen since goods must now be transported overland from the capital and folks have taken to hoarding.

Organisations: The local soldiery form their own faction. The Fisher's Guild was once a powerful local group but cut off from the lake most have moved away recently.

Eastermarck

Once a busy city that kept a sizeable militia and city-guard in case the Lornish invaded, Eastermarck now lies in ruin. When the undead dragon attacked eastern Dardarrick, Eastermarck was the first to feel its might. Buildings were smashed, fields were withered and any townspeople caught in the streets or revealed by a rooftop being torn away was soon driven into undeath by the creature's black breath. Those who were not outright killed by the terrible hit

and run attack were soon swarmed by the animated corpses of their former neighbours and family.

Now the ruins of Eastermarck are little more than a collection of broken and burned buildings surrounded by zombies and ghouls. Many corpses have wandered away, corralled by the great rift towards Grainington or Sentinel Keep but enough of the living dead remain that Eastermarck is considered too dangerous for the normal military to deal with at this time. Fears abound that infections caught from the rotting bodies of the undead will spread into the ranks of the Dardarrian army.

Despite being given a wide berth by looters and such, the Brotherhood of Magnus worries that the dead city will become an irresistible draw to anyone powerful in the art of necromancy and is considering sending in a Wraith Recon team to scout out the scale of the problem.

Population: 750 (All Undead).

Government: None, the undead are seemingly mindless and uncontrolled.

Defence: None, the undead only hunt living flesh and do not specifically defend themselves.

Commerce: None.

Organisations: None.

Southwatch

Southwatch is a large and busy city placed in the far south, on the banks of the Walker River near the ill defined border of Torres. The sodden wetlands surrounding the city, grazed by large herds of cattle, are often boggy in places and become a muddy morass in the winter months. Although Southwatch is built upon a low rise, the waterlogged soil will not support the weight of military stonework that slowly subsides and sinks into the ground. Thus the entire city, even the palisades is built of wood. In the low lying areas houses are built on stilts to avoid flooding and the inevitable creeping dampness. The summer is often a two-edged sword, drying the ground to pleasant firmness but bringing with it vast swarms of annoying, biting insects.

As the most southerly settlement on the river, it is the commerce centre for Dardarrian and Torresh traders alike. The markets specialise in water-resistant lumber, water fowl, fish, both edible and burnable rushes and a plethora of medicinal (and narcotic) herbs. Some foreign trade goods also make it from the Torres coast. The streets are so crowded with lizardfolk, that those reptilians with Dardarrick citizenship wear specially made gold bracelets to identify them.

The city is home to the Southwatch Rangers, a legion of soldiers that garrisons and patrols the border, trained in moving through swamplands and dealing with the natural threats that inhabit the region. Ostensibly it is their responsibility to protect the south if the scaly clans ever unite and decide to move north en-mass; something which historically has never happened.

Some of the Torresh villages provide squads of mercenary lizardfolk which excel as local scouts. Unlike with Lorn, the king of Dardarrick is making efforts to repair relationships with Torres and has placed some of his most diplomatic offices in charge, to ensure careful but polite interactions.

Population: 12,500 (50% Human, 30% Lizardfolk, 15% Elf, 5% Miscellaneous).

Government: A council of three administrators for the Dardarrian crown; Magistratrix Anna Valumm, Lieutenant Rogerre Bennet and Chieftain Jadescales.

Defence: In addition to the Southwatch Rangers, there is a brigade of regular Dardarrian infantry and Chieftain Jadescales' tribal greenscale warriors that all help protect the city.

Commerce: Trade with Torresh villages and tribes, some common Dardarrian goods and products are sometimes sold at slightly elevated prices depending on race and nationality.

Organisations: The majority of the Southwatch Rangers are distributed along the border in small wooden forts, leaving the regular infantry in charge of the city. Lizardfolk citizens who live in town pay direct homage to Jadescales – making them his de facto tribe.

Grainington

This expansive city was built in the centre of a massive stretch of lightly wooded foothills that gradually level off into rolling grasslands. The open regions were turned into a chain of farms and estates, which for several hundred years has provided roughly one third of the kingdom's flax, root vegetables and grains. A rustic and peaceful place that ran on sweat and aching muscles as much as prayers from the All Father... up until the dragon came and turned the whole area to twisted, necrotic stalks.

Now the city is a bleak, grey landscape of dead crops and fallow fields. While the abomination flew strafing runs on the crops, most of the city's inhabitants managed to escape north towards The Claws foothills to the north, lowering the immediate number of casualties in the attack dramatically. However, with the crops destroyed and food stores withered in its sacks and pots, most died of starvation before they could reach Rivermarck.

Although several legions are being sent to relieve the city, the damage done to Dardarrick's next harvest and food stores could well cause more death through famine in the seasons to come.

Population: 250 (75% Human, 15% Dwarf, 10% Miscellaneous).

Government: Currently the town ruins are under martial law headed by Sergeant Brunos Verisson.

Defence: Two-fifths of the current population are part of the garrison of a nearby border fort. They have been sent by their commander to try to supervise the reconstruction of farms and local services but are facing an impossible task unless more farmers, or soldiers capable of wielding hoes and scythes, come to help.

Commerce: Town was once a primary source for food and animal fodder but now has no outside commerce at all.

Organisations: The soldiers and few survivors, until more aid is sent.

Rivermarck

Located at the point where Southfork River splits away from the main body of the Walker River, Rivermarck is the primary point where river-based trade joins up with land-based caravans and traders. It was once the home of the (in)famous entrepreneur, 'River King' Uesificus. Whilst the power of the riverboat people has long since been broken, a few still berth their wheelships at Rivermarck out of deference to their spiritual founder.

The city is built around a vast open air marketplace and has several smaller bazaars that sprawl along the streets, the exact merchandise reflecting the day of the week and the goods that daily arrive on massive barges and caravans. One day the entire half of the city will be overrun by textile kiosks and canvas merchants, the next might see those streets empty and the space filled with blade masters, horse riders and sages giving lessons.

One thing in Rivermarck is constant however, the Out Knot Inn. A huge tavern and hostelry combined into a three-story building at the centre of town, the Out Knot Inn was reputedly built around the oldest tree in all of Dardarrick. The huge black elm stretches up through the many levels of the inn and even through the tar-shingled rooftop. The inn's owner and manager, a green-eyed human that calls himself 'Drake', has the finest drinks and meals in the kingdom and sells them for two gold pieces a sitting. Drake has but one rule; only fair fights. Anyone caught stacking the odds in a brawl will soon find themselves at the mercy of Drake's powerful eldritch abilities.

Population: 18,000 (80% Human, 10% Elf, 5% Hobgoblin, 5% Miscellaneous).

Government: The city answers to Magistrate Tessa Dawnchilde. The riverboat people being considered little more than transient gypsies have no representative in the city but all still pay heed to the crown of Dardarrick as 'guests' in the kingdom.

Defence: The city itself is protected by the Heartland Legion, which provides a well-trained city watch. Numerous Mage Guild warlocks are assigned to the monitoring and protection of the city as well.

Commerce: Major nomadic riverside markets and bazaars. The city is the economic heart for the entire kingdom. Most goods can be found in at least small amounts somewhere within city limits.

Organisations: The River King's 'people' tend to stick together and think of themselves as separate from the common townfolk, causing their gradual ostracism and loss of their share of the shipping market. The church of the All Father has a large congregation that perform many duties requested of them by the High Cleric in Graenwich.

Tradeston

Well protected by the two spires overlooking it, Tradeston is Dardarrick's only attempt at honest trade and neutral interaction with the tribes of the Wildlands. Small for a walled city, Tradeston was built as a point of recreation and hospice for the troops sent to man the spires and artillery posts on the Wildlands borders. It is made up of rows of rentable quarters, brothels and taverns arranged around a central pavilion that opens as the daily bazaar.

The bazaar is not only always crawling with traders and merchants looking to part soldiers on leave with their wages but also emissaries from the tribes and nomads from the Wildlands. There are lots of resources that end up in the bazaar that the harsh lands west of Dardarrick cannot hope to grow or craft themselves and they know that they can peaceably travel to the spires to Tradeston to get them.

With so many outsiders allowed into the town, some from notoriously belligerent or dangerous races, Tradeston is thankful for its massively increased military presence. Between those soldiers garrisoned there and those visiting from the border keeps, well over 300 soldiers, including several units of warlocks and priests, can always be found in town. Only the most powerful Wildlands tribe would ever dare try to attack Tradeston; most of the would-be conquerors are turned away long before they reach it.

Population: 3,000 (40% Human, 35% Scorpionmen, 20% Hobgoblins, 5% Miscellaneous).

Government: Town is run by a co-effort between a civilian magistrate, Piotr Savaen, and a military commander, Tybalt Four-Fingers.

Defence: The town is well defended by military personnel and an organised city watch. Individual visiting tribal groups often bring their own warriors with them to defend their members.

Commerce: Gemstones and metal ore from the Wildlands are available, as are rare animals and plants. Goods from Dardarrick are traded at a significant discount in order to help 'civilise' the tribes but anyone can take advantage of such good deals.

Organisations: The individual members of visiting Wildlands tribes will stick together while in town. The military, off duty or not, form a faction within the town. There is a sizeable rogue's guild that is predominantly interested in fencing strange artefacts or travelling in search of the ancient ruins lost in the deserts.

Goldston

A strange pioneer town that rose to power in the early 11th Century, Goldston was originally nothing more than a grain-milling village that dipped several waterwheels into the Goldpan River and its easterly tributary. Run by fastidious prospectors, the village bloomed into a much greater city as soon as the first discovery of gold was pulled from the shallow waters. It did not take long for every able hand in the city to ignore the grain mills in order to strike it rich, causing arguments and chaos to break out all over

the area. The king's soldiers were forced to move in and quell the situation, forcing the mills back into production but many folk still spent their off shift hours wading through the river, pan in hand, searching for their fortunes.

The Forge of Engineers soon built coinage mints and revolutionised the gold-scouring methods used to draw up the metal from the silt and mud. Their new methods increased production of gold and turned most of it into coins for the kingdom to use but caused a great deal of damage and polluted the river in the process, angering Dardarrians living further downstream.

The town itself is not much more than a coinage mint and a few gold-working crafting shops located along the river, with several taverns and shops scattered amongst the simple cottage and cabin-styled housing that has sprung up all around it. It is not as metropolitan as some of the older cities in Dardarrick but it certainly is one of the richest. After the Wildland incursions of 1,178 and 1,181 YBD a brigade of the Riverspire legion was transferred to Goldston. Dispersed in a series of outlying fortifications, only a single battalion of soldiers barrack in the town. The troops protect the primary source of gold in the kingdom and prevent nomads crossing the Goldpan River but the posting is a tedious one with few services provided for their entertainment.

Population: 1,500 (60% Human, 30% Dwarf, 10% Miscellaneous).

Government: Unionist Leader Urbard Smithesson serves as the general minting manager and legal voice of the Forge of Engineers, who claims operational rights to the city.

Defence: Each minting facility keeps its own private guards to watch over their assets. There is no real town watch but adjoining the town is a fortified compound housing a battalion of infantry.

Commerce: The city is the source of five-sixths of the coined moneys in Dardarrick. There is some light shopping available in the town market but mainly panning gear and other common equipment are available this close to the Wildlands border.

Organisations: The minting facilities make up one giant faction within the city, all organised under Smithesson. The Freelance Panner's Union is a group of outside gold panners that are allowed to try and make their finds south of the minting sites, leaving them little to discover.

MILITARY FORTIFICATIONS

The following are the major Dardarrick military fortifications, which are not part of an existing city. Most are strongly built in order to withstand sieges lasting months and are sometimes warded by enchantments to improve their protection. Strategically located to defend the kingdom, they normally defend choke points in the local geography to block the passing of enemies. Some are simple forward observation posts from which assaults can be launched deep into hostile territory.

Whilst not covered in detail, Dardarrick possesses dozens more minor camps and forts, most of which are located along the borders. It is these lesser fortifications in which the majority of troops are distributed, providing better surveillance and rapidly deployable forces able to handle lesser problems such as clan raids.

Sentinel Keep

The primary military citadel on the border between Dardarrick and Lorn, Sentinel Keep was home to two full legions and support personnel up until 1,208 YBD – when the dragon appeared and attacked the keep. Ruthlessly it smashed the citadel's defences as if they were toys and its breath killed most of the soldiers within its walls.

Four legions have been dispatched to Sentinel Keep to hold the border, whilst engineers repair and enlarge the blasted citadel but even with magical aid it could be months before the fortifications could withstand an assault.

In the meantime, the soldiers wait nervously for the expected Lornish invasion and the several centuries old stone bridge over the Redwater River has been rigged for collapse if such an attack occurs. Further nervousness has resulted from the intermittent uncovering of more undead as rubble is cleared. Having to destroy those who were once companions has eroded morale significantly.

Saerding Keep

Located in the south-eastern corner of the kingdom, this castle is named for the first line of kings of Dardarrick. The large and sprawling citadel of thick walls and short ballistae towers was also beset by the dragon but did not suffer nearly as badly as other targets did. Whilst the warlocks banded together to drive the beast off, most of the keep's personnel retreated down into the vast catacomb under the keep, remnants of mines dug a millennia earlier by Lornish occupants. After the attack had passed messengers were sent to Graenwich to inform the king of the attack.

When repair crews and a relief garrison arrived back at the keep however, there was no one left. It was completely deserted and emptied of resources, assets, livestock and personnel. Even the remains of those who were killed by the dragon had disappeared. It was as if they never had been there at all. The mystery of Saerding Keep remains unsolved, prompting a great deal of superstitious mutterings in the ranks of the replacement legion now reinforcing it.

Fort Brazen

Built upon the ashes of the original High Church of the All-Father, this fortified structure of stone and bronze was Hierophant Tomar's deathblow to the older faith in his ascension to leadership in 1055 YBD. Originally called the Temple Brazen, the building is a huge complex of thick walls and bronze doors that cost millions of gold pieces to craft, which is why King Archiveldt, despite its symbolism, has chosen to retain it as a military structure after the faith was banished from Dardarrick.

The bronze and stone structure possesses three upper floors and separate cellars carved 20 feet down into solid bedrock of the ground below. It is the primary storehouse for commonplace army supplies, holding vast supplies of grain, clothing, tents, riding tack, medicines, arms and armour. An honour guard protects the stores, the top floor providing barracks for aging, yet still tough veterans who have served Dardarrick faithfully all their lives. The fort is also protected by dozens of arcane wards, constantly renewed and checked by the Brotherhood of Magnus.

This Brotherhood does not just protect the fort's supplies but also hides the most important facet of the Dardarrick military – SpellCom and the Wraith Recon battalion headquarters. Hidden further below the cellars is a complex of barrack chambers, reliquaries, practice halls, debriefing rooms and the SpellCom divination centre. This is where the covert organisation plans, trains and monitors all of Wraith Recon's missions. In the strongest defended parts of the complex, mages fix rigid concentration on Omnicix crystals and several arcane artillery teams remain on constant standby.

A few amongst the Brotherhood think it is somewhat odd that Wraith Recon is based out of the old heart of the Praxious cult but the Arcanist General believes that it makes for the perfect hiding place of something so integral to Dardarrick's survival.

Clawspire

One of two soaring 'spires' built to defend against nomadic incursions, Clawspire is the northernmost military fortification on the Wildlands border. Named for its close proximity to the Claws mountain range, it is an unfeasibly tall tower fitted with several artillery platforms and a landing area for aerial cavalry. The base is surrounded by several small barracks for the spire garrison. The platforms house swivel ballistae aimed toward the Wildlands, ready to take long-range shots at invading armies or tribal forces that are not flying banners of peace – a rare sight.

The spire houses the core elements of the 2nd Air Cavalry Wing, which flies patrols north and west to keep check on goblinoid and nomad movements. In the foothills nearby is a secret excavation being led by the Brotherhood of Magnus. The garrison head off any travellers who stray too close to the hills concealing the underground complex, their mounts able to spot movement from the air with frightening ease.

Riverspire

The second of the two spires, Riverspire is named for its roots that dig deep into rock beneath the silted waters of the Goldpan River. Standing midstream, the towering fortification has the appearance of some great lighthouse. At its base is a dock that is used as the anchor point for ferry lines to and from either bank. The docks are protected by a parapet to the west, helping to shield numerous small skiffs moored there.

The tower utterly dominates the one navigable ford across the Goldpan for hundreds of kilometres in both directions. Like its sister spire, the tower possesses an array of ballistae platforms as well as a single heavy trebuchet on its summit, making it deadly to any invading force whether they approach by land from the west, or drift downstream from the north on boats. It is garrisoned by the River Rat legion, a tenacious regiment trained in boating and waterborne combat.

Dardarrick uses Riverspire as its main crossing point for troops into the Wildlands, the ferries large enough to transport several dozen horses at a time. Due to the confluence of the Southfork River, which connects the Goldpan further south, reinforcements can quickly be shipped from across the kingdom to its relief, or rapidly gather the core of an invasion force.

Westwatch

A fully stocked and garrisoned military citadel on the main route leading into and out of the Wildlands' harshest tribal territories, Westwatch is constantly on the lookout for goblinoid hordes or ogre incursions. Although ostensibly marking the westernmost limit of Dardarrick territory, the truth is that since the fortress was overrun in 1178YBD the true border is now the Goldpan River. Despite retaking the citadel from the nomads a decade later, Dardarrians have been unwilling to resettle the area, leaving the entire region a no-man's land.

Thus Westwatch remains an isolated observation point. They garrison see more combat each year repelling giant, goblinoid and scorpionman attacks, than the rest of the army put together. It is a dangerous place that requires a double-guard be placed at all times and copper gong alarms hang from every bend in the jagged stone walls. Built atop a natural promontory that rises from the savannah, the walls encompass an orchard of fruit trees and shaded vegetable plots, which help feed the occupying men.

The weakness of the fortress is its dependence on cross country supply convoys. A significant proportion of the garrison are required to march to Goldston every three months to escort the next supply train back across the Wildlands, protecting it en-route from nomad raids. A full legion mans Westwatch, and each soldier has likely shed savage blood at some point since their assignment. It makes veterans out of good soldiers and corpses out of bad ones.

Fort Vigilant

Once home to a Dardarrian cavalry legion, Fort Vigilant now stands broken, beaten and occupied. In 1181 YBD, a powerful new race of savages yet to be seen on Dardarrick soil called cynocephales¹ erupted in massive numbers out of the morning gloom and set siege to the fort that lasted several months. Allied with horrible demons and huge trained hyenas, the cynocs eventually stormed the walls and gave no pause in their butchery. Those soldiers and support personnel that managed to escape with their lives tell of horrible sounds that echoed from the fort's walls at night as they fled from the merciless slaughter.

Now the fort is theirs, these savage hyenas and their cynoc masters. They do not seem to be pushing any further inland, satisfied with the territory they have claimed thus far. They are not allies with any of the other savage tribes and have been reported as defending the fort from other Wildlands invaders on many occasions.

The Dardarrick army has long considered mounting a campaign to retake the fortress but now that the western banks of the Goldpan have been abandoned, the citadel lies too far from support. Thus commanders have decided to let the cynocs take the brunt of holding the place. Why they took the fort and how long they plan to keep using it as their lair is unknown to even the most cunning of Dardarrian spies or researchers.

¹ Treat cynocephales as hyena headed hobgoblins, which share the same Characteristic rolls and Traits.

NATURAL POINTS OF INTEREST

Lying as it does in the centre of the continent, Dardarrick has a diverse range of geological and geographical regions and the more important are described here.

The Claws

The large and craggy mountain range, which spreads across the northern border of Dardarrick, the Claws form a natural border westwards into the Wildlands and eastwards with Lorn. They are tall, rough and difficult to traverse but rich in veins of metal ore. Traversing the range without experienced mountaineers or local guides is dangerous and when winter comes most of the passes are closed with snow.

The Claws are frequented by at least two dragons, possibly a mated pair that can occasionally be seen soaring in the clouds above the mountain peaks. It is also home to several tribes of hobgoblins, now loyal to Dardarrick, who wear coloured war paints on their snouts and chests when they emerge from their subterranean world to hunt.

Three Falls Rivers

These are three tributaries that cut down the mountains in a spectacular series of waterfalls, to join up into the Walker River. The three branches are named for where they flow from. Tarn Falls River is a lake-fed waterway with white water cascading from the central mountains. Stone Falls River is the shortest but most violent of the three, crashing down over the coloured rocks of petrified stone forest. The last, Salt Falls River, is a magically-made canal dug under The Claws to enable easier travel between Pierceling and the rest of Dardarrick. The three rivers join together in a single large waterfall called Father's Step, which then becomes the Walker River.

Eastermarch Rift

The rift is an immense ravine, many kilometres long, that runs the length of Eastermarch. It was formed during the climax of the Second Lornish War by the archmage Magnus and his



most powerful wizards. Using hitherto unconceived theory of coordinated casting, Magnus's formed a sorcerous metaconcert and used the power to open the earth beneath the Lornish army. His spell ripped free from his control however, lifting and buckling the earth as a ravine tore the land apart from The Claws to the Redwater River. Their souls ripped free to fuel the magic, Magnus and his allies were destroyed in the backlash.

Since then, the Eastermarch Rift has formed a natural barrier between Lorn and Dardarrick, preventing armies from crossing anywhere along its length.

Walker River

The main waterway of Dardarrick, the Walker River is said to run the same path that the All Father took when he first walked across Dar to remove the veil of ignorance from its people. It is a wide and muddy river from the sediment that the Three Falls Rivers drops into it but it is not very rapid and easily traversed by canoe or wheelboat.

The Walker River is used by both the Dardarrick military and the transient, gypsy-like 'Riverboat People' to ferry troops, supplies,

cargo and wounded all around the kingdom. Much faster than trying to cross overland, large boats driven by paddlewheel, sail, or rowers are frequently seen floating up and down the Walker River, all the way down into the muddy marshes of Torres.

Southfork River

An offshoot of the Walker, Southfork River is the connecting waterway that eventually leads to the Goldpan River and from that watercourse further north and west into the Wildlands. Due to the ingenious weirs and settling pools created by the Forge of Engineers, nearly all of the muddy sediment coming downstream on the Walker is diverted into the Southfork, leaving the rest of the water clean and easily drinkable by the time it reaches the capital. The Southfork then empties into Mudblack Lake, adding its own mud and filth to that, already foul, body of water.

Dawn River

Once a glittering and clear river whose depth could barely be gauged because of seeing the stones at the bottom; the Dawn River has been recently turned into a disgusting tributary of ash, rot and corpses. The number of dead and undead bodies that ended up in the Dawn have made travel on its surface dangerous at best and toxic at worst.

Redwater River

Once named for the red clay particles that gave its water a ruddy hue from the Lornish mountain mine runoff, the Redwater River gained the more chilling name of Bloodwater after the first Hierophant butchered 50,000 trapped Lornish soldiers on its banks so that the river ran crimson for two days.

The river itself flows as the Mettanbaugh all through Lorn before it becomes the Redwater at the Dardarrick border. It then heads down into and through Torres and is used by fast-moving Lornish riverboats trying to cut through Dardarrick at night to meet with their swampland allies. Guards at Sentinel Keep often set up boat-traps in the Redwater in an effort to stop these trips downriver but the boating skills and the tenacity of Lornish spies rarely make this an easy task.

The Goldpan

This muddy, sandy and stony river that flows down from the massive mountains of the Wildlands is rich with gold flakes and nuggets from its long trip through the ore-rich savannah. It is wide but not deep over most of its course, yet runs fast, especially where it flows off the western plateau and drops into Dardarrick. The

rapid current of the waters discourages the most dangerous aquatic predators from inhabiting it.

At Goldston the waters slow, depositing most of the precious metal and silt. Not only does it make it ideal for gold panning but in summer it is the only fording place along its entire length within Dardarrick. An industry of laying sheep skins in the current to collect the finer particles of gold has boosted extraction rates so much that Dardarrick has set up a mint in Goldston.

Up until the Dardarrians discovered the treasure of the Goldpan, several lizardman clans were collecting much of the uncaught wealth in Sunrise Marsh, deep in the wetlands of the southern kingdom. The usurping of their sun-metal collection from the river has become just another reason for the Torresh to believe Dardarrick is a greedy and careless nation of infidels.

Lake Pale

The large body of freshwater at the end of the Dawn River, Lake Pale was once named thus for the alabaster stones and white sands of its shores. It was a fishing paradise and home to many small houseboats across its surface but the fallout from Lorn's draconic strike upon Eastermarck and the surrounding villages has destroyed the idyllic lifestyle.

Locals now call it by the same name for the bloated white bodies that crawl up from out of the waters. Thick with pollutants and corpses, many of which are risen undead, Lake Pale is nothing more than a terrible reminder of what evils breed beyond the borders of the kingdom.

Mudblack Lake

A natural depository for the silt and runoff from the upper Goldpan River, Mudblack Lake was always a dark body of water surrounded by fertile vegetation, which thrived in the thick mud. When the Forge of Engineers diverted much of the mountain sediment from the Walker, into the Southfork River too, troubles began to occur as mudflats began to silt up the main channel, causing flooding along its length.

The increased flow of water, combined with the gradual silting of the lake, has caused its waters to start spreading. Once good quality farmland the shores have been turned into dank, marsh lands. Besides being a breeding ground for blood sucking insects, carnivorous plants and toxic fungi, it has become home to several dangerous and predatory beasts. Large reptiles and long-toothed fish flourish here; often at the expense of those who have to boat their way through the thick, black water. There is also a family of Torresh troglodytes – the Rockback Clan – who are infamous for their thirst for humanoid flesh and their uncanny trapping and hunting methods throughout the area surrounding the lake.

PEOPLE AND PERSONALITIES OF INTEREST

The following are all notable personalities that make Dardarrick their home.

King George Archiveltdt I

Archiveltdt the First grew up being taught the scriptures of the All Father in the fruit cellar of his parent's Grainington cottage from his father, a secret cleric of the old faith. As he matured into adulthood he began to see how the theocracy of Praxious mistreated the meek and forcibly attacked other peoples' faiths as if their gods were somehow unholy. He hid his own belief from their judgmental eyes and trained as if he was a common militia swordsman.

When the wizards came to his parents' farm, to meet the boy they had scryed upon from the bloodline texts, he sensed the good intentions in their hearts and agreed to serve in their plan to retake the throne for the common folk instead of the priests of Praxious. He agreed to bear the heavy crown of his people if it meant saving them from religious persecution. Upon becoming king he was able to unveil his true feelings as a pious warrior of the All Father, defend his people – just as the god taught.

Archiveltdt is a well-built, handsome man with golden blonde hair and deep green eyes. He is a mighty swordsman and terrifyingly stalwart warrior who refuses to stand aside and witness persecution when he can do something about it. Unfortunately he is sometimes too short-sighted in his focus and has yet to take a queen or produce an heir; claiming that his responsibilities to Dardarrick are far more important than worrying about who will next wear the crown. Likewise, the shock of the recent atrocities has caused him to question his own ethics and he is now unwilling to risk the lives of his people to preserve a sanctimonious sense of moral cleanliness. In his eyes the good of the Dardarrian many now outweighs the rights of a few Lorns. This gradual loss of ethics will soon lead him to order 'necessary' atrocities of his own.



Archmage Arcos, Guildmaster of Wizards

The leader of the Mages Guild, Arcos was born to a small nomadic human settlement in the north eastern Wildlands. His peoples' camp was sacked by goblin raiders when he was an adolescent and he was taken prisoner. It was a relief mission of several war-priests devoted to the All Father that earned his freedom, bringing him back to Graenwich as a refugee. It was not long before the curious long-haired young man asked if he could learn the 'magics of the east' and the Guild happily accepted him.

For 108 years he has worked with and eventually led the Guild, using alchemic tinctures to stave off the effects of age in order to continue to remain a strapping man. He has always felt that he owed his life and freedom to the church of the All Father and only managed to stay silent during the Praxious theocracy with the knowledge that he could be key to its downfall. It was Arcos's studies that pointed out the ancient law of the Pillars concerning the noble throne and it was his diligent research that led them to the Archveldt plantation to discover the new king.

Archmage Arcos is a tan-skinned man that reveals his true age through the wisdom that he speaks, when he deems to do so. Normally found in quiet contemplation, it is rare to see the Archmage outside the University anymore unless he is working with the Arcanist General on a project. So seldom is he ever seen in the city proper, that few citizens of Graenwich would recognise his dusky features if they bumped into him in the street!

Archmage Ruger Daramin, High Mage of the Brotherhood

Student of the fey arts and an expert crossbowman, Ruger Daramin was raised into the Brotherhood of Magnus in the shadow of his three older brothers – all who wore the warlock's mantle for Dardarrick. He grew up hearing stories of how the Lornish were evil and could not be trusted and watched as each of his three brothers were sent to their deaths on the eastern front during the Fourth Lornish War.

As a young acolyte in the Brotherhood, Ruger showed great instinctual talent with offensive magic and masterful tactical foresight, winning most internal competitions with risky but awe-inspiring gambits and manoeuvres. He rose in the ranks quickly and soon was given access to the room with the Omnicix studying its use and potential powers. When it became time to remove the corrupt Praxious-worshipping High Mage Tenactu, it was Ruger's blade that killed him and Ruger who picked up his staff and replaced him.

Now a man grown, Ruger despises the kingdom of Lorn. He feels that his neighbours to the east are the worst thing to ever happen to Nuera and would like nothing better than to be given permission to unleash his own dragon strikes upon them, which he claims to be able to arrange. He considers himself one of the forefathers of Wraith Recon and enjoys watching them work through the Omnicix shards at SpellCom, even if his public role with the Brotherhood forbids him from joining them personally.



Chief Unionist Oruzach

Tall for a dwarf, Oruzach has always been good at helping others with their problems by coming up with new and interesting ways to solve them. His father could not keep his pick sharp in the mines, so Oruzach designed a sharpening sheathe to store it in. Friends could not keep their mountain mule in the paddock, so he designed a new fence that made the animal think it was already free; any problem could be overcome by the innovative application of dwarven ingenuity.

He joined the Forge of Engineers to avoid discussions into his religious beliefs with the madmen in the Praxious cult, hoping that slavishly working for the Pillars of Dardarrick would keep him immune from the Brazen followers' inquisitions. His ploy worked and he managed to stay outside the Hierophant's notice until the fanatic leader was deposed.

His remarkable and uncanny skills eventually promoted him to Chief Unionist and his witty charm and endless supply of dwarven jokes allowed him to do so without making any enemies of his peers. Few people that have met the grey-haired dwarf can walk away from the interaction without a smile.



Arcanist General Matteau Raspeng

The secretive and powerful leader of SpellCom, little is known about the ageless mage who is the brains behind the single most important facet of Dardarrick's military and arcane strength. His history is shrouded in mystery, no living wizard remembering when the mage arrived in Dardarrick, or where he came from.

As the leader and organising agent of SpellCom, he has a great responsibility to the Wraith Recon organisation and its teams in the field. He frequently stays in contact with team leaders through their Omnilenses and personally supervises missions that he considers of great import. Many times it will be Matteau's personal spells that send aid to the team agents, as he is a powerful warlock in his own right.

The Arcanist General possesses pale ivory skin which glitters in twilight and his golden eyes never betray what he is truly thinking. He tries to wear garments made of silk or satin as much as he can and in metallic colours that he claims remind him of 'home' – a place he has never confided in a living soul. His voice is without accent and he always speaks clearly and succinctly, removing all signs he is from anywhere but where he is standing at the time.

He is a strange creature, even for a mage, and the king himself is beginning to wonder as to what Matteau's personal motivations are.



Wraith Commander Derrall Ruhrk

Raised as a common soldier in the 5th Light Infantry Legion, Derrall Ruhrk led more successful infantry missions into Lorn occupied territory than any other dwarf in the history of Dardarrick's military. Promoted through the ranks, he was deep in enemy territory when Warlord Guntheor II surrendered and the Dardarrian army was recalled. His unit hampered with serious casualties, Ruhrk covertly remained behind in Lornish territory until they had recovered enough to try and escape to safety. It was this dedication and leadership that caused the Pillars of Dardarrick to choose him to lead the Wraith Recon project.

Sworn to secrecy and given full command over the organisation, he works hand in hand with SpellCom to arrange for the various Wraith Recon teams to fulfil the missions that the arcanists have scryed as 'viable influences on possible futures'. He may not care whether or not the wizards and such of his patron organisation are correct in their plans. He is a soldier first and foremost, dedicated to three things: following his orders, getting the mission done and getting his Wraiths home.

Commander Ruhrk is a grizzled old dwarf that looks as though he has seen his share of battles – which he has. No one in Wraith Recon would ever dare think that he is just sitting at a desk when they are out working their missions and the few teams that have been fortunate enough to see him in action due to 'special circumstance' testify to his prowess and call him the 'Lich'. Behind his steel-grey eyes and close-cropped beard is one of the finest military minds and one of the hardest Dardarrian veterans alive.

High Cleric Weramin Rustavi

Having grown up a vagabond rogue on the streets of Rivermarck, Weramin prayed every morning that he would find food to eat and every night that he would not be killed in his sleep. He has always claimed that 'the most faithful of worshippers are soldiers and the homeless' and he is likely right.

Invited into a secret temple to the All Father during the Praxious theocracy, Weramin found his faith was very strong and so was his conviction to use it. Learning the ways of priesthood from a weathered old man, which he combined with his talents as a rogue, he would sneak around Dardarrick on missions of mercy and healing to those that the Brazen One worshippers would cast aside or crush underfoot. When his mentor finally passed away, it was revealed to Weramin that he was learning from the son of the last High Cleric – and that the ring would now go to him.

When King Archiveldt unfettered the church of the All Father, most of Dardarrick was surprised that the church already had a clerical hierarchy and hundreds of loyal patrons. Anyone that Weramin had healed or aided in the years before came forward and supported the new High Cleric. Serving the people of Dardarrick in any way he can, the pious worshipper wears the High Cleric's vestments and the mystic Omnicix-shard ring with modesty and grace.



THE DARDARRIAN MILITARY

To the patriotic people of Dardarrick, the might and influence of the Dardarrian armed forces is unquestioned and unmatched anywhere in the world. Such claims are questionable in light of the recent ravaging of a single dragon, but they have yet to pit the full might of their forces against a single foe. Between the support they receive from the domestic populace and the extreme advances made over the last two decades in mixing their arcane mastery into military force, there is no question why Dardarrick is the Lion of Nuera.

This section looks at the powerful military assets of Dardarrick, how they function and what each type of asset means to the larger role of the great kingdom.

The Lion's Might

Ever since the huge boost to morale and assets that came after the victory in the Fourth Lornish War, the military of Dardarrick has been the mightiest in Rardarri, perhaps Nuera itself. Few of their enemies and rivals would ever dare do more than tug on the great kingdom's tail through border skirmishes and economic pressures. Direct conflict with Dardarrick is a dangerous game that could cost dearly in lives and resources. The superiority of the Dardarrick armed forces has been proven time and time again.

Faced with this superiority, other nations forging are temporary alliances and with one another in order to deal with Dardarrick's forces. In a gradual change over the centuries, the large set piece battles have slowly been eroded by the use of mercenaries, hit and run skirmishes and guerrilla tactics, prior to a full scale engagement. Such ignoble methods have grated against the more traditionalist opinion of the Dardarrick people, who consider them underhanded – little realising that their king, in sanctioning Wraith Recon, is about to start down the same path.

The populace are justifiably proud of their kingdom, the Dardarrian flag flies from homes throughout the kingdom. It is considered a civic honour to serve in the military and many children grow up idolising the ranks of soldiers that march through their town on occasion. The leaders of the armed forces are personalities of great fame amongst the major cities and painstakingly painted portraits of many long-passed generals and captains hang in museums and magistrate halls across Dardarrick.

Each recruit brings this nationalist pride with him to the branch of the armed forces he joins, creating an atmosphere unique within the ranks of servicemen. Unlike drafted conscripts or tribal warriors, Dardarrian soldiers *want* to be where they can do their part. Fighting the enemies of the king and willing to lay down their very lives for the betterment of the entire nation.

As a kingdom that must fight for its freedom and independence, it stands behind its armed forces. Dardarrians know that they may have to work longer hours at the forge or in the fields to equip and feed their soldiers at war. Normally surplus resources are given over to the nearest officers to use for the greater good. Volunteers stand watch in cities once protected by soldiers to keep them fighting on the front lines. Even if the idea of war is not popular within a kingdom that predominately worships a deity of peace, they all do their part and step forward when bells knell the call to arms.

The strength of each soldier, cavalry beast or warlock in the armed forces may be no greater than any other in the world but it is the faith people hold in their great kingdom that wins wars. Arcane warfare may have given them the edge when blades are crossed; but when added to the collective heart of the nation, they know the Lion will always roar triumphantly.

Dardarrian Uniforms

Unlike most of its neighbours, Dardarrick issues uniforms to its military personnel. The reasons are twofold. Firstly a vivid uniform allows troops to easily tell friend from foe, an important consideration when opposing armies may contain the same species. Secondly a uniform emphasises a sense of belonging and loyalty.

The three major branches of the military, the Corps, the Air Cavalry and the Navy all issue one set of dress uniform (for parades) and two sets of service uniforms to their troops. These normally take the form of shirts, jackets and trousers of a design specific to the particular branch. All jackets are an indigo blue colour with a white Dardarrian star emblazoned on the right breast.

In addition a tabard is given to all personnel to be worn over armour when on duty. Like jackets, the tabard is indigo blue with a white star on the breast.

Rank insignia is displayed on the upper arm (tabards possessing short arm flaps for the purpose) and additionally on the collar of jackets. Insignia is normally embroidered in silver wire to be more eye catching but in a pinch white cloth can be used. The head rank of any service has their insignia embroidered in gold as a sign of respect.



Dardarrian Ground Corps – The Lion's Claws

The main branch and principal component of the Dardarrick military, the Ground Corps – or just 'the Corps' – are the massed regiments of the ground-based soldiers that protect the great

kingdom on an everyday basis. Supported by the nation's strong economy, Dardarrick maintains an unusually large number of men in the field, a necessity when considering the vast stretch of borders they must protect.

The Corps is divided into 21 legions of infantry and cavalry, the numbers of men depending on its designation. Infantry legions more or less number 5,000 soldiers each, depending on casualty levels and replacements. Cavalry legions number 1,000 riders, although they normally try to maintain at least twice that number of mounts. Despite the disparity in personnel, both types of legion are roughly equivalent in terms of cost and supply requirements.

Each legion is led by a Legion Commander, who controls the assignment and dispersal of his troops. In turn, these commanders fall under the authority of Legionary Generals who coordinate the strategic defence of entire provinces.

The four current Legionary Generals are:

- ☉ Marxus Defane – Guardian of the Bloodriver, who commands the defence of the Lorn Border. A seemingly invulnerable bear of a man, Marxus is the greatest hero of Dardarrick, whose forthright personality and charm has inspired his men to glorious victory time after time, although sometimes at a significant cost in troops.

- ☉ Rasser Half-Moon – Warden of the West, who defends the Wildlands border. Well respected by the legions under him, his severe, taciturn countenance belies a subtle understanding of mobile tactics, which has helped him to win every battle against the nomads which he has commanded.
- ☉ Luanne Sversson – Shield of the Marshes, who guards the southern Torres border. A jovial man of rather excessive girth, he can still swing a great axe with finesse and frequently joins patrols to maintain firsthand knowledge of lizardfolk troop deployments. A lover of ambush stratagems, he loves to draw enemies into fighting on his ground.
- ☉ Flintmaw – Steward of the Heartlands, who protects the central regions of Dardarrick. He commands the central legions of the rear echelon, using them in particular to patrol the Walker River and keep the roads well maintained. More of a logistics expert than a tactical battlefield genius, Flintmaw surprisingly has the reputation of being the deadliest warrior in the kingdom, explaining in part his survival to the rank of general.

Every one of these officers began their careers as a common legionnaire, working their way through the ranks by way of valour and experience rather than royal edict or commission.

Each legion marches under its own idiosyncratic banner, which is a symbol of fierce pride. A legion that distinguishes itself in battle

Legion Designations

Banner	Classification	Legion Role	Moniker
L-I	1 st Light Infantry	Heartlands City Defence	'Fangs'
L-II	2 nd Light Infantry	Assigned to Grainington	'Reivers'
L-III	3 rd Light Infantry	Riverspire Garrison	'River Rats'
L-IV	4 th Light Infantry	Saerding Keep Garrison	'Hotfoots'
L-V	5 th Light Infantry	Southwatch Garrison	'Rangers'
L-VI	6 th Heavy Infantry	Assigned to Sentinel Keep	'Steadfasts'
L-VII	7 th Heavy Infantry	Assigned to Sentinel Keep	'Vanquishers'
L-VIII	8 th Heavy Infantry	Heartlands Fort Defence	'Ogres'
L-IX	9 th Heavy Infantry	Fort Brazen Garrison	'Old Guard'
L-X	10 th Support Artillerists	Wildlands Border Defence, Dispersed	'Wasps'
L-XI	11 th Support Artillerists	Lornish Border Defence, Dispersed	'Crushers'
L-XII	12 th Battle Priests	Dispersed Attachments	'Paladins'
L-XIII	1 st Strike Cavalry	Assigned to Sentinel Keep	'Tramplers'
L-XIV	2 nd Strike Cavalry	Tradeston Garrison	'Thunderers'
L-XV	3 rd Fast Cavalry	Heartlands Roadway Patrol	'Lightnings'
L-XVI	4 th Mounted Infantry	Westwatch Garrison	'Resilient's'
L-XVII	5 th Mounted Infantry	Torres Border Patrols	'Swamp Devils'
L-XVIII	1 st Warlock Legion ²	Assigned to Sentinel Keep	'Death Bringers'
L-XIX	2 nd Warlock Legion ²	Mages Guild Defence, Dispersed	'Executioners'
L-XX	1 st Combat Engineers	Dispersed Attachments	'Rock Choppers'
L-XXI	1 st Royal Guard ¹	Graenwich and Royal Palace Defence	'Blackwatch'

¹ Answers to the king only, or if the king is not available, then the Leader of the Faith instead.

² Technically the Warlock Legions are Brigades, if that. But the battlefield effectiveness of the warlocks allows them to take on superior numbers with impunity.

or during a natural disaster, often wins awards that are affixed to the legion's standards. This *esprit de corps* is encouraged by the Legion Commanders who encourage friendly rivalries with the other legions and during peacetime often strive to be assigned to the most unsettled border regions.

Each legion is made up of several brigades, which can be further broken down into battalions and companies. These units rarely fight together as an entire legion; rather they are assigned to a city, citadel, fort or even temporarily attached to other legions. Such deployments, depending on the duty given to the legion, normally last no more than six months before the unit is reassigned somewhere else to avoid the troops going stale.

Legion Elements

Infantry Element	Number of Men	Cavalry Element	Number of Men
Legion	5,000	Legion	1,000
Brigade	2,500	Squadron	200
Battalion	500	Troop	40
Company	100	Lance	8

The Legions get the finest in mundane military equipment and supplies. Each legionnaire is given a uniform, suit of armour, two weapons, two water skins, a personal knapsack and a promissory note for a monthly wage of 20 Lions. They are then supplied for their additional requirements by their Legion's commissary depending on their individual needs. Food, blankets, tents, medical goods and, if relevant, mounts are often given to individual unit leaders to divide between their members as necessary.

Exactly what armour and weapons are considered standard for the legions are detailed on the table opposite.

Advanced Dardarrian Armour

Select legions of the Dardarrian corps have been granted special armour, which provides more protection. These panoplies are not available on the open market, as only the Forge of Engineers has the skill or knowledge to create them. What suits are manufactured are strictly limited to arming legionaries. On retirement such armour is given back to the legion so it may be used by new recruits.

Reinforced Mail: Constructed similarly to normal mail, each link connects to six others, giving a denser weave and making it more difficult to pierce or Sunder. A second layer of mail is added over more vulnerable regions to grant even better protection.

Full Plate: The ultimate in personal protection, it takes the one piece greaves, vambraces and cuirasses of archaic plate armour, replacing them with complex articulated limb protection and using mail to cover the remaining gaps. Whilst excellent protection

Legion	Armour	Melee Weapons ¹	Missile Weapon ¹
L-I	Linen	Shortsword, Shield, Halberd	Javelin
L-II	Linen	Battleaxe, Shield, Longspear	Longbow
L-III	Linen	Sabre, Shield, Longspear	Javelin
L-IV	Ringmail	Great Axe, Shortsword, Shield	Longbow
L-V	Ringmail	Longsword, Shield, Shortsword	Longbow
L-VI	Full Plate	Halberd, Mace, Shield	Crossbow
L-VII	Full Plate	Great Sword, Mace, Shield	Crossbow
L-VIII	Plate	Military Flail, Falchion, Shield	Crossbow
L-IX	Plate	Great Axe, Longsword, Shield	Crossbow
L-X	Chainmail	Battleaxe, Shield, Dagger	Siege Engine
L-XI	Chainmail	Falchion, Shield, Dagger	Siege Engine
L-XII	Plate	Longsword, Shield, Mace	None
L-XIII	Reinforced Mail	Lance, Longsword, Shield	Recurve Bow
L-XIV	Reinforced Mail	Lance, Scimitar, Shield	Recurve Bow
L-XV	Linen	Lance, Rapier, Shield	Recurve Bow
L-XVI	Plate	War Sword, Shield, Military Flail	Crossbow
L-XVII	Plate	Falchion, Shield, Poleaxe	Crossbow
L-XVIII	Linen	Longsword, Shield, Dagger	Javelin
L-XIX	Linen	Sabre, Shield, Dagger	Longbow
L-XX	Chainmail	Great Hammer, War Sword, Shield	Repeating Crossbow
L-XXI	Wrymscale	Great Axe, Longsword, Shield	Longbow

¹ The range of weapons can be taken as the Combat Style of that particular legion.

the increased mass is somewhat encumbering, slowing the wearer considerably.

Wrymscale: The alchemically treated skins of wyrms hunted in the southern marches, the iron hard scales of Wrymscale armour protects as Full Plate but is slightly less restrictive.

Armour	AP	ENC	Locations	Armour Penalty
Reinforced Mail	7	4	All	-10
Field Plate	8	4	All	-11
Wyrmscale	8	3	All	-9

The standard Dardarrian Ground Corps uniform is an indigo blue tabard worn over the armour bearing the brilliant white emblazon of Dardarrick's royal star. A wide leather belt is used to keep the tabard from flapping in the way of combat or fast movement, carrying the riveted-on weapon loops or sheath for the soldier's equipment. In travels outside of a battlefield some Corps legionnaires will tuck their tabards into the straps of their backpacks to keep them from getting too dirty on the road – possibly marring the Corps' image of perfection in combat!

Every Corps legionnaire is trained for two months in all of the normal necessities of being a Dardarrian soldier – basic survival skills, hand-to-hand essentials, battlefield medicines, equipment upkeep and how to recognise an ally from an enemy in the heat of conflict. Once they graduate from their basic training they are assigned to the 'green cadre' of a given Legion and they begin to learn the specific talents and skills they will need to function in that Legion. Once fully trained in their Legion the legionnaire is shipped out with his unit or brigade to his first tour service.

The vast majority of Dardarrian legionnaires are human or dwarven and function better as single race units. However, a fair number of less common species such as native Dardarrian hobgoblins, lizardfolk and scorpionmen are welcome to don the uniform for their kingdom but are lumped together in mongrel units since there are generally too few to form an entire battalion. Since racial tolerance is a fundamental aspect of the All Father's faith, few humans hold any issue serving alongside them. Those who do are usually closet Praxious worshippers.

The uniformity of the Legions is a part of their strength. Seeing hundreds or thousands of the blue uniformed soldiers marching toward the battlefield can be enough to shake the morale of lesser forces and many border skirmishes have been broken before the legionnaires reach the main line of conflict.

With access to the excellent training, equipment and camaraderie the kingdom has to offer, each legionnaire is a dedicated and patriotic fighter that will gladly march into any conflict with his brothers at his sides. Fleeing battle and abandoning your compatriots is an unthinkable shame.

Ranks within the Ground Corps

A tour of duty in the legions is normally three years. Most soldiers that do well in the Corps stay in for many tours due to the high pay, excellent conditions and the respect given by Dardarrian people wherever they go. Everyone loves a patriotic legionnaire; especially considering that the current generation in the great kingdom has never even considered anything a real threat to the superiority of the Corps.

Those who excel are promoted to higher rank in recognition of their leadership. The following are the badges of rank and office in the Dardarrian Ground Corps; presented in their order of rank and command structure.

Legion Rank Insignia

Rank	Insignia	Command
Legion Recruit	No tabard	None
Legionnaire	Plain tabard	None
Sergeant	Single stripe on shoulder	Squad
Captain	Three stripes on shoulder	Company
Major	Single star on shoulder	Battalion
Colonel	Two stars on shoulder	Brigade
Commander	Three stars on shoulder	Legion
General	Clawing lion on shoulder	Several Legions

Dardarrian Air Cavalry – The Lion's Pounce

Alone in its existence on the continent of Rardarri, the Dardarrian Air Cavalry is a small but specialised force of flying beast-riding knights and supporting personnel that rule the skies. They are the bane of enemy ground troops, swooping down from above to rout enemy units. Those that do not break are skewered in a fly-by attack, the speed of the diving mounts smashing infantry lines, earning this branch of the military its reputation.

The Air Cavalry is made up of willing volunteers or recruits taken from one of the cavalry Legions of the Ground Corps after one full tour of duty. Those who wish to apply for an Air Cav position must travel to the Grounds Martial in Graenwich and pass a series of intensive riding and mounted combat challenges before being allowed admittance.

New recruits are transferred to the Rookery; a fortified hilltop stable of massive proportions, located nearly an hour's walk north of the city walls. The Rookery is the headquarters of the Air Cavalry and is where all of the trained mounts are born, trained and maintained when not assigned to a specific carrier or garrison. It is commanded by Wing Marshal Erik Manheisson, who coordinates missions and deployments from its central location.

Recruits are given another three months of intensive training, learning about the control and care of flying mounts. The final test is the riding of a griffon and is quite literally a make or break experience. Soldiers who successfully ride the creatures without being bucked from the saddle or suffering paralysing vertigo – no easy task for those unused to flying – are awarded their silver Air Cavalry wings and assigned to a further eight months of training. Failing the test usually ends with falling, often from a great height. Those that survive are thanked for their application and returned to their original unit, usually with a brevet rank for their courage.

The Dardarrian Air Cavalry possesses eight separate Wings. The majority are stationed at the borders to provide aerial surveillance of neighbouring territory and close support during infrequent

Wing Designations

Banner	Classification	Mount	Wing Role	Moniker
W-I	1 st Air Scouts	Griffon	Western Border Air Patrol	'Vipers'
W-II	2 nd Air Scouts	Griffon	Eastern Border Air Patrol	'Patriots'
W-III	3 rd Air Scouts	Griffon	Southern Border Air Patrol	'Reapers'
W-IV	4 th Air Cavalry	Hippogriff	Heartlands Air Patrol	'Cavaliers'
W-V	5 th Air Cavalry	Hippogriff	Messenger Communication	'Furies'
W-VI	6 th Air Assault	Wyvern	Naval/Coastal Defence	'Stingers'
W-VII	7 th Air Assault	Wyvern	Rookery/Capital Defence	'Dragoons'
W-VIII	8 th Air Support	Giant Eagle	Troop/Supply Drops and Recovery	'Storm Bringers'

raids. A few are used as messengers for rapid communications where Omniciex crystals are not available. Lastly a single Wing provides air transport for those brave enough to fly pillion.

Each Air Cavalry Wing comprises of around 80 individual mounts and their riders but also includes an additional number of support staff that feed, care for and medically treat the mounts and a unit of experienced soldiers to guard them. Thus a wing can total up to 500 men all told.

Strategically, Wings are further broken into squadrons, which themselves are comprised of several 'flights', each unit being assigned to different tasks or garrisons. The various Wings are commanded by Wing Leaders, who form the advisory military council of the Wing Marshal.

Wing Elements

Wing Element	Number of Mounts	Command Rank
Wing	80	Wing Leader
Squadron	16	Squadron Leader
Flight	8	Flight Leader

During advanced training, Air Cav riders are assigned a mount with which they forge a bond, each learning the other's idiosyncrasies. A close bond is necessary to be able to perform some of the more acrobatic manoeuvres necessary for aerial combat.

Once training has been completed the flyer must await a suitable opening in a Wing before they can be assigned. This occurs relatively frequently, flying being a dangerous occupation. Mid air collisions, aggressive encounters with airborne monsters, saddle failure and violent weather all take their toll. Few mounts ever see old age and retirement. Current recruitment and breeding is tailored to this natural turnover, however, with war declared against Lorn, the expected losses will quickly outstrip the replacement rate.

All riders in the Air Cavalry are equipped identically. Assignment to a wing grants the rider his tabard, a suit of Wyrmscale armour, lance, shield, longsword and repeating crossbow.

Joining a wing, an Air Cav rider will be posted to a specific squadron. These units each operate out of a specially designed rookery, normally fortified and constructed in a remote and

difficult to access location. Clawspire in northwest Dardarrick is a striking example of such a facility but most are more modestly sized. Dozens have been built along the kingdom borders, even in the inhospitable Claws which overlook Salt Bay.

Rookeries are notable for their lack of gateways at ground level. Everything entering or exiting from the towers must be flown, or winched by ropes from the top. The forts usually possess a number of ballistae to provide artillery cover and plenty of arrow slits for missile fire. Inside are copious cellars for storing food for the mounts, additional chambers for supplies for the squadron personnel, dormitories, an armoury, watch posts and an unofficial brewery to supply the alcoholic celebrations following a particularly successful mission. Most squadrons are rotated out every three months for rest and recuperation.

Of particular note are the wyvern riders of the 6th and 7th Air Assault Wings, some of the toughest soldiers ever to fly. Each 'flight' is assigned in sequence to a term on board enormous carrier ships belonging to the Dardarrian Armada. These vessels possess large platforms astern from which the wyvern riders launch and land. The tiny area combined with treacherous sea winds makes such manoeuvres dangerous, especially when the swell is rough.

The wyverns are held in a cramped stable amidships at water level to help reduce nausea in the beasts. Only wyverns can be used at sea since the inescapable salt water and spray soon degrades the feathers of griffons and hippogriffs. The advantages of aerial surveillance are invaluable. Enemy ships can be located and hunted down long before they are aware of the Dardarrick navy. The wyverns themselves are capable of inflicting a great deal of damage to ships, tearing down rigging or stinging crew who foolishly remain exposed on accessible decks. Night vision also aids attacks if the vessel is not staffed by races that can match the wyvern's sight.

Perhaps the most impressive Air Cav mounts are the giant eagles. Half the size of Rocs, the raptors are capable of carrying huge loads over long distances, gliding much way to conserve energy. Their primary function is to transport supplies to outlying rookeries and, of more import to Wraith Recon, carry personnel in and out of enemy territory.

To facilitate such transfers, Air Cav has a number of special troop carriers, which look like two benches back to back with a carrying bar extending from the top. Specially enchanted to lighten its load, with a cliff top launch a giant eagle can bear up to six lightly

equipped humans strapped onto the benches and still (just) fly. On emergency extraction missions the eagle riders bring a cargo net into which troops must climb, before being very uncomfortably carried off.

The major problem with the eagles is their slow breeding and growth rates. The Storm Bringer Wing is well below strength, only possessing three squadrons. Even supplying them with enough food is difficult and the Wing has been scattered across Dardarrick in individual groupings no larger than half-flights. Even so, Air Cavalry is struggling to maintain their consumption requirements.

Collectively the Air Cavalry is responsible for the excellent intelligence provided to the other branches of the Dardarrick military. Their rapid response capability can help to head off, or stall, enemy activity long enough for the ground pounders to arrive. Whilst no other nation can claim to have the skills or resources to maintain over 600 flying mounts, indications exist that some nations, Torres particularly, are experimenting with their own flying warriors.

It is a matter of time before the Dardarrick Air Cavalry will face pteranodons or perhaps even dragons in the skies, threatening their hitherto unchallenged ability to turn the tide of any conventional battle.

Ranks within the Air Cavalry

Given the high turnover of riders in the Air Cavalry, promotion can be quite rapid, especially in wartime. Riders receive higher pay than a comparable foot commander.

Air Cavalry Rank Insignia

Rank	Insignia	Command
Wing Recruit	No tabard	None
Airman	Pair of wings on shoulder	None
Flight Leader	As above with a sword behind wings on shoulder	Flight
Squadron Leader	As above with crossed swords behind wings on shoulder	Squadron
Wing Leader	As above with a star of swords behind wings on shoulder	Wing
Wing Marshal	Tabard with griffon on shoulder	All Wings

Dardarrick Naval Fleet – The Lion’s Roar

Based in the kingdom’s only port of Pierceling, the Dardarrick Armada is the amazing result of ingenious naval architecture blended with the magical skills of the Brotherhood of Magnus. Whilst the still novice Dardarrick crews are lacking in experience, the vessels they sail on more than make up for their slowly growing expertise.

Under the command of the privateer-turned-admiral Brinetalon Ironfist, the Pierceling Naval Port is a small narrow inlet whose short stony beaches are overshadowed by towering cliffs. The harbour is protected against the bleak Salt Bay seas by a manmade breakwater, its sloping fortified walls shielding the vessels clustered within. The lack of space within means that the port is always crowded.

To alleviate the situation, the navy has converted the remaining few rifts in the towering crags as safe anchorage points for the fleet. Similarly defended by high breakwaters and artillery points dug into the overlooking precipices, they provide safety against storms. However these tiny harbours lack any sort of facilities at all, save emergency shelters and chandlers stores, which form part of the excavated defences.

Unlike the ground and air forces, the Dardarrick Armada is not organised into rigid fleets that can be divided into convenient flotillas. Instead each ocean going ship is an independent vessel, which may be thrown together to form impromptu convoys as and when they become viable. Several reasons are behind this lack of formality. Firstly it gives Brinetalon a chance to give all his captains a chance to lead expeditions and show the admiral what they are capable of. Secondly, the violence of Nuera weather generally scatters the ships of any fleet, often preventing organised fleet manoeuvres. Thirdly, the admiral has access to wyvern surveillance and communication, enabling him to dynamically react to any threats using the closest available elements.

Within the armada each type of ship has its own designed role but ultimately naval assets are utilised as deemed necessary by whomever the Admiral has designated commodore for that action.

Cutters are small, fast attack craft used to bring warlocks or crossbowmen into attack range of enemy ships, whilst the Dardarrick vessel that launched them uses its artillery to pound the foe. Cutters are manned with between 15 and 20 sailors and can be rowed or sailed.

Frigates are large and impressively fast sailing ships. Armed with a ram and a ballistae deck, six mounted each side, which can fire sorcerously enchanted bolts capable of smashing or even immolating enemy ships. If the frigate wishes to capture an enemy vessel instead, the ballistae can fire ‘harpoons’ in order to slowly winch the two ships close enough for boarding planks to be dropped. Frigates carry 50 sailors and no less than a score of marines.

Cruisers are Dwarven-designed artillery vessels that lack masts; instead they are wheelship designs with broad, flat upper decks adorned with a trio of deadly catapults, trebuchets or ballistae. These heavily armoured ships slowly plod along, using their artillery to demolish and cripple enemy ships at long range. Heavy stones hurled by trebuchets smash through their hulls; catapults fling clouds of red hot shrapnel to immolate and shred sails; and ballistae cast volleys of crew impaling bolts. It takes a crew of 40

skilled war engineers to keep the paddle wheel and war machines working correctly on an artillery cruiser, with an additional score of marines to defend it against boarding. Such vessels are not particularly seaworthy however and keep close to the shore to avoid being swamped or capsized in high seas.

Carriers are the largest ships ever built. These Dardarrian vessels have a disturbingly extended stern area, where their wyverns land. They are armed with a dozen ballistae mounted each side on a dedicated 'ballista' deck. For extra security the carriers have wizards assigned to them, to help propel and protect the vessel if necessary. The crew numbers 150 sailors, with an additional 40 marines in case of close combat. The most prized passengers however, are the eight wyverns that nest between carrier's decks. These are sent out on regular patrols to spot enemy shipping and coordinate with other Dardarrian vessels. The creatures are a fearsome weapon, being able to fly at night, rip down rigging, or even drop incendiary bombs on deck, whilst all the while the rider lays down suppressing fire with his repeating crossbow. Facing eight of the beasts simultaneously, most enemies flee or surrender.

The armament of a sailor on an Armada vessel differs greatly by the role that sailor will be filling, assuming there is time to prepare for combat. Most crew wear no armour during their normal duties.

Sailor's Role	Armour	Melee Weaponry	Missile Weaponry
Deckhand	Leather	Club, Dagger, Hatchet or Sabre	Thrown Dagger
Marine	Chainmail	Great Axe or Halberd	Crossbow
Artillerist	Ringmail	Dagger	Siege Engine
Officer	Chainmail	Any single handed sword	Crossbow

Tours as a naval crewman in the Armada last for two years aboard ship and one year at Pierceling in a supporting role.

Humans and hobgoblins tend to be the most populous sailors, the latter especially good as topmen (those that take care of the rigging and sails). Although some Parennax privateers are fascinated by the complex vessels, few join the Dardarrian navy, finding it too cold to remain in Pierceling during the winter months. Whilst the few that brave torpor might not be as pure or patriotic as one of Dardarrick's own citizens, their knowledge of the seas is invaluable and part of why the Armada is now being viewed with consternation by outsiders.

Few navies can match the Dardarrian fleet in direct battle but fortunately for the rest of Rardarri the vessels remain locked in ice for nearly half the year when Salt Bay freezes. In fact Dardarrick's rapid naval expansion is on the point of faltering, lacking the space to overwinter more ships. If Dardarrick could ever seize control of

an island port in warmer waters, such as Blades Fell or Dragonnex, the kingdom would be in a position to extend an iron grip over the Rardarri coastline – even threatening the Lorn ports.

Ranks within the Navy

With the fleet currently limited to four carriers and several dozen frigates and cruisers, chances for promotion are limited unless a ship's crew suffers significant battle casualties.

Instead of wearing tabards that catch on the paraphernalia aboard ship, the sailing crew wear dark blue shirts and white slacks instead. Officers have more formal jackets.

Armada Rank Insignia

Rank	Insignia	Command
Seaman	None	None
Bosun	One chevron on shoulder	Seamen
Ensign	Two chevrons on shoulder	Marines
Lieutenant	Three chevrons on shoulder	Crew
Captain	Star on shoulder	Ship
Commodore	None (temporary rank)	Fleet
Admiral	Sea-lion on shoulder (Lion forequarters with fish tail)	Armada

The Brotherhood of Magnus –

The Lion's Heart

The heart of Dardarrick's military factions, the Brotherhood of Magnus are colloquially known as Warlocks, spellcasters who specialise in military magic and weaponry. Within their ranks, the Brotherhood contains many of the most powerful sorcerers in Rardarri. It is their province to have overall command over the military assets of Dardarrick, the High Mage of the Brotherhood serving as the highest ranking officer in the kingdom. The Wing Marshal, Legionary Generals, Admiral and Arcanist General all answer directly to the High Mage and accept his or her orders.

Based in the Commune, their bleak and towering fortress in Graenwich, the Brotherhood is not solely an organisational arm of the military. They are the source of 'Tactical Magica', the tactical use of magic to support mundane military troops in combat situations. This comes in two main forms – augmentation spellcasting and battlefield magic.

Augmentation spellcasting is an indirect form of arcane aid the Brotherhood gives to the military. Prior to battle, skilled adepts spend time with a unit casting spells to help the soldiers, improving their chance of success in the approaching combat. For example, granting spells to ward injury, deflect magic, boost strength or increase their movement rate.

The use of battle magic is more straightforward, requiring the use of offensive magic to blast enemies directly. Both the 18th and 19th

Legions are formed solely from Warlocks, though generally ones of petty power, most never progressing beyond Novice level in the Brotherhood before signing up with the legions. However, their ability to both augment themselves and cast volleys of offensive magic before charging home with swords, makes them two of the most feared regiments in the whole Dardarrian army.

Within the Brotherhood of Magnus there are five 'circles' that constitute the ranking system within the organisation.

The lowest ranking circle is made up of Novices, who are the students of Magnus's teachings. Once an Apprentice has reached a proficiency with his basic magics (50% or more in Sorcery and Manipulation), he may take a test to graduate into the second circle and assumes the title of Brother. The majority of Novices fail the extremely challenging trial but are offered entry into the warlock legions as compensation. For the majority this is their primary objective, having a greater love for the blade than sorcery.

Brothers make up most of the Brotherhood's competent numbers and fulfil its mainstay duties, usually the production of single use magical potions or ensorcelled war-engine ammunition, which are always in short supply. They are rarely used for combat missions and most of the time they live within the confines of the Commune. Brothers that show true skill with their craft (75% or more in Sorcery and Manipulation) are either claimed by the arcanists of SpellCom or rise into the third circle, becoming Adepts.

Adepts are given field responsibilities outside of Commune; usually by being attached to a legion as part of its Tactical Magica squad and providing sorcerous support. For the period of their detachment they remain under the authority of the Legion Commander. Depending on personal inclination, an Adept can provide augmentation, battle magic, or both. Once real world experience has improved the Adept's skills to an unquestionable level (100% or more in Sorcery and Manipulation) they are granted the title of Wizard and entry to the fourth circle.

Wizards are in charge of teaching the Novices the finer points of spellcasting and service to the Brotherhood. They decide who takes the test to leave the first circle and which Brothers should be promoted further. Wizards also maintain the strategic overview of Dardarrick, coordinating the supplies, deployments and reinforcement requests of the other branches. Consumed with administrative duties, few Brotherhood Wizards earn the chance to join the fifth circle – the Mages' Council.

The Mages are among the most powerful sorcerers in Dardarrick (125% or more in Sorcery and Manipulation) and they advise the High Mage on decisions concerning long term military strategy. There is no set number of Council members but the fifth circle rarely reaches a dozen members. Most are in charge of special research projects, designing new tactics or weapons, to ensure that their armed forces remain smooth-running and one step ahead of any other military in the world.

Few races save for humans ever reach the higher circles in the Brotherhood of Magnus, although several elves have achieved Magehood in the past. One of the Wizards, Urdenvaulk, is a dark-scaled lizardfolk originally from the Kingdom of Torres that proved his dedication to the Brotherhood and now is considered a loyal ally despite his heritage.

The High Mage, head the Brotherhood of Magnus, is one of the Pillars of Dardarrick, serving to aid the king in making the right decisions for the kingdom. He is also the ultimate mind behind the great kingdom's military success and strength.

Ranks within the Brotherhood

Used to determine where in the Brotherhood a member belongs, the following are the badges of rank and office in the Brotherhood of Magnus; presented in their order of rank and command structure. The majority of the Brotherhood wears indigo blue robes as their uniform.

Brotherhood Rank Insignia

Rank	Insignia	Command
Novice	No robe	None
Brother	Plain robe	Novices
Adept	Narrow band at cuff and hem	Brothers
Wizard	Two narrow bands at cuff and hem	Adepts
Mage	Three narrow bands at cuff and hem	Wizards
High Mage	Deep black robe with single star over heart	Mages

Spellcaster Command – The Lion's Eye

SpellCom is the source of arcane intelligence for the Kingdom of Dardarrick. Controlling access to the Omnicix crystals with which they work their miraculous spells, Spellcaster Command has become the hub for communication with the kingdom's Special Forces and spies. As far as the populace of the kingdom is aware, SpellCom serves to watch for future threats. Only a few select individuals outside of the organisation are also aware that they are the arcane backbone behind the covert operations battalion called Wraith Recon.

Orchestrated and commanded by the Arcanist General, SpellCom primarily enlists its members from the Brotherhood of Magnus. Recruits are all collectively called arcanists and most of them have backgrounds in using sorcery. Many of the services the organisation performs *require* some degree of control over magic and the majority are masters of the craft.

Arcanists fall into five main categories:

- ☉ **Diviners:** Those who supervise the Omnicix shards, continuously observing events and giving advice to operatives in the field.

- ☉ **Enchanters:** Artificers capable of creating unique and permanent magical artefacts, a secret long forgotten outside the organisation.
- ☉ **Evokers:** Groups of sorcerers who cast extremely potent ritual magic through the Omniciex link, augmenting a spell's power by combining the skills of the team members.
- ☉ **Guardians:** Veteran warriors devoted to protecting the assets and personnel of SpellCom.
- ☉ **Operatives:** The Wolves and Wraiths of Wraith Recon.

There is very little official ranking within SpellCom, other than the Arcanist General himself. The other sorcerers instinctively follow the orders of those who are more skilled and experienced than them. The guardians are politely subservient to everybody, unless there is a breach of security, at which point they assume control until they are sure the personnel and Omniciex shards of SpellCom are safe.

Wraith Recon itself remains outside of the sorcerers chain of command, only answering to their commander, Derrall Ruhrk – who in turn only indirectly answers to the Arcanist General, since authority over the battalion is shared with the other three highest ranking officers of the Pillars of Dardarrick

Each 'branch' of the SpellCom arcanists has a single organisational Commandant who reports to the Arcanist General but they are given no further powers or rank-related command over their peers. They are noted as different from their brethren in order to ensure the Arcanist General stays fully aware of what is going on with his organisation. Should Raspeng retire, willingly or not, the next Arcanist General would be chosen by the leaders of the Pillars of Dardarrick from one of the three sorcery capable Commandants.

There is no specific racial lean amongst SpellCom members other than a predominance of humans due to their concentration in Dardarrick. There are just as many dwarves as there are elves or lizardmen. Hobgoblins and Scorpionmen make excellent Guardians and several of their warriors have joined the Old Guard defending the SpellCom headquarters. The racial mix within the walls at SpellCom is diverse, even including one of the sharkfolk; but all members of the organisation must be Dardarrick-born and swear a mystical oath to forfeit their own lives before betraying the secrecy and confidentiality of SpellCom. Even if someone was able to somehow negate the sorcerous-oath, most know their chances if SpellCom comes hunting for them are slim to none.

Though not a large organisation or powerful in the sense of weight of arms, SpellCom and its hidden weapon of Wraith Recon are the

reasons why Dardarrick currently remains tall and proud against the threats that are stacking against it.

With SpellCom and its ingenious use of the Omniciex at the hub of the Brotherhood's control over the Dardarrian military, the organisation holds the literal key to the world. It sits leagues ahead of its neighbours in its mastery of sorcery and few comprehend what further secrets the Omniciex crystals will yet unlock.

WHY IS THE FIFTH LORNISH WAR A THREAT?

If Dardarrick's military is so indomitable, then why are the recent events, ostensibly Lornish aggression, any real worry for the king? Why is it so important that Wraith Recon be mobilised against the enemies of Dardarrick? Why cannot the forces of the Lion simply crush Lorn *and* Torres and go back to their everyday lives?

Territorial entrenchment aside, something has changed in the way this war has been orchestrated. Unleashing any dragon upon a populated area – let alone an undead one – is universally seen as an atrocity to civilised peoples and Lorn's apparent willingness to use it has resulted in an emotive response from public opinion, Dardarrians all over the kingdom demanding that troops march off to the east.

Yet King Archiveltd's decision to go on the offensive and his apparent desire to make the Lornish pay has most All Father worshippers setting their opinions *against* the war. Between so many influential clergy speaking against the mobilisation, the morale losses in the undead fallout of the dragon's attack and a famine looming in the near future, rising fear and disillusionment have planted the seeds of civil discontent. Worse still are the rumours of Lornish alliances with Torres and the Wildlands. Drawn in too many different directions, the heart behind Dardarrick's military is not beating nearly as strong as it might first appear.

Outside of public knowledge, SpellCom has gotten whiff that Lorn is trading with the dark elves of Zritec gaining dire magics hitherto unknown in the hegemony. There too is something *ominous* in the mystery surrounding King Guntheor V's disappearance and return to power. Who or what is behind these manipulations and is Lorn really responsible for the atrocities?

It will be up to Wraith Recon to find out what is really occurring, perhaps in time to stop Dardarrick launching its own holocaust, as the rest of the world moves to crush the Lion of Nuera.

CHAPTER EIGHT

LORN



Suddenly at war once again with the Kingdom of Dardarrick, the Hegemony of Lorn is the oldest civilised empire on the continent of Rardarri – and the source of the first military hostilities in history. They are the Dardarrians' oldest and most bitter of enemies; and a recent source of scandal and tragic abuse of power.

According to Dardarrarian perspective, Lorn is the second-most powerful nation on the continent, lying in the shadow of the Lion kingdom's wealth and arcane might. There has been bad blood between the two nations since the Dawn of Mortals and it seems as though only war can solve the problems between them time and time again.

THE OFFICIAL ANNALS OF LORN

Encompassing all of the eastern shores of the continent of Rardarri, the Hegemony of Lorn is an ancient and powerful empire that sprang up in the mineral rich mountains and spread south across the once-thickly forested plains. What began as a few city-states became a powerful patriarchy within a few generations and their sights soon lined up upon the early kingdom of Dar.

A Struggle for Supremacy

In the beginning, just beyond the Dawn, the area that would later be known as Lorn was built of a dozen or more individual city-states growing from the roots of several different races, humans, dwarfs and hobgoblins. The patriarchs of these cities were taught to protect the home and family before all else but squabbling between them over territorial borders and access to resources grew angrier until religious teachings could no longer hold them.

Abandoning the fundamental teachings of the All Father, the hobgoblin tribes who inhabited the most aggressive of the city-states began a series of brutal conflicts and small wars amongst themselves, which soon spread to include the other races. The larger and more powerful tribes won out over their neighbours and soon there was a single ruling clan – the Lorn bloodline.

The patriarch of the Lorn family raised his banners over the subjugated city-states and declared the collective a hegemony, offering membership to other clans outside its borders willing to accept his rule, in exchange for military support to conquer their own neighbours. The surviving leaders of the occupied clans and cities, whether they were hobgoblin, human or elven, were all brought before the new warlord. Ruegar Lorn gave each of the eldest males in these groups the right to rule over their part of the realm in his name, calling them the Patriarchs of Lorn. Ever since all aspects of Lorn have been governed by the Patriarchs; taking a knee solely to the iron crown of the Warlord.

Turning their backs upon the All Father, the Patriarchs formed armies under the banners of Lorn himself and looked hungrily at the peaceful regions lying to the south and west, especially that of pastoral Dar.

Wolves amongst Sheep

Using the experienced troops from their own wars, Lornish armies marched across Rardarri, claiming lands as far west as the arid Wildlands but made no headway into the swamps in the south. Dar capitulated without issue, not comprehending the outright blasphemy against the will of the All Father. The hard working and stalwart Darrians were immediately placed in a lower class under the Lornish overlords and were forced to be the workhorses for the growing civilisation. For over 150 years Dar laboured under the yoke of the cruel Lornish clans, each one owning vast tracts of land which they squeezed to support their own indolent and warlike lifestyles.

The peasant uprising in eastern Dar in 208 YBD was a minor affair which the majority of the hegemony ignored, using the situation to undermine the standing of those clans 'so weak' as to lose control over their peasants. However, the first rebels fled into the thinly populated foothills across the Walker River and set up their own community hidden in the forested hills. Over time, ever greater numbers of subjugated second class citizens fled westwards and were accepted by the insurgent freedom fighters, whatever their race or creed. To support themselves they held raids on clan storehouses



which held taxes bled from their subjugated peasants and soon the Lornish plantation masters were racing outright insurrection.

Economic collapse of several member clans caused the hegemony to take notice. Several small punitive expeditions ventured west into the deep forests and were not seen again. In growing irritation the reigning Warlord raised the might of hegemony's armies and marched through Dar to crush the uprising. The first clashes went badly for the rebels, losing hundreds of their inexperienced troops. It was decided to use guerrilla tactics, which successfully tied up the Lornish army for the next eight years.

Eventually a devious attack, orchestrated by a wizard named Magnus, managed to kill half the ruling Lornish patriarchs as they met for a strategic conference. Although the leader of the rebels also died in the attack, the loss of so many clan leaders propagated a war for succession, causing Lorn to pull back behind the Mettanbaugh River; taking with them huge amounts of supplies and burning the region behind them. Although they counted the loss of Dar as a slight to their honour, they had grown wary of a region which

did not fight openly, resorting to assassination and subterfuge. The rebellion and underhanded manner of their warfare made the newly dubbed Kingdom of Dardarrick a hated enemy of Lorn.

A Race of Arms

Over the course of the next millennium the Lornish kings repeatedly invaded portions of Dardarrick, each time to be defeated by the might of the Dardarrian wizards, priests and armies. Some battles would be victories, most were bloody losses for both sides but the Lion with its more productive citizenry would consistently come out ahead in the long run. When common arms would not prevail, the Lornish turned to dark magics, becoming slowly corrupted into using the same style of warfare they had hated so long before. When Dardarrian innovation came up with a new weapon or fortification, Lorn would spend a fortune on Aphaxusian armour to bolster soldiers in return. Despite massive investment in the arms race, nothing they could do seemed to work for long against the might of Dardarrick and it was beginning to take its toll over the landscape of the kingdom.

Lorn was once a beautiful wooded plain that sloped up towards the mountains. To supply the Lornish war machine however, much of the nation was deforested seeking timber for siege engines and new merchant fleets; whilst the hills were strip mined by industrious dwarfs, seeking ore for swords and armour. Over several centuries, Lorn began to look as weathered and scarred as its soldiers but the constant tension between them and Dardarrick meant no end was ever in sight.

The Rise and Fall of a Warlord

It was under the domination of the Warlord Tyron Guntheor II, that the Lorn Hegemony struck a deliberately low blow against Dardarrick. Setting up a plan to take advantage of a famine, he hired mercenaries to strike random blows against the most important farmlands producing the kingdom's grain. With this single act, Guntheor triggered a chain of events that would once again ignite the nations' mutual dislike.

Uncovering hints that the raids were being orchestrated by Lorn, the peace-loving Dardarrians unexpectedly retaliated. King Saerd IV took such an affront that he sent two legions of his army straight into Lornish territory – the first invasion Dardarrick had ever attempted. Decades of doing little but practicing parade ground drills had ill prepared the Dardarrians for real war. Arrogantly self confident, the legions crashed into Lornish troops with real experience, the resulting butchery sent the attack recoiling back to Dardarrick. Lorn's counter-offensive was brutal, allowing the hegemony over the next three years to retake territory all the way back to the Walker River. Guntheor gloried in the accidental result of his plans, crushing the Dardarrians under his control for over a decade until a new and vengeful theocracy rose in its response.

The new zealots following the bitter words of Praxious fielded an army heedless of their own lives and untouchable by fear. Facing overwhelming numbers of fanatics, the Lornish armies fled the kingdom but were caught and slaughtered at Sentinel Keep. The retaliation did not stop at the border however, the Brazen Priests flooded in the hegemony itself. When they showed no mercy for his people, Guntheor had to surrender and the nation was brought to beggary, paying reparations.

Even though the next century would be tumultuous and tense for Dardarrick, Lorn was near penniless and demoralised from the losses they took at the blades of the Brazen Legion. The warlord used his hatred toward Dardarrick to incense his people with little needed propaganda, whilst simultaneously entering diplomatic negotiations with his allies in Torres, Aphaxus and House Xuan. Yet the disastrous defeat undermined the hobgoblin's power and he was soon murdered and replaced by a chaotic succession of dwarven warlords who were unable to unite the hobgoblin clans under their rule.

Game of Death

The Guntheor family line eventually reclaimed the reins of authority over a century later. Though still paying crippling reparation payments, expansion of the hegemony's trade fleets had come close to restoring its former glories; whilst Dardarrick grew exponentially more corrupt and autocratic under theocratic rule. As the Lion's internal strife intensified, Lorn ceased paying its tribute, further propagating civil disorder but with the unfortunate result of a king being returned to the Dardarrick throne. Although initially facing financial difficulties, the kingdom revised its corrupt taxation policies and began to grow strong once more. It made the Lornish people hate them with greater intensity.

On a misty morning at Moratlis in 1200 YBD, Warlord Yurimov Guntheor V met with a dark stranger in his courtyard and vanished into a portal with him. Left with a power vacuum, the clan Patriarchs fell upon one another like wolves after scraps.

The hegemony fractured into several states whilst the clans argued amongst themselves. During this breakdown, they lost control of The Claws and were at the point of starting a full blown civil war when Guntheor strolled back into his old throne room in 1205 YBD accompanied by 13 black-clad knights of unknown origin. A single gratuitous and very disturbing death later and the Patriarch Generals fell in line instantly.

Since Guntheor's return the Lorn Hegemony has become a different place. Roadway patrols are led by dark and sinister Black Knights, citizens are told to steer clear of certain cities or wilderness areas 'for their own safety' and the king is never far from his eerily beautiful consort Esuvera – who now leads the formerly Fraternal Order of the Iron Circle. The appearance of undead and demonic horrors along the border between Lorn and Dardarrick are seen by the populace as frightening occurrences, which rumours say are the results of necromantic assaults by the Dardarrick against loyal Lornish border troops. As a result, the clans are recruiting heavily within their territories, seeking to raise armies against the unholy invasion.

The appearance of an undead abomination, a dragon reputedly dredged up from the bottom of Wyrms Lake, by a cabal of wizards wearing the robes of the Brotherhood of Magnus, has sent a message to the Lornish people that the Dardarrians cannot be trusted. Facing the certainty of a Fifth Lornish War, the hegemony knows that the Lion will not stop until it has utterly destroyed the first and most ancient civilisation of Nuera.

With war declared against his kingdom, King Guntheor V has bolstered his defences with savage new weapons and deadly new types of dark magic. He has told his Patriarch Generals to be ready to deal with any Dardarrian offensives that come across the border

but his orders have been precisely clear – Lorn must keep its hands clean and not be seen as the aggressor. Thus Lorn patiently awaits the inevitable attack, its defences primed and ready to receive the legions into a prepared trap.

IMPORTANT SITES IN LORN

These are some of the major cities of Lorn. There are dozens of smaller towns and villages located throughout the hegemony but only remain important on a local level.

Moratlis, The Black Capital of Lorn

Located on the craggy shore of the notorious Wyrn Lake, the towering walls of Moratlis hide a bustling city carved from local black stone and held together by blood as much as mortar. Svartshard, the Warlord's traditional seat of power, is tall, craggy castle which juts form a tor at the centre of town, looming over the capital.

The buildings here are typically short and squat, constructed by dwarven masons. The streets are wide to accommodate carts and wagons, and crossbowmen stand watch from street corner towers. Doorways are taller than normal to allow easier passage by hobgoblins, windows are almost nonexistent and smoke trickles gloomily from the chimneys of buildings on every block. It is a dank and dismal place for anyone other than the industrious dwarves or their current hobgoblin rulers.

From the towering castle the Guntheor line briefly ruled over Lorn for several generations, manipulating the hegemony through magical control of dark birds, bound to their will, which acted as their scouts and spies. Guntheor V has been seen on the castle's parapets with dark visitors that are never seen coming to or leaving from the castle gates, casting more suspicions upon the powers of his ancestry.

Population: 45,000 (50% Dwarf, 25% Hobgoblin, 15% Human, 10% Miscellaneous).

Government: All pay allegiance to the Iron Crown of the Warlord.

Defence: The city is well defended with by the Iron Brigade, Centuries of which function as city watchmen as well as military guards in outlying regions.

Commerce: Hard industry and resources are found in great abundance, as is imported weaponry and armour from Torres and Aphaxus. Some caravan or naval traders can supplement this with temporary bazaars.

Organisations: There are many guilds of blacksmiths, silversmiths and coopers that form several small unions but the largest and most powerful organisation are the Mine and Dredging Guilds, whom respectively run the iron ore strip mine and the bottom-searching fishers of Wyrn Lake.

Fogreach

Tucked away in the northern valley coast between the two halves of the Whinaugh Mountains and sitting on the northern shore of Pearl Lake, Fogreach is a misty city. It is primarily a fishing town that supplies most of the kingdom's supply of dried fish, whale meat, blubber and oil. Although the city is devoted to this industry, there is one place in Fogreach that could not be more different.

The largest building in the city is a beautifully built mansion, dated to the 1st century YBD called the Library of the Iron Circle, where the Order of the same name has met since its original incarnation. Once used as just a teaching place for a range of scholarly studies, the Library has been turned into a secret citadel of the dark arts in which no one outside the circle knows what is being undertaken. The locals claim to hear haunting moans and see dancing lights around the building at night and more than a few disappearances have occurred since the witch Esuvera took over in 1207 YBD.

Unusually, the town is one of the few places in Rardarri where Sharkfolk have begun engaging in trade and contact. Though feared by many, some fishermen have taken to paying the marine race with trinkets and perhaps worse things. In return, they always seem to return with full nets.

Population: 6,000 (40% Human, 30% Hobgoblin, 20% Dwarf, 5% Sharkfolk, 5% Miscellaneous).

Government: The agents of the Iron Circle pay direct homage to the Warlord, too afraid of repercussions to disobey.

Defence: An organised town watch of several hundred individuals and three centuries of soldiers from the 3rd Heavy Division, which is primarily based in the mountains to the west. As the closest port to Salt Bay, an entire fleet comprising of over a dozen war galleys remain in harbour to protect the town and its fishing ships from Dardarrian imperialism.

Commerce: Very little outside commerce; majority of goods are fishing/whaling based.

Organisations: The Whaler's Guild and the Fisher's Guild were once the most powerful groups in the area but the recent augmentation and alteration of how the Order of the Iron Circle functions has allowed it to surpass all else in the city. Although not specifically a navel base, the admiral of the fleet stationed in Fogreach wields considerable authority too.

Darkenholme

A settlement devoted to the early House Xuan dark elf inhabitants that sailed to Rardarri, Darkenholme is a major naval base that extends farther underground than what is built above it. Most of the sandstone buildings are little more than single rooms above staircases leading down into the catacombs that are the true city. Above ground the city is sparsely populated; only once someone meanders through the rocky cove grottoes or descends the city stairwells – do they discover its heart.

Underground the city becomes a thriving metropolis of spider silk and basalt brick constructions. It is a complete dark elf city shipped from the inhabitants' original home in the empire of Zritec; brought over stone by stone by House Xuan exiles. The catacombs have everything needed in order to create a pleasant home for the subterranean elves. That is to say that the city is a dark and sinister place filled with slaves, spiders, baleful fungi and hideously melded half elf, half spider creatures.

Darkenholme is also notorious for its School of Shadows, a league of assassins that teaches the rogues of Lorn the finest dark elf techniques of poisoning, sniping and terrorising. Those who graduate from the School of Shadows are some of the most feared agents available in the hegemony.

Population: 12,250 (70% Dark Elf, 20% Human, 5% Lizardmen, 5% Miscellaneous).

Government: Although they pay nominal allegiance to the Warlord, the High Priestess is actually in charge of the city.

Defence: An unknown number of spiders, House Xuan warriors and a small number of Lizardman mercenaries.

Commerce: Gemstones, precious metals, poisons and alchemical reactants. Zriteci goods are frequently found but at a premium.

Organisations: The dark faith of the spider goddess is stronger than anything else in the city, seconded only by the cutthroat mentors at the School of Shadows.

Port Baumegard

The main naval and trading port of Lorn, Port Baumegard is where the Lornish people do all of their main business with the Kingdom of Aphaxus. Outside its impressive walls are a number of unusually tall stone houses, slate roofed, with copper faced doors and window shutters. The solid looking buildings looking like something more suited to a castle on the northern coastline. However, the odd construction is explained by the presence of fire giants who arrive at the port to negotiate trade deals, the houses provided as hostels.

The walls are heavily defended by soldiers garrisoned in the town in order to protect the port and its citizens from the rampages of the fire giants should they become unruly. The town itself is modestly populated beyond the garrison and the dockyards but there are always a few merchant caravans travelling in and out of the town, exchanging their goods for Aphaxusian metalwork.

The commercial success of Port Baumegard has brought great wealth to hegemony, enough to make sure that the Patriarch responsible for the city keeps it well protected. There are always a dozen or more war galleys in harbour at all times, with a dozen more patrolling the coast in pairs to watch over trading vessels. The watchtowers on Baumegard Bay always keep at least two sets of eyes watching toward the west; being so close to the Torres border, it is a necessary precaution.

Population: 5,000 (50 % Human, 30% Dwarf, 15% Lizardmen, 5% Miscellaneous).

Government: The Patriarch resides in the town and is completely loyal to the Warlord in every way.

Defence: The city is protected by elements of the 8th Heavy Division, which are garrisoned in a series of barracks buildings. There is a massive war fleet in the harbour at all times and frequently several armed vessels from Sando anchor here to protect trading vessels.

Commerce: Torresh and Aphaxusian goods are prevalent, most military goods are caravanned inland. Local marketplace can sometimes carry exotic items imported from distant parts of Nuera.

Organisations: Below the Patriarch, the caravan masters are very powerful in regards to their stranglehold on trade but it is the fire giant ship captains that hold the most influence due to their intimidating size and ferocity.

MILITARY FORTIFICATIONS

Castle Draculist

An enormous granite castle located on the rocky banks of the Mettanbaugh River, Castle Draculist is the ancient home of the boar-riding clan of berserkers descended from the ancient barbarian Dracoul. It is a dark and savage place that the locals steer clear from, as that it is home to nearly 500 of the fiercest heavy cavalry known to the Lornish people.

The Draculist Bonegrinders are never expected to show themselves when the Lornish army engages an enemy; when they do make themselves known, the blood flies as the maul-wielding heavy cavalry charge wantonly into the enemy. They seem to have no care for themselves or their allies – they simply lust for bloodshed and are seemingly masters at achieving it.

The Redwine Keep

Overlooking the massive strip mined plains that stretch for miles in front of Moratlis, Redwine Keep is named for the ruddy tone in the bricks and mortar used to build it. It is the main meeting place of the Patriarch Generals and the headquarters for the most influential military minds of the kingdom. It is a pair of towers linked at the base by a huge campus where officers are trained. Additionally it is the reserve armoury of the hegemony. Vast amounts worth of weapons, armour and equipment is stored in within the great halls of the Keep.

With the surrounding lands levelled and poisoned from strip mining, the soldiers at Redwine Keep have an open killing ground, which can be bombarded by a dozen trebuchets mounted atop the towers and further guarded by 40 ballistae mounded behind crenulations atop the walls; making the fortress extremely defensible against land-based units of troops trying to assault the capital from the west – the only direction where the city is reachable by foot.

Redwine Keep is a massive structure and is home to half of the Iron Brigade. Outlying forts contain the rest of the 1st Heavy Division, tasked with the protection of the capital as well as the patrolling of the strip mining facilities. It is the most important military base in all of Lorn.

Azerholme Keep

When the first treaties with the fire giants of Aphaxus were made to create trade routes between Lorn and Sando, the king of Lorn at the time arranged for 100 of the enslaved pahhur dwarves to be 'purchased' as part of the deal. The Lornish get a unit of fiery dwarven warriors who can forge weaponry and the fire giants received reduced import taxes on their goods. The deal was made and the pahhur were brought to Lorn, where they were segregated to an island in case of troubles.

Under the authority of the dwarven clan of Patriarch General Haephust, the pahhurs have built a small stone and metal community on the southern tip of the island. Commonly called Azerholme, the city has been the lifelong home for the original slaves and their descendants. Haephust, against the recommendations of his peers, has permitted the subjugated forge-slaves to outfit themselves with armour and weaponry and claims that they are the '14th to 23rd Centuries of the 7th Heavy Division'. The Warlord has yet to call upon these fire-bearded warrior-slaves but they are always ready within their huge stone and iron keep built at the centre of the industrious village.

NATURAL POINTS OF INTEREST

These are some of the noteworthy natural features of the Kingdom of Lorn. Much of the natural landscape of the kingdom has been shaped over the centuries by Lornish industry, leaving only these few main points of interest to navigate by.

The Whinaugh Range

A huge bank of rocky ore-filled mountains dotted with mining villages and hobgoblin settlements, the Whinaugh Range make up the northern coastline of Lorn. They are tapped heavily for the abundant natural resources that exist there, and dozens of traversable roads lead down from their tree-covered peaks into the kingdom's interior.

Few ever travel to the northernmost coast of Lorn, which is a series of titanic cliffs that spill down several hundred feet into the Ocean. The entire range is inhabited by a large number of particularly vicious underground monsters, making mining a dangerous affair. Those who wish to brave the danger and climb the highest peaks near the edge of the northern cliffs can catch distant glimpses of lightning and cloud-dancing by the relatively nearby Hyrric Tempest.

Pearl Lake

An ocean inlet before an earthquake separated the lagoon from the greater body of water; Pearl Lake is the only saltwater lake on the continent. It is home to dozens of ocean species and gets its name

from the almost unnatural number of pearl-producing shellfish in the lake's mud. Other more dangerous aquatic beasts live in or around the lake, encouraging the local patrols to avoid the place. Travellers occasionally encounter groups of sharkfolk travelling the short distance overland to reach the lake but fortunately the race seems more willing to depart peacefully than enter a blood frenzy for some unknown reason.

Wyrmlake

This muddy stretch of formerly clean water sits at the runoff point of the expansive strip mining operations surrounding Moratlis. All of the industrial waste, silt and workings from the water powered extraction processes is flushed into the lake. It is a horrid collection of foul toxins and floating rubbish that is unfit to support any plant life save the hardiest of fungi – which are plentiful around it.

An ancient folktale tells of the 'dragon graveyard' that lies in the silt and mud at the bottom of Wyrmlake. In ancient myths, the great dragons once used as mounts for the gods are said to have been placed here in a sign of respect. Rumours abound that several years ago a cabal of wizards, dressed in dark blue robes, appeared over the lake and cast a mighty spell that raised a titanic skeleton from its depths, before vanishing into the aether. Now the Warlord has organised the Dredging Guild, once used to look for drowned travellers or lost artefacts, to search the lake for other bones.

The Mettanbaugh River

Running from the high peaks of the copper-filled Whinaughs, the Mettanbaugh is a fast-flowing river that cuts deeply into mountains and hills on its course down through the kingdom. From its source it flows into the Earthblud Canyon, a jagged but beautiful crevasse that is 500 feet deep and lined with sharply weathered limestone walls. Even when the canyon evens out to the rocky boulder plains of Lorn the river keeps its rather steep banks, ripping red clay out from the ground to leave behind dangerous outcroppings and jagged ledges overlooking the river throughout its course.

The Scorpion River

This river is long, winding and notorious for killing unwary travellers. It runs from the eastern hills of the Whinaugh Range down through Troll Gorge (named for its primary inhabitants) and eventually it spills out into the Ocean via a 50 foot waterfall in the centre of the Lornish fishing city of Fallsreach.

The river's name remains an enduring conundrum for visitors and sages in the region, although antique stories tell of an evil Dardarrion sorcerer who once turned the entire river poisonous, or whistled a plague of arachnids from the dusty riverbanks, depending on which aged local you ask.

PEOPLE AND PERSONALITIES OF INTEREST

The following are all notable personalities that live in Lorn.

Yurimov Guntheor V, Warlord of Lorn

The current Warlord of Lorn is a dark-furred hobgoblin that takes his brooding stare from his mother and his bulky build from his father but his instinct for bloodshed and slaughter hails from ancestors much farther back. Seizing the throne by personal challenge from his older brother soon after being declared an adult, Yurimov is a superlative natural warrior always known for his merciless tenacity. The tribes believe he is everything a good hobgoblin should be; cunning, tough and ruthlessly brutal.

Guntheor's disappearance was a disaster for the hegemony, triggering a wave of supremacy challenges between the eight ruling clans, each death sparking yet more challenges in an unstoppable chain reaction. When even this wave of violence failed to settle the issue, civil war loomed and was only prevented by his timely return and a display of previously unknown magical power; which, in concert with his anarchic and enigmatic choices concerning the hegemony, has made him more feared than respected. His never being far from the reputed demonologist Esuvera has added to these fears.

Yurimov Guntheor is nearly burgundy in hue and his fangs are capped in silver points that double as both weaponry and jewellery. He was once vain, keeping mirrors nearby to gaze upon his intimidating features but since his return he has forbade the existence of mirrors anywhere near him – going so far as smashing a priceless relic that was brought to him as a gift by a visiting dignitary.

Something is not right with the Warlord of Lorn, as shown by some of his choices and tactics concerning the war with Dardarrick. There are claims of his possession by demons or his being controlled by Esuvera but never ones audible to Guntheor or his loyalists. Such an offence could bring flaying as a suitable punishment in the dark Warlord's new style of rule.



Esuvera the Ivory One,

Matriarch of the Iron Circle

Appearing alongside the High King when he reappeared from his unexpected five-year sabbatical, the albino human named Esuvera goes by several other names. Her titles include Matriarch of the Iron Circle, the Ivory One, Consort to the King and – when she is not within earshot – Witch Queen of Lorn. She is a master of diabolical arcane powers and possibly the source of King Guntheor's newly revealed powers.

Mysterious and soft spoken, Esuvera rarely says anything above a whisper but always manages to be heard. Her chalky white skin is traced with light blue veins and her blood-hued eyes make her seem almost monstrous at times, pitiable at others but somehow constantly otherworldly. She spends a lot of her time in the Library at Fogreach but those who go to the Warlord's weekly assembly in Moratlis will always see her standing behind him... whispering into his ear in a way that angers the helpless Patriarchs.



Dastad Vantessio,

Patriarch General of the 1st Heavy Division

Short for a human and powerfully built; Dastad Vantessio is actually a descendant of one of the original eight ruling clans, who was born and raised in Torresh but returned to claim his birth right. He is a tactical genius and a master axeman, being famed for singlehandedly defeating 10 hobgoblin mercenaries while travelling through the southern end of Lorn en-route to his ancestral clan lands. Only a fool would ever deny his right to be Patriarch General; and a short-lived fool at that. The hegemony's hobgoblin-derived challenge laws allowing for him to defend his office, which was the way he won it after all.

Dastad considered himself Guntheor's closest advisor and wartime proxy for as long as the Warlord has ruled – until his disappearance. Ever since his return with the 'white witch' at his side, all of Dastad's strategic advice has fallen on deaf ears. The suspicious appearance of the undead dragon, which Dastad discovered only inflicted Dardarrian casualties, has the Patriarch General worried that the attack was somehow orchestrated by Guntheor himself; although the Warlord denies any knowledge of the abomination and Dastad does not understand how such a thing could have been done.

Although he has never had a problem with shedding Dardarrian blood by the gallon, unleashing any form of dragon, let alone an undead one, is not something he would have ever contemplated. There is no question that Dastad is loyal to the Warlord but now that his apprehensions have been raised and strange creatures seem to be gathering in the hegemony, how far will he let these diabolic influences push his sense of military honour?



THE MILITARY OF LORN

The collective military forces of Lorn fall into three categories. There is the Lornish Army, the Lornish Navy and the Order of the Iron Circle. Each branch of the Lornish military is headed by several Patriarchs, all of whom answer to the Warlord directly when assembled. The Iron Crown of the Warlord is the absolute highest authority in the hegemony and cannot be questioned. Only through military coup or political manoeuvring can the crown be thwarted and never without copious amounts of bloodshed, whether from assassination or personal challenge.

The Lornish Army is 80,000 strong, mostly hobgoblin and dwarven soldiers in plate armour wielding halberds, great hammers or great axes. It is comprised of eight divisions, each known by its moniker, such as the 'Iron Brigade'. Each is further subdivided into a 100 centuries of 100 warriors apiece. This organisational structure at first appears a little odd, until the observer realises that each Century is formed from a single clan or village, fighting together as companions (or rivals) familiar from childhood. Some settlements of course, raise more than one century if they are large enough.

The divisions in fact represent the eight original city-states that first formed the hegemony and all the centuries within them are raised from their allies, clients, or subjugated tenants within their territory. Divisions are personally led by the head Patriarch of the ruling clan, accompanied by several centuries of personal guards. The Patriarch Generals report directly to the Warlord and no division can be placed under the command of another.

Although these monstrous brigades appear to be tactically inflexible, each century maintains its own cavalry, scouts and priests – the exact proportion varying from unit to unit. Due to this self-sufficiency, most centuries can operate independently of their division, making them perfect for patrol and garrison duty. Problems only occur on the battlefield when the entire division is mustered together, the lack of uniformity whether racial mix, riding mounts or even dress code makes them a rather chaotic sight. In fact each and every unit bears their own standards, coloured uniforms and even going so far as to paint heraldry on the pavises they use to close down enemy troops whilst under missile fire. If two centuries discover they share the same uniform, heraldic device or name they immediately challenge each other to combat in order to determine who has the right to bear it.

It is a source of pride and status for each century commander to ensure their troops are well trained and equipped with the best arms and armour available. Most bear weapons and armour from the dwarven forges at Stonefall Reach, whilst richer units purchase specialised equipment traded from Torres or the Zriteci dark elf vessels that frequent the coastal ports. The personal bodyguard Centuries of the Patriarch General are expected to be armed with Aphaxian armaments, being unable to do so can undermine his authority.

An example of such a century are the 1st Drakuist Bonegrinders, a unit of 100 heavy hobgoblin cavalry of ancient bloodline that wear Aphaxian armour and wield great hammers from the backs of their huge boar mounts, using their knees to steer with unequalled riding skills. They have no love for the rest of their division but loyally fulfil their ancient pact to serve their Patriarch's clan.

Facing impending war, each division has been summoned to the Dardarrick border in order to crush the invaders. However, most of the brigades have left a portion of their strength behind to guard their territories and dissuade any opportunistic raiding by third parties.

Division Designations

Banner	Classification	Division Headquarters	Moniker
L-I	1 st Heavy Division	Moratlis	'Iron Brigade'
L-II	2 nd Heavy Division	Stonepall Reach	'Rock Brigade'
L-III	3 rd Heavy Division	Fogreach	'Hammer Brigade'
L-IV	4 th Heavy Division	Sunpaen	'Slammer Brigade'
L-V	5 th Heavy Division	Isla Ghuntheor	'Storm Brigade'
L-VI	6 th Heavy Division	Fallsreach	'Quake Brigade'
L-VII	7 th Heavy Division	Azerhome	'Skull Brigade'
L-VIII	8 th Heavy Division	Port Baunegard	'Desert Brigade'

Powerful by any standard of comparison, the Royal Navy of Lorn is a structured collection of fast-moving clippers and rowed war galleys. It is primarily used to keep trading vessels safe from pirates from Parrennax or the other dangers that the Ocean holds for unwary sailors. It has recently pitted itself against elements from the Dardarrian Armada but the arcane power of Dardarrick combined with the level of war technology wielded by their fleets makes these engagements costly and more often than not futile. It is far better for Lornish naval vessels to pick their fights against the Lion's ships carefully – and hopefully in overwhelming numbers.

The most recent addition to the military of Lorn, the 'Fraternal Order of the Iron Circle' has existed for hundreds of years. It was a collection of sages and priests who debated over the history and mythologies of the region. They would ritually research the wealth of scrolls and tomes in their huge library in Fogreach but their studies were never considered a military asset. Even though many of the strange things they discovered would end up in the hands of Army war-priests, the Order itself remained an outside organisation. That is, until the recent re-appearance of King Guntheor V.

When the king returned from his mysterious journey he immediately ordered the Order of the Iron Circle to report to Esuvera – a woman of all things – to be instructed how to integrate their talents fully under her command. Several of the Circle's leading members spoke in protest, only to disappear in the night. Soon those who remained reluctantly followed Lorn's first official Matriarch as she directed them to a collection of dark texts and never-before-known writings, previously hidden in the library vaults. The Iron Circle's Library in Fogreach closed its walls to outsiders and only agents of the Order are allowed to come and go. What is really happening under the pale-skinned witch is a mystery.

The mysterious and terrible Black Knights answer only to Guntheor, technically part of his personal retinue and not held responsible for their atrocious actions, save by the warlord himself. They remain faceless, never removing their armour or cowls in

Aphaxian Armour

Select centuries of each Lornish division outfits their troops in highly expensive Aphaxian Armour. Similar to Dardarrian Full Plate, the cunningly wrought pieces of the suit cover most of the gaping weak spots existing in archaic plate panoplies but instead of using fine mail the Aphaxian suits use articulated plates on the backs of limbs and insides of joints. Whilst offering the same protection, a suit of Aphaxian plate is exceedingly cumbersome, limiting its use to the strongest warriors or those mounted on sturdy beasts.

Since the armour is so form fitting, only members of the same race, with the same SIZ Characteristic can wear it.

Armour	AP	ENC	Locations	Armour Penalty
Aphaxian Plate	8	5	All	-13



public, which appear to be enchanted in some fashion. The few foolish enough to challenge them were soon cut down with almost contemptuous ease.

The military of Lorn is strong and numerous except when compared to the forces of Dardarrick, making it imperative that they find their enemy's weakness. Allying with the foes Dardarrick has managed to make over the centuries in their pride and self-grandeur is just the first step.

CHAPTER NINE

TORRES



This nation claims the southern end of the continent; the Kingdom of Torres is loosely united through the power of religion. The very word 'torres' means 'soul' in Draconic, the most common language in the kingdom. Covered in marshes and swamps and riddled with dangerous animal life, Torres began as a collection of scattered tribes and villages not unlike those found in the Wildlands. Over the centuries it has been the faith of Mersmerro that gathered the various tribes and races under one banner.

Comparatively impoverished when compared to its neighbours of Dardarrick and Lorn, Torres is a primitive place at first glance. A deeper look shows strength that rivals the nationalism of the Dardarrians and an instinctual drive that makes Lornish aggression seem like childish squabbling. The swamp kingdom has been relatively quiet for centuries; serving as the backstop for many of the other nations' plots and schemes without interference.

Yet the constant meddling of Dardarrian foreign policy and aggressive religious intolerance of the Praxious missionaries finally awoke a smouldering anger in many of the lizardfolk. No longer will they sit passively in their humid swamps whilst the warm-bloods destroy Rardarri. The Torresh have heard a new calling; and they will not be denied its bloody destiny.

THE SCRIPTURE ACCORDING TO TORRES

The god of all the Ocean and the waters that flow into it, Mersmerro, dove into the swamps of Torres and gave shape to the scaly folk on land and in the sea. In the early days, before the Dawn, it was Mersmerro's instincts that gave the tribes of Torres shape and the strength to govern themselves. It was not until the children of the All Father – humans – came to the swamp kingdom that the scaly folk learned about greed, jealousy and avarice. The tribes went to war upon themselves in the Chaos Time and Mersmerro had to put on his prey mask to teach his righteous followers how to live in peace. Ever since the scaly folk and the soft folk (humans, elves and so on) have lived in relative harmony in Torres; only allowing the predator's mask to raise their choler when Mersmerro sends the signs to his shamans.

Learning to rule itself during the first long 'prey cycle', the Kingdom of Torres has always been reliant upon the ancient faith of the Ocean God to lead their decisions. Such an old faith that is based on the instincts of the beasts of the world has been integral to why the kingdom has rarely been viewed as anything other than 'primitive'. Cycling through periods of history where inter-village savagery and warfare is commonplace and encouraged, the Torresh druids never saw a reason to focus upon 'civilisation'. Their faith teaches them that instincts and natural living is purer and more appealing to the great Mersmerro.

Pride and Prejudice

Over the centuries Torres has been continuously exploited by ally and enemy alike. Their thick cypress forests, black oak plantations and peat bogs have been raided by loggers and cutters for centuries; no matter how savagely these interlopers are punished for such indiscretions. It seemed that anyone venturing to Torres was looking for something to take away from their lands. No one came without their own greed to sate and the tribes of Torres were too weak and fractured to do anything about it.

Eventually the Torresh peoples were forced to make some allegiances with outsiders in hopes of stopping this constant encroachment. No one else on the continent could understand the faith of Mersmerro; they were all so absorbed with the philosophy of the All Father that they could not see the purity of Torresh instincts.

Choosing first to ally with Lorn due to the lower number of Lornish infidels coming into the kingdom in comparison to Dardarrian ones, they were soon introduced to the fire giants of Aphaxus and the dark elves of House Xuan. Several tribes of troglodytes and lizardfolk began hiring themselves out as mercenaries to their new allies, bringing coin and resources back to the kingdom and setting a precedent for all of the tribes to sell the use of their swords to the highest bidders.

When the soft folk of Dardarrick refused to send help to the tribes, when the pirates of Parrennax began assaulting them from the sea, the druid-priests saw that the Lion of Rardarri had no interest in brothers, only in itself. Left without the aid of their neighbours, the



lizardfolk withdrew from the sea, hiding deep in their swamps until the preying saurian sailors left to seek richer pickings.

If their earlier transgressions were not enough, the 'prideful and arrogant' Dardarrians went to war with Lorn, economic allies of Torres and demanded the lizardfolk abandon their sworn treaties else be regarded as foes. The druids said that Mersmerro had once again put on his prey mask so the lizardfolk retired in neutrality, only striking back against those who trespassed too deeply into their northern marshes.

Fists of Fury

After Dardarrick's fourth victory over the Lornish and the rise of their blasphemous theocracy, Torres was soon plagued with pilgrims of the Cult of Praxious – the foul betrayer that Mersmerro battled in the Chaos Times. Still wearing the mask of prey, Torres had a very difficult time dealing with these heavy-handed missionaries. The Torresh peoples remained devout believers in Mersmerro and would not falter in their faith, earning violent displays of the power that the clergy of Praxious wielded. Once again Dardarrick

showed its conceit towards another true faith and shamans in the deep swamps began to notice the stirrings of the great spirits, being awoken to dire anger by the Brazen One's transgressions. Druids warned the Torresh to prepare for the predatory cycle change that would come soon.

The change in the world came just a few years later but by some trick or slyness the pilgrims were recalled, just before the druids could make sacrificial examples of them. The predator's mask was firmly on Mersmerro's face and the frustrated Torresh became hungry for vengeance as well as the blood of infidels.

A new leader, a cunning greenscale lizardfolk mercenary named Bloodak, took up Mersmerro's predatory psalms and toppled the soft human King Xoatl from his throne. Taking it for his own, King Bloodak slowly fanned his peoples' vigour and zeal, using his own experiences as a hired soldier in Lorn to weld the Torresh tribes under one banner. Instead of falling upon themselves as they once did when the predatory mask was in power – they listened to the words of Bloodak and instead turned their desires northward.

By Lizard King Bloodak's command there would be no conflict amongst the tribes; no hunting of trespassing soft folk and no more wars over hunting or spawning grounds. He would hold them in check long enough to drive them mad with ravening hunger and only then launch a holy jihad that Mersmerro himself would be proud of...

IMPORTANT SITES IN TORRES

There are the few permanent towns within Torres. The few which exist are built on places that will not subside into mud or be washed away in the seasonal monsoon floods. Of course, there are countless smaller nests and nomadic camps found throughout the kingdom but they are not important enough to list here.

Merstorres, Holy Capitol of the Torresh People

The heart and capital city of Torres, the name *Merstorres* is translated from ancient Draconic to read '*the water's soul*' and the people of this kingdom take its meaning very seriously. Merstorres is one of the few standing cities in the entire kingdom and most definitely the largest. Built on an artificial island of stones gathered from the banks of the Walker River, the city is a marvellous combination of living fauna and mortal-crafted constructions. All visitors are required to bring a new stone or rock when they visit, to expand its glory.

Huge living trees grow into a canopy over the city, hanging vines snake in and out of multi-tiered stone buildings built from colossal carved blocks and anything that has not moved in over a week is covered in soft green moss. Animals move freely in the muddy streets and a back alley mugging is far less likely than an accidental snake bite. The city has no walls and is a sprawl of smaller wooden structures scattered around the bases of the six enormous ziggurats, constantly growing with new tribes coming to listen to the new ideology of Bloodak.

The highest of the ziggurats, Merstoch, is said to be built over a mystical freshwater pool. Myths say that the crystal clear water is where Mersmerro dove out of this world and into the next, making the pool and its waters sacred and the temple protecting the most sacred place in Torres. There are always 100 Fanged Knights protecting the Merstoch, all tirelessly waiting on the steep stairs to dispatch infidels who come to defile the magic waters inside – or serve as willing sacrifices to the god to encourage his return.

Population: 25,000 (65% Lizardmen, 15% Human, 10% Other Reptilians, 5% Elf, 5% Miscellaneous).

Government: As the capital city, the King rules directly from his royal ziggurat.

Defence: The city is defended by thousands of trained warriors and 15,000 martially-minded citizens. It has no official watch or guard and the population is expected to work out most of its own issues by the holy laws of Mersmerro.

Commerce: Imported goods from Lorn and Aphaxus are common

in the marketplace bazaars. Torresh timber, peat and lye are common exports as well as several types of rare herbs, dyes and animal products.

Organisations: The clergy of Mersmerro are easily the most powerful faction in all of Torres and are concentrated here in the capital.

Ssint

The 'floating city' of Ssint is the most important port of call for anyone wishing to deal with Torres. Located in the middle of a flooded peat bog adjoining the Walker River delta, the city is built atop a metre thick layer of bundled reeds, over which reed matting is spread. Since the peat is three to four metres deep underwater, the entire city actually floats on the surface, held up by the buoyancy of the packed rushes. These become waterlogged over time, so new bundles are constantly cut and stacked on the top layer, to keep above the water. Homes are similarly made from woven reed panels, which can be easily deconstructed and rebuilt as necessary.

To ensure that visiting large ships do not damage or weaken the floating island, only small hand-rowed craft are allowed to dock at the sprawling 'harbour' at Ssint. This is a chaotic mess of boarding, disembarking, loading and unloading at all hours of the day and night but it is essential to get goods from their allies this way – since few roads cross the swamps and it is risky to try to transport things by boat, even a shallow drafted one, if unfamiliar with the winding rivers and deadly animals that live there.

Walking around on the spongy streets can be disorienting and awkward at first but the city's inhabitants claim it keeps them 'more attuned to the Ocean'. During typhoon season however, the entire city is abandoned, since it provides no shelter against the tearing winds and torrential, lashing rain.

Unusually, some sharkfolk visit Ssint for short periods of time but only after dusk and only if the tide is in, since they need salt water to remain comfortable. The Torresh treat them with cautious respect but have little idea why the shark people come and sit cross legged at the ends of the piers, staring at things with their large bulbous eyes.

Population: 5,000 (40% Lizardfolk, 30% Human, 20% Other Reptilians, 5% Sharkfolk, 5% Miscellaneous).

Government: The city is managed by the eldest druid-priest of Mersmerro, currently a human named Born-Without-Scales.

Defence: The presence of sharkfolk is disconcerting for sailors but it is unknown whether this group would be willing to provide marine protection off the coast. A clan of estuary crocodilians protect the dock waters and the city itself is thick with tribal lizardmen warriors. Twenty Fanged Knights serve as the king's law.

Commerce: Lots of trading and negotiations for future exchanges. Some small scale merchants supply trinkets, food and carved ivory knickknacks for sailors.

Organisations: The Icti Guild is a group of crocodilian mercenaries who protect the docks, who of late have been throwing their weight around. A small group of gypsy River People are

normally found here, offering the services of their wheelships to transport large cargoes up the Walker River from Ssint to Merstorres or even farther.

Swordtooth Hill

Located to the north of the Great Black Wild, in a pestilent region of densely forested swamp, Swordtooth Hill comprises of a strange cluster of villages scattered around an ancient mound that rises out of the waters. The hill is a mass of ancient ruins choked with mud and overgrown vegetation. The villagers are servants of dark gods; snake worshippers and not allies of the Torresh people. These settlements belong to serpentmen – and they hate their lizardfolk and human neighbours.

Locals know better than to venture too close to Swordtooth Hill. The serpent people and their snaketongue servants are fearless and extremely territorial, attacking even large groups of lizardfolk warriors without hesitation. Those who have dared come close to the dark and evil place and lived to tell about it speak of some kind of monstrous thing that lives in the centre of the village – and the increasing number of serpentfolk scouts leaving the area has the Torresh wondering what the ancient devils are planning.



Population: 1,300 (70% Serpentmen, 25% Snaketongue Humans, 5% Miscellaneous).

Government: The serpentfolk follow the will of their cult leaders, the Scaled Sorcerers.

Defence: Every being living in the village is a capable killer, thus the village is extremely well defended.

Commerce: None except for the purchasing of slaves through the snaketongue cultists.

Organisations: A circle of seven Scaled Sorcerers that are in charge of keeping something, large, inhumanly evil and very, very powerful dormant under the ruins in the centre of the village.

MILITARY FORTIFICATIONS

These are the two major military locations found within Torres. The military presence of the swamps is far less structured and regular in comparison to other nations, relying heavily on tribal warriors to defend the region. Sometimes excess warriors, superfluous to the needs of the tribe, form a mercenary band and offer their services to whomever is willing to pay. Usually they find employment outside of Torres.

Altar of Scales

Home to 300 or more Fanged Knights and druid-priests, the ziggurat temple complex known as the Altar of Scales is found just inside the northern boundaries of the massive Sunrise Marsh. Built upon colossal pillars to stand over the murky water and reeds of the swamp, it is a massive platform with low walls and temple buildings surrounding an immense steep sided ziggurat. The entire complex is built of cunningly fitted cyclopean stone blocks, intricately carved with disturbing friezes.

The Alter of Scales is holy site for worshippers of Mersmerro. Beneath it live 1,000 enormous crocodiles called the 'Children of the Swamp' and can only be reached safely by traversing a gradually inclined causeway over three kilometres long. Whenever the faith of Mersmerro is in its predatory aspect, the druids bring sacrifices to the top of the ziggurat, which are then cut open and dropped 70 metres down a chute into the mud below, to be devoured by the holy beasts.

Within the ziggurat is a warren of tunnels and chambers, most of which remain secret, even to the druids who live within. The warriors reside in the outbuildings, using the open spaces of the platform to practice combat.

King Bloodak has decreed that only willing volunteers or captured infidels are to be sacrificed at the Altar and every 13th day another body falls down into the awaiting frenzy. Such displays keep the bloodlust up in the Torresh people; their belief that the sacrifices keep Mersmerro sated and pleased with their piety.

Swampholme

The only outside fort allowed to be built on Torresh territory, Swampholme is an outpost of the Lornish Army and home to 200 uncomfortable and homesick soldiers. Swampholme was built as

a show of trust between the two kingdoms early in their alliance but has since become little more than a punishment posting for insubordinate troops. The outpost is damp, foul-smelling and dangerously close to the vicious beasts that live in and around Lake Trogg. It is a horrible assignment for Lornish soldiers and everyone that comes up as being reported 'disappeared' could just as easily be a deserter. Either way, wandering off alone in the swamps of Torres means the soldier will not be coming back again.

NATURAL POINTS OF INTEREST

These are some of the noteworthy natural features of the Kingdom of Torres. Most of the nation is swamp, marshes and waterlogged forest, making every mile of it difficult and potentially dangerous to traverse. Hidden away in its thick foliage and backwater landscapes are numerous places of interest; lost ruins, ancient sacrificial temples and overgrown forgotten treasure houses. Lacking space however, these are the commonly known and less mysterious ones.

Lake Trogg

The largest body of freshwater in Torres, Lake Trogg is nestled between the undead-ridden Grave Marsh and the dark and sinister Great Black Wild. Long ago the lake was called an oasis in the middle of the deadliest parts of Torres and this is only half true – it is centrally located but it is not an oasis. It is home to the largest snakes, crocodiles and wyrms in the kingdom, all of which can feed upon unwary travellers who come to the lake to refill skins or canteens. Even the Lornish military presence, located just a few hundred metres from the water's edge, does not daunt these creatures and soldiers vanish beneath the deceptively placid waters all too frequently.

Sunrise Marsh

A shallow marsh that is fed by the end of the Goldpan River, Sunrise Marsh was named such for the glittering of gold flakes in the water and mud that could be seen when the sun hit it from its low angles. It was the only source of gold Torres had, a minor one at that, creating the gold-fishing village of Glittering Water to scrape it up from the muck and cast it into small icons of Mersmerro. When the Dardarrians used their arcane technologies to remove the gold from the waters far in the north, Sunrise Marsh lost its glitter and became home solely to monsters. With no sacred water-gold to make their religious tributes, the Torresh gained another grudge against their northern neighbour; something they will not soon forget.

Grave Marsh

The smallest of the mainland swamps, Grave Marsh is a northern stretch of still water and sulphur springs that befoul the entire area for miles in all directions. If the smell was not bad enough, the marsh is the resting place of hundreds of risen dead. Something in the foul waters calls the corpses of the deceased to rise and attack the living, resulting in the huge numbers of animal zombies and skeletons that stalk the dark waters nightly.

The Great Black Wild

The only jungle-like forest on the continent of Rardarri, the Great Black Wild is the enormous stretch of brackish swamp that dominates the eastern edge of the kingdom. It is thick with vegetation and hanging moss, turning slowly into mangrove swamp near the coast, making even boating through the area difficult. Few ever venture far into the Wild, for not only is it home to many poisonous snakes and even dragons but deep within its hidden heart something even more deadly exists, as the occasional bodies of interlopers hanging impaled on trees and branches seems to indicate.

THE HOLY DEFENCE FORCES OF TORRES

The Kingdom of Torres is unique in that it does not support a standing military of any real form but remains the most well-defended nation of Rardarri. This is in no small part due to the deadly terrain that is nigh impossible for an organised army to cross, whilst the population of Torres are used to the difficulties of travel and have intimate knowledge of the predators and other natural dangers of their lands. When danger threatens a Torresh community, the call to arms can bring two-thirds of adult population to the battle – a better ratio of warriors-to-civilians than in Dardarrick or Lorn.

To say there is no traditional army in Torres is a bit of a misconception. Under the recent rule of the King Bloodak, the various unemployed mercenary companies have been unified under one banner. Although they do not bear officer rankings or titles, they are a single cohesive force under the King's personal orders. Should he give the order for them to march on Dardarrick they would obey without question. Tens of thousands of human, elf, lizardfolk and troglodyte skirmishers would erupt from the muck of Torres to fall upon the enemy without a second thought, secure in their faith that Mersmerro would protect them or he would welcome them to his hall, the cycle of their reincarnation completed.

Willing to fight and die for the word of their gods, the Torresh civilian population is not to be discounted either. Over three quarters of the fauna in the swamp kingdom are predatory beasts, many of which have been 'domesticated' to serve as food and labour sources, which can be turned upon enemies if a nest or village is threatened. Combined with the sheer number of natural threats that stalk the marshlands, including dinosaurs, Torres is not a kingdom that needs to worry about a deep invasion into their interior.

Champions of Mersmerro, the Fanged Knights as they are called in ancient texts, are warrior priests. They act as the leaders of local defence forces and tribal warrior militias. The majority are lizardfolk and embody the nature of their god; slaughtering foes when the predator mask is in power (as it is currently), or protecting the homes and people of their villages when the prey aspect is ascendant. They are taught that their instincts, the holiest of gifts given to them by their god, must be followed in all things and that personal feelings should be secondary to the needs of Mersmerro.

PEOPLE AND PERSONALITIES OF INTEREST

Bloodak, King of Torres

The current lord of all lizardfolk and king of Torres, Bloodak is a huge, thick-limbed lizardman warrior. His beautiful emerald green scales belie a savage warrior that has devoted his entire life to fighting and the thrill of the hunt. Yet despite a bloodthirsty nature and his spear carved from dragon bone, he has the convoluted mind of a mystic and is a devout believer in the primal purity of Mersmerro – at least the god's predatory aspect.

Serving in Lorn for 20 years as a mercenary, Bloodak picked up the same anti-Dardarrick sentiments that are so common in Lorn. By the time he came back to Merstorres to dethrone the 'weak human king', he was utterly sure that every Dardarrian citizen was a debased and heretical creature not worth the stroke of a blade to kill.

Now carefully gathering the power of the Torresh tribes, Bloodak has set his golden slits upon punishing the people of Dardarrick. He would never risk an all out offensive with the Lion of the North but now that King Archiveldt has declared war upon Lorn, the Lion of Rardarri has turned its flank to the slaving jaws of his holy crusade.



Hessima Mul, High Druidess

Dark with the indigo tattoos of the Torresh elven tribe of Walker Bog, High Druidess Hessima Mul was raised to revere the water under her feet, that which fell from the sky and the waves of the nearby Ocean. As an adolescent she could control the crocodiles and snakes of the swamp and by the time she blossomed into womanhood she had memorised every recited scripture of Mersmerro.

Given up to the druids who did not particularly want her, she was sent on a pilgrimage to find spiritual purification. Driven by dreams she was drawn to the sea off Sandy Launch, where she discovered an ancient artefact in an underwater coral grotto – a trident made of white coral and clusters of pearl, which commanded the will of the Ocean's beasts. Suffering an epiphany, her overwrought mind saw the trident as her god's own weapon left in the cave for her to find.

She took the trident back to Merstorres and thinking to present it to Bloodak, she was beset by the Fanged Knights, each one claiming to be more worthy than her to carry such an artefact. She defeated each one with a single stroke, not long after claiming the title of High Priestess and accepting the role as Lord King Bloodak's most trusted advisor.

Amongst the other druid-priests however, a growing concern has raised itself. Whilst undoubtedly sacred to Mersmerro, the trident is clearly a weapon of the sea, not of the swamps; and has little purpose deep in the freshwater lands. Why it was found is unknown. All that can be said is that the druids feel a doom attached to the weapon and wish to see it removed from Torres as soon as possible, along with the obviously cursed druidess who bears it.



CHAPTER TEN

THE WILDLANDS



The western third of Rardarri is a land of dusty plains and scrubby savannah; hot and dry most of the year and eternally windy. It is not a nation but a collection of smaller territories that appear, grow, shrink and vanish. The boundaries of these territories are as fractious and transient as the shapes in a kaleidoscope, making no two trips into the region the same.

These are the Wildlands and they are aptly named.

This chapter looks at the 'nation' of savages and nomads known as the Wildlands, how it exists in relation to the rest of the world of Nuera and the Adventurers of *Wraith Recon*.

THE ORIGINS OF THE WILDLANDS

Little remains of the Wildlands history, only myths and legends. A millennium of nomadic savagery has washed away the origins of the peoples, memory of their heroes and stories of their deeds. Such knowledge is superfluous in the day-to-day life of the tribes.

A Myth of the Godsreach Mountains

In the time before the dawning, when the All Father wept to see war amongst the gods, the King of Beasts journeyed into the western plains. He ran amongst the herds of horses, danced to the tunes of the satyrs and wrestled with the giants. He was not just their god but also their friend and mentor. He told them it was alright to be bestial, joyous to live on instinct and he was good company.

Then the humans came. They upset the world, caused dissention and with them brought the conflict with which they had corrupted the gods.

Tainted by the touch of Praxious, these humans migrated westwards to find a new home – a place where their lies had not twisted friends to become enemies and equality still reigned. Seizing the lands that belonged to all, the Brazen Horde battled against anything or anyone they came across, countless thousands of 'those who were

not human' left as corpses in their wake. Anything they could rape from the land they did, leaving behind ruins of what once was.

The King of Beasts saw the greed and selfishness of the fanatics, wept as his children were butchered without need and men acted as though better than the animals. In his anger he wrenched open the vaults of the mountains freeing his darker children to combat the expansion of civilisation.

From the flanks of the torn mountains flowed the vengeful tribes; the goblinoids, orcs and ogres, who spread like fire across the plains. Their glorious charge at first washed away the humans like a tide and the King of Beasts was pleased that his savage children fulfilled the roles they were born to – the strong feeding on the weak. Yet this was only one part of the cosmic law, for when the strong conquer the weak, the weak bind together to become strong.

So it was with humans, who gathered behind walls and built towering cities from which they turned back the scourge. The infectious touch of Praxious soiled the tribes that fought them, who retreated into the mountains to build walled cities of their own. It polluted the land with their industries, turning verdant plains into arid deserts.

Shaking with growing wrath, the King of the Beasts stamped down the walls, which profaned the land, scattering the Brazen Horde into the desert and howled so loudly that the sands of the earth tore asunder with his song. From the rifts arose his purest children, those which stalked, stung and fed without thought. Yet the tenacious cunning of humans tamed the giant scorpions even as they were hunted down and eaten.

Understanding that the touch of Praxious would always lodge in the heart of humans, he plucked them up and unmade them, blending their souls with those of the giant scorpions. By doing this the King of the Beasts finally defeated the Brazen Horde, expunging the taint of Praxious and his civilisation, with the joy of slaughter, the simple pleasure of a full belly and the need to do no more than just live.

Thus arose the tribes of the Scorpionmen.



The Law of Survival

Saved from civilisation, the feral inhabitants stake out their territories, fight amongst themselves and pay homage to the King of Beasts by dominating those who are weak enough to beg for their protection or slaughtering those that stand in their way. Tribes grow and ebb like the ocean tides but one thing remains constant – the fight for survival.

Tribal leaders are known as khans. Some are physically powerful beings that rule with an iron fist, others are magically proficient priests or warlocks that unleash their arcane might upon their competitors. These chieftains lead their tribes into battle against one another to increase the size of their territory, enslaving those that they can and crushing others. Their lives are of constant preparation for warfare and the execution of it; just one of the reasons why the world calls the inhabitants of the Wildlands the ‘savage tribes’.

Over the centuries there have been tribes whose leaders gathered enough power to create ravaging hosts of bestial warriors bent on overthrowing all before them. Smaller tribes would be given a single offer to join a khan’s conquest or be razed by it. Eventually

the resulting horde grows to such a size that nothing remains in the Wildlands which can satisfy its ravaging need to kill and pillage – and ultimately they head east to prey upon the soft lands of Dardarrick.

The Cycle of Nomadic Swarms

Starting with the conquest of the earth titan Granix in 300 YBD, the Wildlands throngs have risen over a dozen times to try and overrun the Dardarrick border. All of these efforts were eventually fought off, but at great cost; scattered by suicidally powerful evocations of Dardarrian wizards or held back at strategic key points by the sacrifice of entire legions.

The most recent rise of a horde has been at the command of a mighty beast named Grynderomon, who calls himself the king of all ogres. From his original tribal base at the foot of the Godsreach Mountains this cannibalistic creature has led a growing army all the way to the western banks of the Goldpan River. Unlike most of the ravaging swarms that has come before it, this menagerie consists of all kinds of tribes whose leaders were fought and eaten by the ‘bloody-jawed king’. His host has reached 20,000 strong, over half of which are scorpionmen; the largest in recorded history.

With so much tension in the east of the great kingdom, Grynderomon's bloody march toward Dardarrick would likely have gone unseen until it was too late to respond, if it were not for the Scarfist Tribe. The Scarfists, a tribe of werebeasts that were set upon in their territory south of the Queen's Litter mountain range, had their tribal chieftain killed by the ogre king but refused to bow their heads to the horrible creature. Instead of joining the war tribe they rebelliously travelled downriver into Dardarrick, where they have joined with local military outposts to prepare them for the impending invasion.

The slow approach of Grynderomon's war tribe is a looming threat from the Wildlands but it is not the only one. New tribes of cynocs have begun small incursions from the southwest, a treaty between two large clans of goblins has formed a single entity around the Blood Harbour and the colony of Campenton has reported new movements from the Queen's Litter. To make matters worse, the chaotic nature of the Wildlands means potential threats appear daily.

It is hard to keep track of all of the dangers that spawn in the Wildlands but the border patrols of Dardarrick must constantly try to do so, lest they leave a hole in their defences and let the anarchy of the rabid tribes sweep into the great kingdom. Should the legions holding back the ferocious tide of savagery break, the western half of Dardarrick will be flooded with terrible creatures and the blood of those they slaughter.

IMPORTANT SITES IN THE WILDLANDS

The Wildlands are a dangerous and brutal place for outsiders but anyone that can live by the sword long enough to make a name for themselves can prosper. History has shown that the barbarous tribes of the Wildlands can become a nation of sorts for a few months at a time and this has left the whole area scattered with tiny reminders that not everything in the tumultuous land is ravaged by chaos and anarchy.

There are very few permanent settlements in the Wildlands, with most of the area's inhabitants roaming as nomads and vagabonds. Settling down requires defences against the other tribes and hordes that live here.

Ograt, Home of the Ogre King

Built in the foothills of the Godsreach Mountains, Ograt is a sprawl of stacked-stone buildings and warrens built by ancient ogres and giants to watch over the enormous gate leading to the mountain pass up the Venghattermount. It is oversized compared to the cities of men or warrens of goblinoids and is home to 100 or more ogres, giants and their kin. From the ancient stories about the King of Beasts, Ograt was built to house the protectors of the gods' journeys to the heavens.

Perhaps in deference to the King of the Beasts, the city is not walled or even protected from the outside world, as if it begs for outsiders

to try to test the city's mettle. The warriors of the city live for the thrill of the fight, eager to crush anyone foolish enough to try to storm their home. Even with the ogre king away on his conquest of the lesser tribes, his rule remains strong with his son on the throne in his stead. No matter what happens on the march across the Wildlands, Grynderomon can always return to his throne here in Ograt.

Population: 350 (55% Ogre, 30% Orc, 10% Giant, 5% Goblinoid).

Government: Currently ruled-in-proxy by Haranomom, blood son of king Grynderomon.

Defence: Every citizen allowed to live in the city is a dangerous monster that revels in fighting to defend it.

Commerce: None to speak of but slaves and loot from other tribes and conquests are occasionally traded by private parties.

Organisations: The various races that live in the city tend to segregate themselves, becoming gangs or mobs that constantly squabble amongst themselves.

The Blood Ports

A strange sight in the Wildlands, the Blood Ports are not a single city but a chain of several smaller villages connected by a single natural harbour. These villages are comprised of a combined number of goblinoid tribes who have run from the central territories to create this tense league of villainous creatures. It is a despicable place that is home to Parennaxian pirates, Wildlands refugees and cutthroats from all over the world. If someone is brave enough to try to live in the filth and shadows of these small towns they can make a small fortune in ill-gotten goods, services and trades.

Population: 7,000 (50% Goblin, 30% Orc, 15% Cynoc, 5% Miscellaneous).

Government: No one rules the Blood Ports. It is utter anarchy and survival of the fittest.

Defence: The Ports are protected by nature of its inhabitants. So many thieves, pirates and bloodthirsty killers in one area have little to defend itself from the outside – its threats come from within.

Commerce: Naval trade of stolen loot, slaves and other illicit goods and services.

Organisations: Each of the seven individual ports is dominated by a different tribe of humanoid. The largest rag-tag collection of ships in the Blood Harbour belong to the feared and esteemed High Chieftain Demarskus, calling them his 'fleet'.

NATURAL POINTS OF INTEREST

There is very little in the spanning plains of the Wildlands that could be counted as 'notable' but the few things that could be are something truly special. They are the only landmarks outside of territorial markings of the tribes that someone could use to navigate the Wildlands and are used by locals to know which way is which when surrounded by nothing but scrub grasses and rolling hills.

In addition to the locations noted here, a large number of pre-dawn ruins lie scattered about the desert, especially near the foothills of the two main mountain ranges. A fatal draw for curious sages,

the remnants are generally more than half buried in sand, making access difficult. Most tribes give them a wide berth, claiming them to be haunted and accursed.

The Dragon's Tail

Second longest river on the continent, the Dragon's Tail is a wide and slow flowing waterway that starts in the Godsreach Mountains and ends in the marshy delta at the border to Torres. It is named for the ancient myth that says that the King of Beasts took a dragon as his queen, the river being the rut in the earth that her tail left behind when she climbed to the mountaintops to leap into heaven after her mate. It is a bountiful river full of large fish and banked on both sides by thick reeds that occasionally house crocodiles that increase in number the closer it runs to its mouth. Running through four major tribal territories, the Dragon's Tail has been used many times as a method of faster travel through dangerous areas – and as a tactical advantage over unwary enemies.

The Queen's Litter

The mountain range to the high north of the Wildlands, the Queen's Litter is heralded in myth as the home of the storm titans; orphaned by their parents, the King of Beasts and his dragon consort. They are sharply jagged and cold peaks that are home to much more than just fabled storm giants. Everything that tries to make its existence in the Litter soon falls to raiding and hunting to survive.

The Godsreach Mountains

The tallest mountain range on all of Rardarri, the Godsreach Mountains are so tall that their tops are always cloaked in a wreath of clouds, giving them their legendary status as the physical stairway to the heavens. The tallest of the peaks, the Venghattermount, rises more than 10 kilometres into the sky and is said to be the spike that holds the skies in place to the world. As if such enormity required enormous inhabitants, the Godsreach is home to all sorts of giants, ogres and other massive beasts. Nothing so small as mere men can survive in the area – mostly due to the appetites of its larger inhabitants!

PEOPLE AND PERSONALITIES OF INTEREST

The following are all notable personalities that live in the Wildlands.

Grynderomon,

The Bloody-Jawed King of All Ogres

Large even for a normal ogre, Grynderomon was raised in the streets of Ograt to one day become a ferocious warrior of his bestial people. When he was big and strong enough he challenged the warlord of his tribe – his own uncle – for the leadership of ogre-kind. The battle was long and brutal but it was Grynderomon who emerged the victor. Eating his uncle's heart in front of all to witness, he became king.

His thirst for violence and the flesh of those weaker than he was what pushed him into the Bloody March. He began his conquest by subjugating three tribes of local orcs that his uncle had made pacts with, biting the heads off of their chieftains in as many days. The added strength of the orcs to his tribe gave him reason to believe he could deal with the eastern giants and so he did. Each victory fuelled his hunger for more and soon he will be pushing against the rushing banks of the Goldpan. He now waits for his enslaved hobgoblins to design a way for his massive horde to cross the river without catastrophic losses due to the currents, mud and the fact that few of his people can swim. When they do, woe betide those of the east.



High Chieftain Demarskus,

Goblin Commodore

Clever and sinister, High Chieftain Demarskus is an aging goblin who relies on his cunning and wickedly sharp mind to get him through the dangers of living in the Wildlands. Possessing 10 sailing ships of his own in the Blood Ports, Demarskus' goal is to one day be wealthy and powerful enough to sail safely to Parennax to live out his remaining days. His allies amongst the saurian privateers claim that the continent is a veritable utopia for someone of his particular proclivities.

He longs for the day where he can uproot his entire brood of 74 children and countless grandchildren and take them to a new land where he does not fear that his neighbours will soon eat them all. This is his real reason for raiding and piracy, cloaking his intent with a façade of greed, bloodlust and hatred – when all he really wants is for his huge family to be safe.



Brigadier Captain Reid Burrisson,

Commander of Campenton

The commander of the colonists living in the Dardarrian colony of Campenton, Reid Burrisson once believed his position was some form of punishment for something he must have done to his superiors. He could not be more wrong. He was chosen to lead the settlement because of his history of dealing with wild threats and having the respect of his soldiers. Campenton is a first attempt at colonising the Wildlands from the northern shores and its success or failure will go far in deciding if Dardarrick can ever expand peacefully into the unclaimed lands of the west.

The Brigadier Captain is a stout man that has grown a thick beard braided in the dwarvish style to better fit in with many of his soldiers and to fight back the bitter cold of northern winters and the icy winds blowing down from the Queen's Litter. He is a firm but jovial man who enjoys hearing tales from outsiders, a facet of his personality that largely led to the alliance between the colony and the Northwinder tribesmen. Without his unflinching smile and willingness to aid others in the name of the king, the colony would surely have been overrun by orcs or worse by now.



SAVAGE TRIBES OF THE WILDLANDS

Although lacking any formal military, there are dozens if not hundreds of vicious nomadic peoples that roam the Wildlands trying to survive in the hostile desert and rocky savannahs. Most are just a few families that stick together for survival but some have grown into powerful entities that have managed to stake out large tracts of territory for their clan, tribe or horde. Those living in the Wildlands must fight to stay alive, no matter their sex or race – making everyone and *everything* potentially dangerous.

Grynderomon's Blood March

The largest of the ravening hordes to ever rise in the Wildlands, the Blood March is mostly made up of ogres and orcs from the Godsreach Mountains and the countless scorpionmen that the ogre king has conquered. What began as a few dozen companions on a hunger-driven rampage in Ograt has blossomed into an army 20,000 strong eager to despoil Dardarrick. There is nothing in the Wildlands that can stand up to this force. With the Dardarrian armed forces stretched thin by its foes, maybe nothing in the great kingdom will be able to stop it either.

The Crimson Eye

Numbering nearly 100 Cyclopes, the Crimson Eye is a savage tribe that lives on the northern island located in the Fang Straits. Based out of the ancient ruins of Bladesfell, the creatures float out on primitive rafts to raid vessels travelling through the Fang Straits. Those sailors unaware of the island's inhabitants sometimes foolishly land there, a generally fatal mistake since Cyclopes warriors are more than a match for most ship crews. Even the dreaded saurian pirates of Parennax watch their bows when drawing near to the Crimson Isle, despite knowing that 1,000 years of treasure looted from passing ships lies piled in the ruins.

Twilight Laughter

The savage tribe of cynocs that are singlehandedly responsible for pushing the Dardarrian border back to the Goldpan River. Twilight Laughter is a collection of cynocs and summoned demons that worship the dark gods of the Mortessal pantheon and not the King of Beasts. Upon the command of their demon binding priests they stormed the walls of Fort Vigilant and in a single night an entire legion and its dependants was butchered. The tribe now use the fortress for their twisted and horrible debaucheries.

Northwinders

One of the few nomadic human tribes in the Wildlands, the Northwinders is a degenerate warrior culture that lives on the snowy eastern peaks of the Queen's Litter Mountains. They are wary of outsiders and have a deep hatred for orcs, which is how they have managed to become loosely allied with the Dardarrians at Campenton. The soldiers of the colony fought alongside the Northwinders against a local orc uprising and earned their trust, giving the barbarian tribe reason to occasionally come down from the mountains to trade and socialise with the Dardarrians.

Scarfists

Once a strong tribe, the Scarfists are all werebeasts that were recently forced to abandon their territories on account of Grynderomon's expanding horde. They are devout followers of the King of Beasts but they are aware of Dardarrick's strength and have chosen to fall in with the great kingdom for the chance of gaining revenge for their leader's brutal death. Although warily tolerated by the Dardarrick garrison at Westwatch, a large degree of suspicion and some hatred exists between the two. The Scarfists have no love for the kingdom and will likely turn on the legion at some point in the future... if they survive the approaching conflict.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CAMPAIGNS & MISSIONS



The basic *Wraith Recon* campaign is designed around sending wraiths on Special Forces style missions. Their objectives can be varied and diverse, from simple reconnaissance to assassination. However, an entire campaign need not limit itself to special ops work. The Adventurers could also begin to become embroiled in kingdom politics or uncover clues to a deeper, more despicable plot underlying the outbreak of war.

This chapter describes how to craft *Wraith Recon* missions and helps the Games Master to shape his campaign to bring out the best in his players and make a very memorable epic worthy of veterans everywhere.

THE MISSION ASSIGNMENT

Mission assignments are the collective term used by Spellcaster Command for the individual deployments of a Wraith Recon squad. In less militaristic language, the Mission Assignment is the scenario and its corresponding objectives.

Using the following design structure makes designing missions, or rather *scenarios*, an easy job. Once a Games Master has run through a few Mission Assignments, they should be able to design one in 10 minutes. All that is needed is the premise for the mission, for which random tables have been provided; a few memorable Non-Player Characters; and a suitably evocative location. With these, the rest falls naturally into place.

A mission assignment consists of several distinct sections. These are as follows:

- Ⓢ **Pre-Mission Briefing:** This is where the Wraith Recon operatives are told of their upcoming assignment and given the broad details of the mission parameters. They will be told what general type of mission they will be going on, how many individual segments they will be responsible for and any mission-specific details they should have. A Team Leader will need to be chosen at this time.
- Ⓢ **Equipment Requisition:** Having heard what the mission should entail, the Wraith Recon operatives can then equip themselves accordingly.

- Ⓢ **Pre-Deployment Check:** Ready to go to the location of the mission assignment, the strike team has one last chance to ask questions of their commanders or of Spellcaster Command before being deployed. Any special equipment SpellCom feels the Wraiths should have will be given to them at this time.
- Ⓢ **Deployment:** This is where the Wraith Recon strike team is transported to the mission assignment site. There are several ways this can occur depending on the mission and the priority level of the Wraiths involved.
- Ⓢ **Mission Segment Solution:** The meat of the mission assignment comes in the form of a number of mission segments that must be accomplished for the assignment to be successful. From solo-segment assignments to multi-tiered/multi-segmented ones, the Wraiths must deal with them.
- Ⓢ **Exportation:** Once the mission segments have been completed (hopefully successfully) the Wraith Recon operatives must find their way back to headquarters. The details of this are sometimes part of their pre-mission briefing but depending where they are deployed they are often on their own.
- Ⓢ **Post-Mission Debriefing:** This is the aftermath of the mission assignment. It includes the return of unused additional equipment, the curing of ailments and the praise of successful missions.

Each of the steps are covered in this chapter in the order in which they are supposed to occur in a game session dealing with *Wraith Recon*.

Pre-Mission Briefing

The initial appointment of a mission assignment to a Wraith Recon team is probably the most important part of the whole process. Knowing that the terrain they are going to face, the enemies they might encounter, the distance they will travel and the specific type of task they must perform are all invaluable for selecting equipment. Knowing what weapon to bring or which type of clothes to pack could be the difference between failure or success.

The first steps in arranging for a pre-mission briefing is to determining the three most important pieces of information – where, what and how.

Game Preparation

To make sure that the narrative aspect of a mission assignment briefing goes smoothly, Games Masters using this chapter to put together their own missions, are encouraged to do so before they sit down with their *Wraith Recon* team. Answering questions can be difficult if the Games Master has not yet determined what the answer would be.

Additionally the pre-mission briefing could be printed out in advance, saving Games Masters from delivering long monologues and repeatedly answering questions since the players can refer back to the briefing document at will.

Such preparations can also be valuable documents to be saved in the *Wraith Recon* service file, for future perusal to rekindle fond memories.



Where is the mission taking place?

The first thing to decide is where the assignment is to take place. The Games Master can roll or choose a nation and location on the following table.

1D10 Roll	Nation/Region	1D10 Roll	Location
1	Dardarrick	1	Castle
2	Dardarrick	2	Cave
3	Lorn	3	Fort
4	Lorn	4	River/Lake ²
5	On the Sea	5	Ruins
6	Torres	6	Shrine
7	Torres	7	Temple
8	Under the Sea ¹	8	Town
9	Wildlands	9	Village
10	Wildlands	10	Wilderness ³

¹ This result will take the team somewhere under the coastal seas around Rardarri. However the majority of the mission need not be in the water itself, perhaps in an air-filled sunken ship or a sea cave complex.

² If the region is on or underwater, either roll again or treat as an island.

³ Wilderness implies an unoccupied area suitable to the region, desert, forest or mountains for example

What is the goal?

The next thing to determine is what style of mission assignment the team is being sent upon. The Games Master can roll or choose a mission type on the following table.

1D100 Roll	Type of Mission	Mission Specific
01–05	Reconnaissance	Investigate an individual, their history and contacts.
06–10		Map out a building, settlement or region of wilderness.
11–15		Research the location or history of an item or place.
16–20		Scout out a potential threat without engaging it in any way.
21–25	Retrieval	Acquire a hidden or guarded item and return with it undamaged.
26–30		Collect covert message from an informant or spy.
31–35		Extract specific information from potentially hostile source.
36–40		Kidnap a specific individual and return with them alive.
41–45	Escort/Protect	Carry an important object from one place to another undamaged.
46–50		Ensure that an important individual reaches a specific destination alive.
51–55		Guard an important location from infiltration or assault.
56–60		Rescue a captured or wounded ally and bring him back alive.
61–65	Elimination	Destroy a specific being or group of beings.
66–70		Destroy a specific item.
71–75		Destroy a specific location.
76–80		Destroy a specific piece of information.
81–95		Roll twice, mission starts as first roll and changes mid way into second.
96–100		Roll again, mission starts as roll indicates but is a betrayal or trap and the team must escape capture or imprisonment.

How many segments is it?

Once the *where* and *what* have been answered, the Games Master must determine how long this assignment is supposed to be. Measured in mission segments, the following table can be used to choose or randomly determine how involved this mission assignment should be. The more mission segments the longer and more risky the mission will be, with little chance of rest or recuperation if within hostile territory.

2D6 Roll	Mission Segments in Assignment
2	1
3–4	2
5–6	3
7	4
8–9	5
10–11	6
12	7

Wraith Combat Techniques

Being able to kill enemies quietly is a staple skill required by Wraith Recon operatives, vital for removing vigilant guards or wandering patrols, which cannot be avoided in any other way. Whilst killing is often sub-optimal due to missing guards being noticed, it can sometimes give the wraith a brief window of opportunity to complete their objective.

To reflect their ability to disable unsuspecting enemies the following new Combat Action and Combat Manoeuvre are presented.

Ambush – New Combat Action

An ambush is a stealthy attack from cover. It can only be used on opponents who are completely unaware of the attacker's presence. Any successful melee attack made with an ambush action automatically receives the benefit of a Choose Location Combat Manoeuvre.

Kill Quietly – New Combat Manoeuvre

Opponent is unable to cry out or otherwise raise an alarm. If the attack inflicts a Serious or Major Wound, the victim will automatically fail his Resilience roll. Kill Quietly can only be used on a surprised opponent and only on the first attack against them.



Specific Mission Requirements

Some mission assignments will have specific requirements, to which the Wraiths must adhere if wishing to succeed. These are purposefully vague to allow Games Masters to better shape their own missions but could be made as detailed as they need them to be.

The consequence of failing a requirement should have long term effects. For example, leaving a witness alive on an Elimination mission may mean that the existence of Wraith Recon becomes known by an enemy, or might lead to that NPC later recognising the Adventurer responsible and later denouncing, attacking or spying on him.

1D10 Roll	Special Requirement	Detail
1	No Evidence	Nobody must know or even have suspicions that a mission ever occurred.
2	No Killing	Non-lethal violence only.
3	No Magic	No enchantments, save the Omnicix Crystals (which are not magically detectable) may be taken.
4	No Weapons	Nobody must be harmed in any way during the mission.
5	No Witnesses	Anyone witnessing or coming into contact with the team must be eliminated.
6–10	None	—

Equipment Requisition

This part of the mission assignment process is where the Wraith Recon team arranges for any specific weapons, armour or equipment they will want for the mission, as it was described to them in the Pre-Mission Briefing. Players should consider their requirements carefully since after requisitioning has been completed, there are no further chances to change their load-out.

Details on what a Wraith can requisition are covered in the *Arming a Team* chapter.

Of course the original briefing details may be flawed or perhaps deliberately sabotaged. Games Masters who wish to reflect countless centuries of real world conflict, are encouraged to make sure one or two points in every pre-mission briefing are wrong – whether it be distance to travel, availability of transport, date of attack, location of deployment, numbers of enemy present and so on.

With experience Wraith Squads will hopefully start to plan for such problems. Indeed, regular flaws in military intelligence can become entertaining fun as players try to anticipate what the cock-up will be *'this time'* and watch the Games Master pull the rug out from under them from unexpected directions or even have an occasional brief which is 100% accurate!

Pre-Deployment Check

Once equipped and ready for action, the Wraith Recon strike team reports to their commanding officer at Spellcaster Command to get any final instructions (this is a good time to spring Specific Mission Requirements on them), ask important questions and receive any mission-specific equipment.

Should the squad have any last minute questions to ask, the *team leader* is permitted up to three plus their Improvement Roll Modifier, 'yes or no' questions. This limit reflects the short period of time before deployment and the fact that the commander is always very busy. It is specifically codified here, to ensure the mission does not get bogged down by an endless series of enquiries, which the Games Master might not wish to answer.

The 'yes' or 'no' format of questions helps prevent unnecessary revelation of detail but a kind Games Master may elucidate a little, in order that players do not misunderstand the curt answers. The Wraith Recon commander will freely reply with 'I don't know' if

that is the case. Once these questions, if any, have been asked the team will move on to the Deployment procedure.

Deployment

The process in which the Wraith Recon squad is transported to where the mission assignment is to take place, the Deployment step can be very fast or very slow depending on the mission's need for secrecy, expedience or resource management.

To determine what form of travel will be utilised by the Wraith Recon team, the deployment range must be decided first. How far the mission is supposed to be from Spellcaster Command will determine the potential methods of deployment.

Several issues are taken into consideration when planning a deployment. Firstly is that each Wraith Recon squad is oversubscribed. There are far more backlogged missions than there are teams to execute them. So SpellCom, where possible, provides the fastest or most efficient method of travel available. Outside of Dardarrick this may not always be possible, since rapid transport can draw unhealthy amounts of attention.

The Limits of Magical Deployment

Teleportation in Nuera, at least that known by Dardarrian sorcerers, requires the enchantment of two portals between which the teleported travellers can safely travel. For the ranges required to even cross the kingdom, this is an extremely costly creation and is only possible by the innovative application of an entire Omnicix crystal within each portal linkage.

Thus whilst SpellCom has the power of forming these gateways, it only maintains a handful of portals within the kingdom itself and never outside it. These link Fort Brazen with Pierceling,

Sentinel Keep, Southwatch and Riverspire. Wraith Recon missions travelling outside Dardarrick generally use these portals to reach the border quickly, before beginning the mundane deployment assigned to their mission.



Each location of a mission has its own table to roll upon or choose from to determine transport type as follows:

Domestic Dardarrick

Missions that take place within the boundaries of Dardarrick are easy to reach and are often not considered high arcane priority for transporting Wraith Recon teams when conventional travel can

suffice. However, Dardarrick itself is a huge nation, which can take a considerable time to cross.

1D6 Roll	Transport Type
1	Air Drop
2	River Travel
3	River Travel
4	Overland Travel (Fast)
5	Overland Travel (Fast)
6	Portal-Link

The Kingdom of Lorn

Missions heading into Lorn are going to need to be either careful and slow if penetrating an area near the border, or very rapid aerial drop if further into the hinterlands; the latter itself a risk since often the air drop is spotted as it crosses enemy territory, inevitably attracting attention in the region the team arrives in.

1D6 Roll	Transport Type
1	Air Drop
2	Air Drop
3	Overland Travel (Slow)
4	Overland Travel (Slow)
5	River Travel
6	Sea Voyage

The Kingdom of Torres

Missions going into the hostile theocracy of Torres have their deployment severely limited by the natural geography of the landscape. Most of the terrain is open marsh or swamp with very few overland routes save for a handful of causeways, travel upon which is difficult to hide. In the south and west of the country flooded forests, mangroves and jungles limit aerial deployment. The best form of deployment remains going by boat.

1D6 Roll	Transport Type
1	Air Drop
2	Air Drop
3	Overland Travel (Slow)
4	River Travel
5	River Travel
6	River Travel

The Wildlands

Missions taking place in the chaotic lands of the Wildlands are normally overland expeditions, which require either stealth or excellent diplomacy skills to bypass the fractious tribes. The vast distances involved often make air drops mandatory, unless the target area is near the coast, at which point a naval deployment becomes viable. The lack of large rivers in the Wildlands is a severe hindrance.

1D6 Roll	Transport Type
1	Air Drop
2	Air Drop
3	Overland Travel (Fast)
4	Overland Travel (Fast)
5	Overland Travel (Slow)
6	Sea Voyage

On the Sea

Missions that are targeting something on an ocean, such as a vessel or remote island are difficult to reach because there are no roads and mobile targets are by their very nature always moving.

1D6 Roll	Transport Type
1	Air Drop
2	Air Drop
3	Air Drop
4	Sea Voyage
5	Sea Voyage
6	Sea Voyage

Under the Sea

These rare missions are normally located in the inshore waters of the Rardarri coast or its islands. Reaching them can depend on a great many factors, not least of which is which nation that stretch of coastline belongs to. If the target zone is very close inshore, then overland travel may be possible only requiring a swim at the end. Inaccessible seas will probably suffer the same problems as On the Sea missions.

1D6 Roll	Transport Type
1	Air Drop
2	Air Drop
3	Overland Travel (Slow)
4	Sea Voyage
5	Sea Voyage
6	Undersea Voyage

What the various Deployment methods mean are as follows:

Overland Travel (Slow) – This is the old fashioned method of travel...hiking and climbing. It takes the Wraith Recon team upwards of weeks to get where they need to be going. This might be the slowest form of deployment but it ensures that the Wraiths can stay hidden or secretive while they travel.

Overland Travel (Fast) – This deployment places the Wraiths on horseback, in coaches or as part of a wagon caravan. They will usually reach their destination in less than a week. They might draw more attention to themselves in this fashion but clever Wraiths can cover for anything.

River Travel – Taking a boat or raft, the Wraiths use the region's extensive web of rivers to reach the destination within days.

Sea Voyage – Travelling around the coast by ship can take weeks but is sometimes the only method of transport available to reach the area. It is often only a route which takes several stages. Sometimes the vessel will not actually stop at their destination, forcing the team to abandon the vessel by small boat or swim to the shore.

Undersea Voyage – It is rumoured that magic artificers have created several ships capable of sailing underwater. Journey times are similar to that of normal sea voyages but can be done more covertly. Travelling by this claustrophobic form of transport can be a unique and scary experience.

Air Drop – Arranging for the use of an Air Cavalry unit to take the Wraiths directly to the mission assignment, air deployment is very effective and extremely fast but can often raise an alert if the flying beasts are spotted en-route. Air Cav can also be used as pickups at the conclusion of a mission, especially if operational secrecy is no longer required.

Portal-Link – Using one of the teleportation links usually indicates a domestic mission fairly close to the location of the portal. The target zone could still be several days' walk or ride away but the first displacement eats up most of the distance.

Mission Segment Solution

The core action and adventure of *Wraith Recon*, mission segments are where the Wraiths have their skills, training and equipment put to the test. It is, in laymen's terms, the meat of a *Wraith Recon* scenario.

Each mission segment is a self-contained series of events that make for a good few hours of game play. They are designed to help the Games Master pace his game, permitting one or two segments to be completed per gaming session. Spinning these together behind the scenes, each segment should blend naturally into the next to give the players the impression of a story-arc.

Although each segment represents a task that should be completed to succeed in the overall mission assignment, they need not take the simple form of a linear plot. Sophisticated missions can be designed giving players several paths to achieve each stage, or indeed allow them to complete the tasks in whatever order they desire.

The mission segments themselves are made up of potential Complications. These range from possible witnesses to death traps. A well handled complication will emphasise the excitement and challenge of a mission and what could pose a problem for the Wraith Recon team if they handle things poorly or, in some cases, not at all.

Every mission segment should receive 1D3 Complications, rolled on or chosen from the following table.

1D10 Roll	Reconnaissance	Retrieval	Escort	Elimination
1	Obstruction	Obstruction	Obstruction	Obstruction
2	Obstruction	Obstruction	Obstruction	Obstruction
3	Obstruction	Obstruction	Trap	Trap
4	Obstruction	Trap	Encounter (easy)	Trap
5	Trap	Trap	Encounter (easy)	Encounter (easy)
6	Trap	Trap	Encounter (standard)	Encounter (standard)
7	Trap	Encounter (easy)	Encounter (standard)	Encounter (hard)
8	Trap	Encounter (standard)	Encounter (hard)	Ethical Dilemma ¹
9	Encounter (easy)	Encounter (hard)	Ethical Dilemma ¹	Ethical Dilemma ¹
10	Encounter (standard)	Ethical Dilemma ¹	Ethical Dilemma ¹	Ethical Dilemma ¹

¹ After rolling this Complication, roll again on the table to see what complication the ethical dilemma refers to. Only one dilemma can occur per mission segment.

Encounter (easy/standard/hard) – The Wraith Recon team are entering a situation which could, if they are not careful, end up placing their mission at risk. Encounters need to be crafted as something suitable for the situation, thus a Games Master should consider the following:

- ☉ Attitude: Is the encountered being friendly, hostile, surprised, suspicious or completely oblivious?
- ☉ Sapience: Is the encountered being an animal, monster or member of an intelligent race?
- ☉ Location: Does the encountered fit into that area; are they native? Do they work, live or recuperate there? If not, they need a reason why they are there.
- ☉ Purpose: What task is the encountered being performing?
- ☉ Bypass: How should the encounter be dealt with? This can be dynamic depending on how they are approached.

Thus an encounter could be anything from a hungry dog in an alleyway looking for food, to an entire tribe of scorpionmen camped around a temple seeking a ritual sacrifice.

For example the disguised team penetrates a forbidden cult temple to Praxious. Just as they prepare to burn the place to the ground the door opens an old priest enters. He is mildly surprised to find people inside the temple at that time but has come to make his own ritual obeisance. Since they are dressed in the robes of the faithful he is not suspicious and exchanges a few words. If the wraiths engage the old man in a little light chatter he will happily continue on his way, completely oblivious.

Games Masters should encourage their players to deal with encounters with a minimal of combat. Once fighting starts, most missions will quickly become untenable as people are alerted to enemies in their midst, troops are sent to hunt down the team and guards reinforced in sensitive locations. Realistically a squad of men, no matter how skilled, cannot prevail against overwhelming numbers. As much, if not more, dramatic tension can occur during attempts to sneak past a sentry or fast talk past an official than in mindlessly butchering an entire garrison.

Of course, some encounters are going to be combat orientated, at least from the onset. But Games Masters should reward chutzpah and lateral thinking.

Relevant skills to bypass an encounter are Culture, Disguise, Influence, Insight, Language, Oratory, Seduction, Sleight, Stealth and Streetwise. The objective is to remain unnoticed or unremarked.

The challenge rating of the encounter Easy, Simple, Standard/Routine, Difficult or Hard reflects the skill of the opponent who must be overcome in an opposed test. Easy challenges are adversaries with skill about 40% less than the Adventurer, Simple ones 20% less, Standard/Routine opponents have roughly equal skills, Difficult foes have skill of at least 20% more and Hard enemies 40% more.

Obstruction – The Wraith Recon team have stumbled upon some kind of obstacle or difficulty that will require the use of the Wraiths' skill training and chosen equipment to get through. These are normally physical challenges which require unopposed checks of the Acrobatics, Athletics, Boating, Brawn, Drive, Resilience, Ride, Shiphandling, Swim or Track skills to overcome. To reflect the fact that some challenges are tougher than others, use of the Difficulty and Haste Modifiers Table on page 31 of the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook* is recommended.

For example, a Wraith Recon squad must climb a cliff face to reach their objective. Since this is a natural obstacle the Games Master requests each team member to succeed in an unopposed Athletics test in order to get to the top. On their return however, rain has made the rocks slick, posing a significant challenge. So the Games Master penalises the Athletics test, making it Hard (-40%).

Trap – The Wraith Recon team are about to walk into a situation that hides a perilous device or prepared ambush. These differ from Obstructions, by representing an active application of a skill against them, whether it be the use of stealth to hide an ambush or the cunning of a well made mechanical trap. To survive or avoid the complication requires an *opposed* test of the Adventurer's relevant

skill. Common skills challenged in this way are Perception, Lore (Regional) or Survival to notice something is wrong or Evade to dive clear, occasionally followed up by a relevant second skill to diffuse the complication, such as Mechanisms to bypass an unsprung deathtrap for example. The challenge rating of such tests is usually $1D6+4 \times 10\%$.

Ethical Dilemmas – These are situations that place Adventurers in a position that challenges their ethics, balancing the wraith's desire to complete their mission against a morally questionable deed. Whether or not the Adventurer performs the deed or not is completely up to the player, these are acts of free will that can provide a great deal of suspense, as well as gritty Adventurer development.

The form of the dilemma is up to the Games Master to orchestrate but they are tied to the complication(s). For example, during an Elimination mission the team is about to kill the target, a man who has been passing on Dardarrian troop movements to Lorn, when the man's six year old daughter walks into the room. Do the squad kill the man in front of the girl, lead her from the room first, or kill her too as a witness?

Imagination is required to introduce a valid dilemma into certain situations. Coming up with dilemmas of overcoming obstructions are particularly tricky, these mostly revolve around the abandoning of stealth to rescue teammates who get into difficulty or aborting the mission to find medical aid if a team member fails to climb, jump or swim properly.

If the game is using Passions the Games Master can tap these to create especially tough morale choices (see Using Passions on page 24).

Traps Large and Small

Traps are built for a range of purposes but generally focus on raising an alarm, capturing interlopers, or killing transgressors outright. Building such traps require the Mechanisms or Engineering skills, the former to create small devices designed to affect a single target, whereas the latter concerns massive constructions that are capable of incapacitating small groups.

When a trap is built it gains a challenge rating equal to the Mechanisms or Engineering skill of the maker. Thus a pitfall trap constructed when the craftsman had an Engineering skill of 65% would thereafter use that value in opposed tests rolled to see if the pit can be spotted, evaded or disarmed. Even if the craftsman later increases his skill, the trap remains unchanged.

Only mechanical traps or those built to be undetectable on crafted items cost money to build. Alarms cost the crafter's skill in gold pieces, imprisoning traps cost 10 times more and death traps 100 times more. Alarms and traps built in the wilderness from natural materials cost nothing but the time needed to set them up.

Alarms are simple and often subtle affairs, which when triggered, ring bells, drop flags and the like. Since they are not meant to cause harm, they are often fast to set up.

Ensnaring traps tend to be based around pits, cages or heavy sprung limb snares. Save for the latter they do not normally injure the victim, the objective is to keep them trapped until the owner can see what he has caught. If it possesses one, victims gain a single chance to 'disarm' the locking mechanism, in order to break free. Otherwise they must overcome the armour and Hit Points of the material it is constructed from.

Deathtraps deliberately try to kill the victim. The amount of damage that can be inflicted is based upon the maker's skill. Traps can normally only be used once before they must be manually reset. Master crafters however can design mechanisms powered by clockwork springs or large weights that can reset themselves several times before they run out of power.



Maker's Skill	Deathtrap Damage	Maker's Skill	Number of Uses ¹
1–10%	1D2	1–100%	1
11–20%	1D3	101–110%	2
21–30%	1D4	121–130%	3
31–40%	1D6	131–140%	4
41–50%	1D8	141–150%	5
51–60%	1D10	151–160%	6
61–70%	2D6	161–170%	7
71–80%	2D8	171–180%	8
81–90%	2D10	181–190%	9
91–100%	3D8	191–200%	10

¹ This is the number of times the trap can be triggered until its mechanism needs to be rewound or reset.

Overall Mission Success

Once the Wraith Recon team has finished all of the mission segments of the assignment it should be pretty evident whether or not they have been successful in the overall mission.

If it was a Reconnaissance mission assignment and they have the information they need, they were successful. Perhaps they could have been a little more sneaky and a little less 'kill them all' but the information was the target.

A Retrieval mission is successful if the target in question was acquired and brought back to SpellCom for the de-briefing. Hopefully the target is unharmed or undamaged but bringing anything back is better than coming home empty handed.

Escort/Protection missions are only really successful if the object or person survived. Some degree of expediency might be considered if facing overwhelming numbers but they better have taken considerable casualties themselves, or be considered incompetent or perhaps even complicit!

Elimination missions have the easiest degree of success. Is the aforementioned target destroyed? Yes? Well, the mission was successful. If it somehow survived the Wraith Recon team's attacks they had better have a good reason for leaving a job unfinished, unless ordered to do so by SpellCom.

Exportation

When a mission has been completed (or determined to be a failure), the Wraith Recon team must then return to Spellcaster Command as fast as they can. This often is as easy as the team requesting an aerial extraction but might be more involved if those assets are not available or they need to clear the area with no observation.

Exportation may itself be the climatic high point of the mission. Completing an objective may, in the process, alert the enemy to their presence. This can lead to an exciting pursuit, the team being forced to hotfoot it through territory crawling with foes hunting them. Making tactical choices of what route to take, sneaking past or killing sentries and taking desperate gambles by leaping off cliffs or throwing themselves over waterfalls can bring a memorable finale to the scenario.

Whether they are forced to hijack a boat, steal a team of horses or bribe a local wizard to help them – the Wraith Recon team must return to Fort Brazen as soon as they can.

Post-Mission Debriefing

Once the Wraith Team has returned after dropping off any people, information or items that they were responsible for gathering during the mission, they head into the debriefing chamber to talk about what happened on their mission to the Wraith Commander.

If successful, the team will be applauded for their service and if the mission was particularly successful they may even be promoted. Other than that, their reward is merely a few days of healing and rest whilst Spellcaster Command figures out what to do with the team next.

If they failed, gods help them, the Wraith Commander will take turns explaining exactly what they did wrong during their mission (he will have a thorough report from the sorcerers observing it through the SpellCom system) and the cost and consequences of their failure.

Requisition Returns

No matter how the mission panned out, Spellcaster Command wants their assets back in the vault where they belong. This means that any requisitioned magical equipment (not Basic Wraith Equipment Packages or personally-owned items) that was given out for this mission assignment is expected to be returned. Permanent enchantments are then deconstructed to allow its crafter to regain the POW invested into it. Temporary enchantments that are expended upon use, such as potions and ammunition, are simply allowed to lapse.

Anything that was requisitioned that is supposed to be returned, that does not find its way back into SpellCom's hands before the next mission assignment, is considered to be 'erroneously lost'. Items that fall into this category go onto a list in that particular Wraith's personnel file and are held against his future requisitions.

In game terms, every item on a Wraith Recon Adventurer's 'erroneously lost' list counts as one negative level of 'rank' for the purposes of the amount of equipment they can requisition in future mission assignments. Such black marks can be erased over

time if an item was a genuine loss but such mistakes permanently cripple the arcarnists manufacturing these items, so the matter is a serious one.

CAMPAIGNS

A series of sequential mission assignments will soon develop into a campaign. Whilst one shot scenarios can be great fun, the ongoing development of a full campaign can weave together missions, Non-Player Characters and scattered hints into a highly enjoyable storyline.

Campaign Structure

Like any good book, a well designed campaign should have a start, middle and end. Whilst this sounds obvious, many campaigns founder at their beginning due to a lack of a suitable introduction to capture the spirit of the world and setting. A disgruntled group of players who did not understand the game rules, or failed to fall into the Special Forces mindset are less likely to want to continue playing *Wraith Recon*.

Likewise, campaigns might start strongly but due to a lack of direction, or repetitive scenarios, slowly lose their vigour and eventually fizzle. Most campaigns die a natural death over time, so the Games Master should wrap up a storyline with a spectacular conclusion, so the players not only gain closure to their Adventurers' story but may remember Nuera with such fondness that they will want to return again.

Designing a Campaign

Before plunging players into their first mission the Games Master should decide what his storyline will be. What he wants them to see and experience as they travel the world; and what is their motivation for being members of *Wraith Recon* in the first place.

Objective

This is what the Games Master wishes his players to ultimately achieve. It does not have to be as straightforward as 'Save the World' but can be far more subtle or psychological in scope. Arriving at the objective should be the conclusion of the campaign so it needs to be paced accordingly. Examples include:

- ☉ Save Dardarrick by defeating the threatening nation and be lauded as genuine heroes.
- ☉ After destroying a neighbouring nation, uncover a plot that reveals that a respected Dardarrian leader or superior officer was responsible for maliciously starting the war.
- ☉ Hunt down clues suggesting the existence of a super weapon and either destroy it before it is brought on-line or turn it against its makers.
- ☉ Send the Wraiths to perform increasingly unethical missions until they can no longer stomach the job and are forced to go rogue and flee.
- ☉ At the climatic apocalyptic battle, discover the entire Rardarri war was orchestrated by an overseas third party, who then turns up en-mass to finish the job.

- ☉ Realise the king is psychotic and be forced to swap sides or perhaps even assassinate him, in order to stop the genocide.
- ☉ Destroy a particular faith or cult on the verge of incarnating their god, or perhaps just after.
- ☉ Comprehend that the sorcery which supports Dardarrick comes from an evil source and be forced to destroy SpellCom.

Scope

Once the story-arc has been decided, the Games Master should then decide where the *Wraith Recon* team will be sent as part of reaching the ultimate objective. Whilst a great deal of fun, a campaign need not be a globetrotting affair. For instance, a campaign with the simple objective of militarily overthrowing Lorn may remain solely within Lorn and Dardarrick, with no need to wonder further afield.

Scope covers more than simple terrain. What races and monsters will be stumbled upon is also important, as is the scale of their missions. A plain scouting assignment with the occasional hobgoblin encounter is a different kettle of fish to putting on a suit of magically enchanted full plate and mowing down entire armies.

Motivation

The reasons why the Adventurers join *Wraith Recon* are very important. These drives can be used by the Games Master to give the first missions more relevance, perhaps granting an edge in whether they succeed or fail. As time passes these motivations will evolve becoming a framework upon which new missions can be fixed.

Depending on how the Adventurers were generated they may share the same back-story, giving a reason d'être for their assignment to the same team.

- ☉ Excellence – The Adventurer wishes to be the best of the best.
- ☉ Vengeance – The Adventurer wants to make those responsible pay.
- ☉ Patriotism – The Adventurer desires to serve his country.
- ☉ Hatred – The Adventurer simply wants to bring down those he dislikes.
- ☉ Love – The Adventurer is doing what will best protect his loved ones.
- ☉ Honour – The Adventurer might not like what he is doing but he will do his duty.

What Makes a Good Campaign

The art of crafting a good campaign is often dependant on the most difficult thing to engage, the emotional investment of the players for their Adventurers. To do this successfully can be very rewarding but requires effort from the Games Master to take a sheet of numbers and abilities and breathe life into it.

The best method is to ensure that the game does not just descend into a series of combat encounters. Whilst patriotically kicking the hell out of enemies can be fun for a while, it soon grows stale, especially if there are few risks to the Adventurer. Since wraiths are

highly trained and very well armed, it is often expected that they be able to ward through enemies in a wave of blood.

In fact it is often better for a Games Master to show players, especially those not familiar with *RuneQuest*, that Adventurers are very vulnerable, perhaps by overwhelming them with superior numbers or a large monster with a big damage bonus. Surviving against the odds in such a combat, can embed the first hook. After this there are a number of things that can be done to make the campaign a memorable one.

Risk of Death

Whilst it is often a frustrating experience to lose an Adventurer, especially one that has a long history, the occasional death can really highlight the risks that Wraith Recon teams face every time they depart on a mission. To increase the sense of danger they face, Games Masters can restrict the availability of healing to the team; perhaps SpellCom has no knowledge of the Regenerate spell for example. A wraith should concentrate on stealth, trying to avoid engaging in combat if at all possible but doing it quietly if necessity requires it.

A great aspect of *RuneQuest* is that you cannot judge the difficulty of a fight from the appearance of an enemy or its species. Size of course is always intimidating but is no indication of how capable they are. Players will quickly realise that the reputation of a Non-Player Character is far more important than the fact that it is a lizardman. Such uncertainties should help to reduce the incidence of fighting, since picking a fight is a gamble, potentially a fatal one.

Games Masters should not bring Adventurers back from the dead if they can help it. Sometimes in fact, a glorious death is preferable to a fudged resurrection. Not only can the Games Master play out a tear jerking burial ceremony, recounting the glorious deeds the Adventurer performed but it makes every successful mission that much more of an achievement. Additionally it can harden the resolve of the surviving Adventurers to complete their ultimate objective, or at least begin to build a hatred of who, or what, was responsible.

Wrong and Right

‘We’re the good guys, right?’ is a question often asked in times of war, the bodies of dead civilians lying at the feet of soldiers. In most roleplaying games it is a given. The enemy is bad and must be killed at every opportunity and you are rewarded for your righteous tenacity.

Wraith Recon is a little different – if you want it to be.

In the beginning of the campaign, the two dimensional nature of big bad guys should be reinforced with lots of propaganda and rampant patriotism. Of course the Lornish are evil bastards, they have been assaulting Dardarrick for centuries! Hobgoblins eat babies and all humans in the hegemony are repressed slaves! This is what all Dardarrian’s know, they have been listening to the same cant from the Hierophant for generations.

If you like such simplicity and do not wish to upset your players with moral ambiguities, then you should leave things as they stand.

If on the other hand you like the drama inherent in moral ambiguity then, after a while, start undermining the bad guy cultural stereotype.

As the wraiths spend more time in enemy territory they should start to see the situation from the Lornish perspective. After all it was the Dardarrians who invaded them, in fact the last three wars all started with Dardarrian armies invading Lorn. Perhaps the Lornish are fighting their own battle against undead too, a curse they believe was sent by Dardarrian wizards...

Giving the enemy their own *humanity* might show that even the most monstrous of alien races has a society and culture, which although different, is just as right as anyone else’s. A lizardman who eats the bodies of the dead, might seem horrifying to humans, yet it might be the highest sign of respect the lizardfolk can show to their enemies.

Portraying a long term enemy in this way can challenge the Adventurers moral certitude, bringing a wealth of possibilities for dissent with SpellCom or even the Wraith Recon Commander, especially if the war goes badly for Dardarrick and the king orders attacks on civilian populations in retaliation for supposed Lornish assaults.

There are several effective ways of gradually converting the world from black and white to a Nuera full of shades of grey. For example, capture the team, only to have the commander of the fort in which they are imprisoned request Wraith Recon’s aid in destroying a monster threatening his own people. Not only might this plant a seed of respect for the captain but when he honours his side of the bargain to let them go and return their magical items, they might believe him an honourable person too. After some further incidental meetings he might even become a source of information and perhaps even shelter for the team. Whilst technically an enemy, since he will always fight to defend his nation against Dardarrick colonialism, he may become a firm friend too.

The ultimate objective is to progressively reveal that Dardarrick is just as bad as its neighbours, then push the wraith team members to their ethical limits. Whilst a little different from the high fantasy slaughter of monsters and bad guys, it might be a refreshing change to actually consider what it means to be a soldier.

Develop Relationships

Whether it be the cute arcanist who is the voice at the other end of the Omnicix link, the tally-ho hell-for-leather Air Cavalry pilot who always flies their aerial drops, or the gruff artificer who always complains when they return their equipment broken, a collection of supporting Non-Player Characters can bring a campaign to life.

A Games Master can also bring enemies to life, although interactions between the team and their nemesis may be few and far between unless your players are willing to accept diplomats, flags of truce or neutral territory.

Not everyone needs to be developed in full depth; a cast of half a dozen memorable personalities is enough to create a soap opera of interaction with the players. Perhaps the nice female sorcerer in the research library is holding a candle for one of the Adventurers, which has made the artificer jealous. The next deployment may find the unwitting recipient of the librarian's love discover his ammunition has somehow lost its enchantment. Once the ball starts rolling the players will generate the ongoing storyline driving the development of the cast.

Things can come to a head when a long term Non-Player Character is framed, kidnapped, or even killed. If this happens to someone the wraiths liked, it can be a strong motivation for action or revenge. A long term enemy is not something to be squandered either, since a well developed enemy can evoke wonderfully irrational responses from Adventurers. An honourable enemy can be an interesting figure, a cultural bridge. If the time comes to dispose of them, then have the enemy regrettably challenge the Adventurer who had the best rapport with him. It will make for a very moving scene!

Remember that not all enemies are bad guys and not all friends good guys either. An ally can be the target of the Adventurer's hatred, just as much as any foe. If you provide the personalities, the players are sure to provide the entertainment.

MINOR THREATS

The world of Nuera is a dangerous one, even for the mighty Lion of Dardarrick. The great kingdom is sitting atop the hill of civilisation, with everyone looking up at it with jealousy and envy. Some of these envious rivals are close and represent a constant risk, like Lorn or Torres but other threats lurk beyond the horizon.

These threats are too far away or too small to be a worry when overshadowed by larger enemies; only revealing themselves when the Lion is looking elsewhere. Small as they are, they remain a problem. They are like pests, nipping away at Dardarrick's heels. The great kingdom can handle only so many small bites before it becomes a much larger problem.

The following lesser threats have been included to provide a backdrop for the major events happening in Rardarri and what they could potentially mean for Dardarrick in the future. As such, they provide the source for possible mission side shoots from a campaign, or actually turn out to be the reason for the wars.

The Kingdom of Aphaxus

Located on the volcanic island continent of Sando, the Kingdom of Aphaxus is an ancient empire that has existed just as long as those created by the All Father. Home to the fire giants, the kingdom was formed when the black-skinned monsters claimed the lands of the continent's other main inhabitants – the pahhur dwarves. With tens of thousands of pahhurs serving them as a labourer caste, the fire giants have enjoyed centuries of idle rulership.

Over the ages the kings of Aphaxus have created trading agreements with outside nations. Sando is not a very easy landscape to live

Playing a 'Normal' Campaign in Wraith Recon

Just as with any roleplaying game setting, the information concerning the world of Nuera does not necessarily have to be used to run a campaign concerning the Wraith Recon strike teams of Dardarrick. The setting is a rich fantasy world that could easily become the source of countless 'common' adventures outside of the idea behind *Wraith Recon*. Nuera can be used as a setting for any number of other fantasy roleplaying campaigns if the Games Master desires it.

Here are several examples of alternate, non-*Wraith Recon* type, campaign hooks that readers could choose to use with the world information offered in this book:

The Adventurers could be mercenary sell-swords looking to profit from the ongoing military actions on the border between Dardarrick and Lorn. What if they are forced to cross paths with a Wraith Recon strike team? What if they are working for the Kingdom of Lorn and must fight a strike team sent against them?

The Adventurers could be from the impoverished Kingdom of Torres, leading food and resource raids on the southern border towns of Dardarrick. They might be good-hearted thieves just trying to get money and food to survive, or maybe they are hirelings of Lorn – which might place them at odds with Wraith Recon.

Counted amongst the hidden civilised populations in the Wildlands, the Adventurers are caught in the path of the growing savage tribes on the war path toward Dardarrick. Will they be forced into slavery by the savage tribes, or will they defiantly try to escape such a fate?

The Adventurers are sharkfolk from the undersea kingdoms. After seeing their overlord killed by fishermen the religious leader of the clan has declared war on the surface people. Being expendable, the Adventurers are sent to raid the fishing village. If they succeed they are promoted and given the change to launch a full scale war.

The Tomarsson fanatics often evangelise to the public of Dardarrick, sometimes with violent reactions to naysayers and verbal opposition to the theocrat's views. They tend to target lower population centres and small towns for their crusading and recruiting, giving a group of local Adventurers a chance to stop them long before the likes of Wraith Recon can deploy to do so.



upon and some goods are simply not available without trade. Aphaxusian galleys contacted several continents but it was with Lorn and Torres that the fire giants found allies who would not judge them for their slavery or try to battle them for their loot.

The Aphaxusians would have gladly tried to trade with Dardarrick as well but with the only Dardarrian port city so far north and the air so cold up there, the fire giants would rather not make the trip.

Because of their dealings with Dardarrick's enemies and not the kingdom itself, Aphaxusian ship crews returned to their homes with acquired prejudices and opinions about the Dardarrian people. The average Aphaxusian thinks of Dardarrick as a haughty human nation that is egotistical and self-absorbed. Dardarrick's firm policy against slavery does little to endear the fire giants, especially amongst the royal families – who keep thousands of pahhur slaves to do their every bidding.

The Kingdom of Aphaxus has never directly clashed with Dardarrick but there have been meetings involving the Lornish government and emissaries from King Bandovaur concerning a stronger alliance between the two nations. Such an alliance would not bode well for Dardarrick.

King Bandovaur and the Three Volcanic Efreets

The current king of the fire giants Bandovaur is a powerful warlord in his own right but his true strength comes from the three otherworldly advisors that he keeps; three efreets that sprang from out of nowhere. Arriving on the same day that three massive volcanoes erupted to bury thousands of acres of land under magma and ash, these three elemental villains urged Bandovaur to kill his uncle and take the throne of Aphaxus. With their help and backing he did so, plucking the crown from his uncle's severed head, placing it upon his own.

Bandovaur is actually a puppet of the three efreets; Buertan, Muarte and Countar. He believes that his decisions are his own, even the stranger ones that he cannot remember his reasons for. The king is physically powerful and not unintelligent; it is just that the eternal cunning of the efreets outmatches him. Why they have chosen to strengthen the ties between Lorn and Aphaxus is yet to be seen. When added to the growing number of pahhur infantry being left behind in Torres and the fire giant warriors forging a camp in the Wildlands – all at the behest of the efreets – something big is afoot on the continent of Rardarri.

The Pirates of Parennox

A continent that has always been home to Chaotic bloodlines, Parennox is the universal home to piracy and sea raiding of any type. Corsairs, slavers and simple raiders are as frequent as soldiers are on the mainland of Rardarri and they are the only power or government to speak of in or around Parennox. The various pirate factions once warred amongst themselves as often as they did the navies and coastal communities of their targets, sending hundreds of saurian sailors to a watery grave each year over the smallest of disagreements or misread 'flagspeak'. It was a dangerous life on and off their ships and the life of a Parennoxian pirate was often a short and brutal one.

Then came the forming of the Pirate Council in 624 YBD; designed by a trio of pirate fleet commanders whose names have long since

been lost to time. Any pirate captain that controlled three or more ships could send an emissary to the meetings of the Pirate Council – which met on board a huge black ship just off the northern coast of Parennox. The Council would then decide where each pirate fleet would be able to prey upon others that season. Any ship not flying that season's agreed-to pennant would be considered a viable target.

A coordinated pirate fleet from Parennox showed itself to be far more dangerous to outsider shipping lanes than anything the world had known before. A single saurian corsair cutter could not take on a Lornish naval war ship but a fast hit and run attack on a coastal community or trading vessel was suddenly a simple endeavour. Ever since the forming of the Pirate Council, sailing the Ocean without sufficient escort was like painting a target on the side of your hull.

Captain Half-Scarlet of the *Venerable Crimson*

Crewed entirely by former pit fighters from the Parennoxian crime-ridden city of Grut, the *Venerable Crimson* is a notorious corsair ship that is found plundering up and down the Rardarrian coasts. Its red sails herald a bloody end for any ship's crew that stands against them and every naval officer on the Ocean knows to watch the horizon for any sign of the ship. Piracy is always a worry but what this nightmare ship brings is far worse.

The *Crimson's* captain, a hulking brown-red saurian that calls herself Half-Scarlet, was raised in the Wildlands. She was sold to tribals before she can even remember and forced to battle all sorts of animals, people and things for the amusement of her owners. Having escaped only once in her entire life, Half-Scarlet ran east toward what she was told were the peaceful people of Dardarrick. When she arrived at one of the Spires they told her 'no savages allowed' and refused her entry. This so enraged the saurian that she killed both of the gate guards in as many breaths and began the long sad walk back to her village to take her beatings.

When she arrived however, the crew of a Parennoxian ship was raiding her village. She hated her owners but they were familiar and she killed many pirates with her gladiatorial training before being taken prisoner. The captain of the vessel – a huge red saurian bedecked with gold and silver – offered her a position on his vessel as a reward for such brutality. Over the next 10 years she took command of the boat and crewed it with likeminded saurians. Still bearing a grudge over the Dardarrians that turned her away in her time of need, she has never forgotten their words and keeps a mockery of them gilded above her cabin door – 'only savages allowed'.

House Xuan of the Black Covenant

Steadfast allies of the Lornish, the dark elves of House Xuan have made themselves a firm under-empire within the kingdom of Dardarrick's enemies. The nocturnal and sun-hating elves are the only direct connection to their homeland of Zritec and the other powerful dark elf houses that remained behind. Collectively known as the Black Covenant, the dark elf culture is one of self-reliance, corruption and darkness in every sense of the word.

The choosing of House Xuan to come to Rardarri and make allies with the first people they met was no accident. Of all the houses in the Black Covenant, House Xuan had the longest history of using deception, misdirection and treachery to deal with its foes. It was also the weakest – making it the perfect choice. Under threat of extinction the house was exiled, forced to sail colony ships to the continent of Rardarri in order to be the Black Covenant's representatives in their empire. House Xuan would be shadowy benefactors to their new allies for as long as it took to build up a proper underworld, then signal the Covenant when the time was right to launch a full scale invasion.

Of course House Xuan is somewhat resentful of this exile. Rather than build an empire for the other houses, they wish to expand and control the larger continent themselves, turning it into a new home as they begin to outgrow the cramped tunnels of Darkenholme. No matter the lies they speak or the promises they make to Zritec, current plans are to seize Dardarrick. The great kingdom is too powerful to take on alone, so House Xuan will happily use their allies to help them to topple the Lion before turning on the others.

High Priestess Llolita Xuan, Mistress of Darkenholme

The most powerful dark elf found outside of the caverns of Zritec, Llolita is a devout priestess of Mortessal and an expert on the undead condition. Once her minions had claimed they made a suitable home for her and her menagerie, a collection of underground beasts common to Zritec, she sailed on her private night-yacht and took command instantly of the puppet city of Darkenholme. Those Lornish citizens that dare to live amongst the dark elf of House Xuan are her playthings in mind, body and soul – even if they have no idea. She lives her life in exquisite excess, sharing her pleasurable activities with her allies for as long as they can survive her attentions.

She has a particular dislike for Praxious and his teachings against undeath and she cannot abide by the cult's existence. When word reached her pointed ears that Dardarrick had deposed the theocracy she began to think they had a spark of worth to her but was immediately disappointed to find out that they allowed the Hierophant to live. Sure that the cult lives on in Dardarrick's shadowy places, Llolita now spends her time figuring out how to fill those dark places with the walking dead. How better can she force the Praxious cultists out into the open to be dealt with?

The Rising Dead

A major problem that Dardarrick has recently been forced to face is an exponentially increasing number of undead rising on the eastern borderlands near Lorn. Ever since the dragon attacks, the risen

dead have appeared in alarming numbers. Zombies, ghouls and skeletons stalk the eastern lands, making more of their kind with each unfortunate soul they fall upon. A blight upon the former grain-belt of Dardarrick, these undead horror sightings began along the Dawn River in Eastermarck and Fisherslane but now have spread as far as the eastern outskirts of Graenwich.

If something is not done about the growing amount of walking dead in eastern Dardarrick, the war against Lorn will be difficult to wage. Troops moving through undead-littered lands to reach their intended enemies would be slow, dangerous and potentially counter-productive if they themselves died and rose as foes. In the age of the Dardarrian theocracy the Praxious templars would never have let such a threat get as out of hand that it has. This has not gone unnoticed by the populace and some people have begun to look for a return of their masked saviours to stem the tide of undeath...

Mox Muertiss, The Eastermarck Stalker

In the weeks following the carnage of the attacks on Eastermarck, a large and dark figure began to appear stalking the streets of the dying city and the surrounding area. At first the sightings were disbelieved as the terrorised hysterics of survivors but when relief troops returned from the area talking about a 12 foot tall undead giant the reality of the situation took shape.

Calling itself Mox Muertiss, the death giant seems devoted to the collection of souls from the dead and dying. Many of the local mindless undead have taken to following the elemental shadow creature, drawn to its necrotic power like moths to flame. Mox does not seem to have any allegiances or agenda other than to kill the living and steal their souls, being violently active on both sides of the border. As the undead are slowly driving themselves toward central Dardarrick, so too Mox will go – he can smell the souls as sharply as they can smell the fresh flesh awaiting them.

Other Threats...

The previous entries are just a taste of the problems and dangers that Dardarrick must deal with. They are not a priority at the moment but the longer they are allowed to grow unchecked the more likely that they will one day become one.

Dealing with these minor threats is often the role of Wraith Recon strike teams, who can go in and do what they must to stem the growth of a future threat before it becomes a big enough worry to warrant more widespread intervention. It might mean stirring up a problem here and there before its time but if it can be dealt with without adding to Dardarrick's problems in the long term, then Wraith Recon will have done its job.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE HEART OF TZARKESH



Wraith Recon Thirteen has been selected, trained and equipped for the time of conflict that will soon weigh heavily on Dardarrick. An undead dragon has been unleashed upon the eastern borders of the great kingdom, Spellcaster Command is in a frenzy over the conflicting information they are getting from the other teams and the manifold enemies of Dardarrick seem poised to strike at anytime.

It is time for Wraith Recon Thirteen to do what it was trained to do – and save the kingdom one mission at a time.

This campaign, *The Heart of Tzarkesh*, is an introductory, multi-staged mission assignment that not only helps Games Masters get used to the format and feel of *Wraith Recon* missions but also introduces the players to the world in which a newly formed Wraith Recon Thirteen will soon be active – perhaps revealing a horrible secret that may shape the conflict to come.

Some Guidelines

The format of *Wraith Recon* scenarios is fairly sparse. This is primarily due to the fact that most Special Forces missions are based around observation, stealth and combat – there is generally little in the way of personal interaction. Looking at examples from war movies, *Where Eagles Dare*, *The Dirty Dozen* or *The Guns of Navarone* being good examples, most of the interaction exists between the team members, little with superior officers and almost none at all with the natives when deployed in enemy territory for obvious reasons.

Thus what little of such interaction is performed during a mission has been designed to be handled in an abstract manner. Need to bluff a guard? Roll an unopposed Influence check. If a Games Master wants deeper roleplaying and soliloquies they can easily be appended to the mission framework. The use of passions and moral dilemmas are two powerful tools to encourage such play.

Similarly it is impossible to design a scenario that handles all possible eventualities. The mission format gives a few obvious solutions to problems but if players come up with ingenious plans or clever ways to bypass a test, then reward them for it. A team that does something completely unexpected, which radically diverts

from the mission outline as written, should be gently guided back to the plot, perhaps several steps down the line.

Lastly, always remember that the actions that Adventurers take have *consequences*. Attacking a guard, rather than sneaking past him, is all well and good. But if the kill is botched then his cries will alert others, probably jeopardising the entire mission. Similarly, showing mercy or acting with ethics should be rewarded later on if the wraiths are ever captured by the bad guys.

Mission Mechanics

To cut down on unnecessary details and make these campaigns scale for differing levels of competence, Skill Challenges are rated as Easy, Simple, Routine, Difficult and Hard.

Depending on the difficulty of the challenge, if the Skill Test is an unopposed roll, then the Adventurer may receive a modifier to their skill. If however, the Skill Test is an opposed test; then the opponent has a default skill equal to the Adventurer's own skill value, further modified by the difficulty. When rolling for an opposed test, the Games Master can simply ask the player what his skill is before rolling the dice.

The rule is designed to make the Games Master's life easier. If it helps to round the opponent's skill to the nearest 10% then they should feel free to do so. In situations where the team are cooperatively overcoming a foe or challenge, then use the skill value of the first Adventurer to act, as the opponent, challenge or trap's base value – rather than dynamically vary the value according to whoever is dealing with it at that moment.

Skill Challenge	Unopposed Skill	
	Modifier	Opposed Skill Value
Easy	+40%	Adventurer's -40%
Simple	+20%	Adventurer's -20%
Routine	None	None
Difficult	-20%	Adventurer's +20%
Hard	-40%	Adventurer's +40%

Games Masters who dislike using a scalable system can instead substitute a concrete value for an opposed challenge, using the following table.

Skill Challenge	Opposed Skill Value
Easy	40%
Simple	60%
Routine	80%
Difficult	100%
Hard	120%

Reading Mission Assignment Codes

All *Wraith Recon* campaigns follow a specific numerical code to explain when in the setting's chronology and publication series a mission assignment should occur.

X.X – The first numeral in the code is the campaign identifier. For example, all of the mission headers in this product will begin with a **0**, as they are all part of the mini-campaign 0. If the first numeral is a letter, that mission assignment or collection of assignments are not tied to the overall chronology of *Wraith Recon* and can be used whenever the Games Master wishes.

X.X.X – The second numeral is the assignment identifier. It shows which order the various mission assignments come in in a given mini-campaign collection.

X.X.X.X – The third numeral is the segment identifier, showing where it occurs within a given mission assignment.

Individual mission complications do not have a coded signature, they simply are listed with the mission segment they are a part of.

MISSION ASSIGNMENT 0.1: JUNGLE TERMINATION

Mission Start Date: 4th day of Harvesting, 1209 YBD.

Deployment Location: Southwatch, Dardarrick.

Deployment Method: Portal to Southwatch, Riverboat thereafter.

Primary Mission Goal: Travel to the Great Black Wild and eliminate Colonel Kurst.

Secondary Objectives: Observe lizardfolk dispositions and military deployment.

Expected Resistance: Incidental attacks en-route, lethal resistance in the jungle.

Useful Information: The swamplands south and east of Merstorres are unknown territory but avoided by natives. Mutilated bodies have been seen drifting out of the Great Black Wild.

Pre-Mission Briefing:

Wraith Recon Thirteen, your assignment is to track down a Colonel Kurst, a distinguished officer who once commanded a Brigade of the 5th Legion, the Southwatch Rangers. Three years ago, whilst on a mission to infiltrate the Torres marsh tribes, he vanished. Occasional scrolls written on fishskin, made it out of the more southerly swamps but of the man himself nothing was heard.

Then last year a disturbance was reported in the east of Torres, fighting broke out when several large mercenary tribes of Lizardfolk sympathetic to Lorn began displacing the locals. Obviously Lorn was attempting to clear a route around our fortifications at Searding Keep but we couldn't be sure of what was occurring until we received this last message from Colonel Kurst.

'We must kill them. We must incinerate them. Dwarf after dwarf, elf after elf, hobgoblin after hobgoblin, village after village, legion after legion. And they call me an assassin. What do you call it when the assassins accuse the assassin? They lie; they lie and we have to be merciful for those who lie. Those pillars. I hate them. How I hate them...'

We suspected that the colonel had turned completely native but since the Lornish push into the Great Black Wild was being effectively countered, we overlooked the situation. Unfortunately however, things have recently come to a head.

Four weeks ago, King Archiveldt was politely requested by the Torres ambassador to 'Remove his pestilent Viper from our eastern border'. Apparently the war, although unknown to those outside the jungle, is still waging fiercely, causing a great deal of unrest between the lizardfolk tribes down there. So we sent in Wraith Recon Eleven to pull Kurst out. It took them several weeks to reach the area and some of the images they sent back were disturbing. Whatever the Colonel has been doing, his methods had become... questionable.

Before we could recover more intel, somewhere on the fringes of the Great Black Wild we lost contact with the entire team. Their Omnicriex crystals went dead and we haven't been able to locate their position. However, the arcanist supervising the mission said that the last thing she saw was a man resembling Kurst, raising a stone mace and striking the head of the team leader. It is now believed that the colonel has gone rogue, whatever little remained of his sanity lost, living in those foul swamps and surrounded by savage primitives.

We have decided that Kurst is a liability and wish him to be neutralised, quietly, in order to prevent an uprising in Torres. Our reputation with the marsh tribes is poor enough as it is, without giving them an excuse to attack Southwatch or raze our pasture lands; the kingdom is close to famine already.

Your mission is to take the portal to Southwatch where you will be assigned a river boat and its chief. You are to then travel downstream into Torres and cut past Merstorres under cover of darkness. As it is currently monsoon season so the swamps are flooded, which should enable you to cut eastwards until you can reach Lake Trogg. On its far shore is the Great Black Wild. The route is long but you will be approaching from a different direction than Wraith Recon Eleven.

From there you must penetrate the jungle and using your own initiative, locate Kurst and... eliminate any further chance of misunderstandings. A dossier on the Colonel is attached.

This is not an easy first assignment for you but unfortunately you are the only squad we have available at the moment. I need not remind you that our kingdom has just suffered a terrible loss. With Lorn massing on our eastern border we cannot afford to have lizardman raids begin in the south.

Now go out there and do what you've been trained for. Dismissed!

The team are given a small, carefully sealed box as part of their special equipment. They are forbidden to open the package until specifically ordered to do so.

The dossier is next to useless, most of the man's service was in another branch of Special Forces, so most of the records are heavily redacted. What remains however is a small portrait of the officer and the general feeling that he excelled tactically and strategically, hence his eventual promotion to Colonel in the legions, which was when things began to fall apart.

Mission Segment 0.1.1: Southwatch

After traversing the SpellCom portal to Southwatch, Wraith Recon Thirteen have reached the banks of the Walker River. They will have to locate the boat assigned to them, extract the drunken sod commanding it and begin travelling downstream.

Complication 1 – Locate the Ride

You exit the tower belonging to the Brotherhood of Magnus, to emerge into a courtyard that overlooks the entire city. Built upon a low rise, Southwatch is a hill of civilisation dumped in the middle of a sea of gently rippling rushes. The flat marsh extends to the horizon in all directions and the only distinguishing feature is the mighty Walker river, which languidly flows past the wharfs below. Dozens of boats congregate in the water, a virtual floating town where they press tightly together near the bank.

The heat and humidity are unpleasant, as is the smell which wafts on the wind gently blowing from the south. Heavy grey clouds churn overhead, heavy with the threat of rain and you hear rumblings of far distant thunder.

Situation: This challenge gives the Wraiths an opportunity to demonstrate their urban skills. Firstly they need to locate the boat assigned to them and then find its pilot who has decided to get drunk in a wharf-side dive. The chief is half drunk, angry with being left hanging for a mission he knows nothing about. Convincing him to take them downstream on their covert mission may take some effort if the team is being close mouthed about their objective. Despite being disillusioned with the military however, he will obey a written order.

Objective: To find the boat and its pilot, Chief Zillips.

Primary Skills: Influence, Lore (Southwatch) or Streetwise

Influence (simple opposed): Ask a soldier to escort the team to the military dock; Request a soldier to find the captain and bring him back.

Lore (Southwatch) (easy unopposed): Know how to reach the military docks; Know which the taverns the Rangers hang out in.

Streetwise (simple unopposed): Find out where the military docks are; Find out the most likely tavern the captain is in.

Success: The team finds the boat and its captain without difficulty.

Failure: The team becomes lost and because of their suspicious questions are arrested by a unit of Southwatch Rangers. The team may either fight their way free (unarmed combat preferably) or lose a day, incarcerated in a damp riverside prison (sans equipment) before word arrives from SpellCom for their release. In the meantime however, they are faced with a brawl in their cell.

City dock patrol

- ☉ 1 Officer (routine)
- ☉ 5 Rangers (simple)

Drunken Sailors

- ☉ 1 Drunken Bruiser (routine)
- ☉ 5 Inebriated Sailors (simple)

Bonus Skill: Insight: Chief Zillips does not give a damn about the legion, is resentful of having his crew displaced and he fears the deeper swamplands.

The Boat

The boat assigned to Wraith Recon Thirteen is a type of vessel specially designed for Southwatch garrison. Named a Patrol Boat Ranger in honour of the troops who use it, the hull of a PBR or Pibber is made from a wooden frame over which a very thin skin of copper is riveted. This makes the nine metre long boat light enough to sail, row or most importantly, punt. Pibbers have a very shallow draft, perfect in the marshes, a small cabin to shelter in wet weather, a dismountable mast with camo-patterned sails and two small ballistae mounted on the prow and stern, with integral shields to protect the firer from missile attacks.

Most PBR's have a crew of five, a commanding officer and four men to row when necessary. The ballistae inflict 4D6 damage but take four Combat Actions to reload, although two men working together can both spend two actions each to reload in half the time.

Mission Segment 0.1.2: Native Aggression

The first few days drifting down river go smoothly, the local river traffic giving the Dardarrian Ballista Boat a wide berth. However the further downstream you go, the more resentful the looks from the passing lizardfolk become. The intermittent rain has swollen the river, flooding the marshes on either side. The dense reeds however, still remain thick and impenetrable for a boat the size of yours. Chief Zillips has been looking increasingly tense, disturbed by the lack of river traffic that morning...

This challenge is to simply fight off an attack by angry lizardmen.

Situation: The lizardmen, alerted to the team's approach, have hidden themselves and their canoes out of sight in the reeds. Once the PBR is almost level, four canoes rush out of the vegetation. The squad has a brief period before the lizardmen draw close enough to board.

Objective: The team must fight off the lizardfolk and rout them.

Complication 1 – Spot the Ambush

Primary Skills: Perception or Lore (Torresh or Swamps)

Perception (simple opposed): You remain vigilantly observing the river banks.

Lore (routine unopposed): You have good knowledge of the local flora and fauna.

Success: The team spots the ambush by noticing a river bird aborting its landing near the river bank. They have almost a minute to prepare for combat (giving six rounds of fire once they come into range) or steer the boat to the opposite bank and avoid combat entirely.

Failure: Dozing in the heat, the wraiths do not spot the ambush until the last moments. They have only three rounds before the lizardfolk reach them.

Complication 2 – Defend the Boat

Primary Skills: Combat skills

Success: If the team manages to kill or injure half of the lizardmen before the end of the third round, the lizardfolk give up, overwhelmed by the firepower.

Failure: Nobody ever finds their bodies.

Each Lizardman Canoe

- ☉ 1 Lizardman Leader (*routine*)
- ☉ 3 Lizardmen paddlers (*simple*)

Mission Segment 0.1.3: Night Paddle

Now deep within hostile territory you are nearing the capital, and only city of, Torres. The chief turns up a side channel, forcing you to disembark and drag the pibber deep into the unending beds of reeds. Cutting more of the vegetation the chief attaches it to the side of the



gunwales, using special straps designed for the purpose. He tells you to rest, since you must wait until nightfall to have any chance of passing the city unobserved. Fortunately the heavily overcast sky makes the coming night pitch black.

Situation: Using a PBR, whilst the best option to cross marshlands, is drawing unwanted attention. Sailing a Dardarrick war-boat past the capital is guaranteed to draw a violent response, from the insult alone. So the team need to creep past the city at night (neither lizardmen nor the Torresh humans can see in the dark), hopefully without alerting anyone of their presence. The river is well guarded however, several boats moored in the central channel to stop precisely this type of thing. The lizardfolk have also trapped parts of the river with (currently) submerged stakes.

Objective: The team must take their PBR past the city without being discovered.

Complication 1 – Sneak past the Guard Boat

Primary Skills: Boating or Stealth.

Boating (routine unopposed): You must steer the vessel dangerously close to the bank, far away from the sentry boat.

Stealth (difficult opposed): Keeping midstream you must remain silent whilst your slightly creaking boat drifts past the guard ships.

Success: The boat manages to slip past the blockading lizardmen without notice and continues to the next segment without difficulty.

Failure: You accidentally make a noise or brush against cracking vegetation. Alerted lizardman sentries light a warning flare and series of fires along the river bank (built from an exotic, brightly burning wood) will be lit. In the lurid pinkish light dozens of city defenders launch a wave of arrows and javelins at the boat.

Each wraith receives three (*simple*) missile attacks per round. They may use Evade against the first volley as they dive for cover. Those who survive to reach the ballistae pits or duck down behind the gunwales, receive 100% cover and cannot be hit. If however they try to shoot back or steer the boat crouched in the cabin, then they are fully protected save for the head. Since the missile fire is in partial darkness and at range, the attackers cannot select the Choose Location Combat Manoeuvre.

Complication 2 – Spot the Stake Trap

Primary Skills: Boating, Perception, Shiphandling, Swim by the person steering or in anyway paying attention to the river, rather than the bank.
Any one skill (routine unopposed): You notice strange ripples in the surface of the water ahead.

Success: The observer realises there is a series of hidden obstacles under the surface and the boat manages to avoid the trap.

Failure: The PBR is holed but does not sink immediately. A successful Brawn roll by three of the crew can free the boat from the stake but then a lizardfolk crewed guard boat will chase them and the chief will be hit in the head with a sling stone and collapse unconscious. If the squad can win a best of three opposed tests of the Boating skill (*routine*) they escape into the darkness. If they fail, the guard boat closes and they must fight.

Guard Boat Crew

- ① 1 Lizardman Captain (*routine*)
- ⑦ 7 Lizardmen Marines (*simple*)

Consequences: If caught by pursuing lizardmen, winning the combat allows the team to escape. Failing, they are taken prisoner and their wounds tended, before being presented for judgement to the King Bloodak – who could be convinced to let them continue with their mission if they reveal their intent to sort out the Great Black Wild problem.

Mission Segment 0.1.4: Grave Mistake

South of the capital the chief, who fortunately recovered from his head injury, looks at you for directions then noticeably pales as you order him to journey eastwards. He mutters something about a lot of good men disappearing into this region and never coming out again. Soon after he selects the largest tributary leading east and follows it for the next two days. The channel gradually narrows and much to your frustration, it ends at a rocky knoll, which emerges from the increasingly muddy, tussock filled region you have entered. Spotting what appears to be a ruin on the low summit, you climb the hill to gage the lay of the land.

Situation: Further travel east with the PBR is impossible; no *navigable* water exists to carry them further. So a call to SpellCom is necessary to arrange for new transportation. Unbeknownst to the team they have entered the western edge of Grave Marsh, an area that spawns undead creatures. With darkness a host of human and lizardfolk skeletons begin to claw their way free of the sulphurous muck.

Objective: The team's primary objective should be to avoid combat. Failing that the only goal is to survive long enough for assets from SpellCom to arrive. In their favour, the ruins retain a few walls to give some defence against being ganged up on or flanked. Additionally the skeletons are only armed with melee weapons and are not particularly skilled. Last but not least, SpellCom can provide some magical support.

Primary Skills: Athletics, Engineering, Stealth.

Athletics (hard unopposed): You can try to reach a section of wall, which cannot be scaled by the skeletons. Leaping across a section of wall whilst being chased might cause a skeleton or two to fall.

Engineering (routine unopposed): One time only, you can topple a rotted section of wall to crush some of the foes.

Stealth (difficult opposed): You can use the ruins to hide in however they seem to detect the living by some supernatural method.

Success: Those who successfully hide are ignored by the undead. Successful climbing will place a single Adventurer out of reach. Bringing down a wall will crush 5D6 foes.

Failure: Failure generally indicates that the undead have found or trapped the Adventurer, forcing them to fight.

The wraiths will attract a horrifying horde of 20 skeletons apiece. This may sound fatal but if they cannot avoid combat they have a few aces up their sleeves.

Firstly each skeleton is an *easy* foe. As long as they work together to limit numbers they face each round, they could potentially cut them down quicker than they appear. Secondly SpellCom will send a burst of Arcane Artillery, which will mow down 1D3+6 x10% of the *remaining* undead – they cannot catch all of them at once without toasting the Wraith Recon team too. Those facts combined with any dirty tricks the players themselves come up with should redress the balance.

If the fight starts to go very badly for the squad, allow the Air Cav to pluck their posteriors from the fire. Conversely if the team literally wipe the floor with the undead host, allow something truly scary rise up from the muck, a couple of zombie crocodiles for example.

MISSION UPDATE:

Wraith Recon Thirteen, you are requested to aid Wing Leader Killgash assault a Lornish Fortification adjacent to your drop zone. You are to take out any air defences whilst the Air Scouts

Here come the Cavalry

Towards the climatic end of the fight the Wraith Recon team will become aware of huge shapes soaring through the night sky, griffons and giant eagles. As they come swooping in to land amidst the bony wreckage, the riders let out whoops of praise and greeting. The Air Cavalry have arrived!

The air support sent by SpellCom are the double mounted 1st Squadron of the 3rd Air Scouts ('Reapers') and a full flight of the 8th Air Support ('Storm Bringers') led by Wing Leader Killgash himself, famed for his gung-ho leadership and tactical style.

With the eagles arrives a full staff of guards, engineers and cooks. Whilst the Wing Leader introduces himself there is a frenetic buzz of activity as a camp erected. Within an hour everyone is sitting about bone fed camp fires, drinking air-cooled beer and eating barbecued steaks. Killgash quizzes the squad about their active service but will be respectful if they remain close mouthed. An older man with a lean body, iron grey hair and an unusually scarred face, he is an effusive personality with a 'can do' attitude and radiates a feeling of utter fearlessness.

Killgash informs the squad that he will be carrying them to their next drop zone but en-route they have a little business to conclude first. If the team enquire about the boat, all Killgash says is 'We'll pick your boat up and put it down like a baby, right where you want it. This is First of the Third, Air Cavalry son, airmobile!'



provide cover. Once the weaponry has been neutralised, you are ordered to clear the area ASAP, before elements of the Storm Bringers pacify the target. After successfully completing this task, your boat will be delivered – allowing you to continue your primary mission.

Mission Segment 0.1.5: Death From Above

In the hours before morning the 'Reapers' mount up for heavy combat, a lance bearing rider and crossbowman or wraith per beast. Leaving the eagles, the entire squadron takes off towards the coming dawn. After several hours of flying over endless swamp the clear blue sky begins to lighten and the griffons drop lower. In the distance ahead can be seen what appears to be a dilapidated fort. With a series of hand gestures Killgash relays his battle plan and one of the crossbowmen raises a bugle to his lips and starts playing the Air Cavalry signature tune. With insane whoops the 1st of the 3rd drop from the skies to wreck havoc.

Situation: The Air Cav have been sent to help the team complete their next stage. However, their landing zone is an old fort occupied by Lornish troops, the crumbling remnants of an ancient alliance. These isolated troops are a potential threat to the mission, as the fort mounts a small force of boats with which they desultorily patrol the lake. SpellCom wishes to remove the Lorn presence, so has decided to take the opportunity to make a full assault. Although well trained the discipline and morale of the defenders is poor.

Objective: The fort is protected with several large ballistae (one per two wraiths) which must be neutralised before the eagles can launch their own attack. Using a dawn attack, Killgash is relying on the wraiths to take the defenders by surprise.

Complication 1 – Deploy from the griffons rapidly

Primary Skills: Acrobatics or Athletics.

Acrobatics (difficult unopposed): You leap from the back of the griffon, land and roll to your feet taking the defenders completely by surprise.

Athletics (routine unopposed): You rappel from the back of the griffon, giving the defenders a chance to arm themselves.

Success: The wraith lands safely.

Failure: The wraith misjudges the manoeuvre and lands badly, suffering 1D3 damage to a random location, armour does not protect. If the roll was fumbled the wraith ends up prone.

Complication 2 – Take out the ballistae crews

Primary Skills: Combat

Success: Killing or injuring half the crew will cause the remainder to flee down the steps of the tower.

Failure: Failing to drive off the crew will pose problems when trying to destroy the weapon.

Ballista Crew

☉ 4 Lornish Soldiers (*routine*)

Complication 3 – Destroy the air defences

Primary Skills: Brawn, Engineering or Mechanisms.

Brawn (difficult unopposed): You try to disable the huge weapon by bashing it with nearby tools.

Engineering or Mechanisms (routine unopposed): You use your knowledge to sabotage the weapon.

Success: The ballista is rendered inoperable and the eagles can attack in safety.

Failure: The metal reinforced weapon proves too tough to break (even its string is woven iron cable) and the wraiths must abandon the tower before the eagles start their attack run. Reinforcements from the tower man and shoot at one of the eagles (80%, 6D6)

damage), potentially causing the bird to crash and preventing the complete destruction of the fort.

Complication 4 – Escape the target zone

Primary Skills: Athletics, Ride or Swim.

Athletics (Simple unopposed): You grab a neatly coiled rope and abseil down the outside of the tower and take cover in the swamp.

Ride (hard unopposed): You wave to a nearby griffon and leap for its back as it passes by.

Swim (difficult unopposed): You dive from the top of the tower and into the waters of Lake Trogg.

Success: The wraith escapes unharmed.

Failure: Depending on the method used, the wraith messes up and suffers a catastrophic fall of 12 metres. If they can still move they can avoid the approaching doom. An incapacitated wraith can be helped by a friend (the griffons will not hang about to help). This is risky however and requires a *regular unopposed* Brawn or Swim roll. Failure means both are caught in the coming explosion.

Consequences: As the eagles pass over the fort they drop large glass spheres from their claws, each one containing a magical firestorm within the delicate container. Anything remaining in the fort is utterly destroyed in the roaring flames. Wraiths who have not escaped the target zone suffer the effects of a Large Fire each round until rescued or left to cook.

If the air strike is successful then Wing Leader Killgash will be enthusiastically delighted with the team and looks forwards to working with them again. The injury, or worse still, loss of an eagle will make him curt – a potential thorn in their sides in future encounters.

As the exhausted griffons rest on a rare patch of muddy beach, the remainder of the eagle flight arrives, the largest of the mighty birds carrying the PBR, which is dropped into the lake. Killgash invites the team to a celebratory party whilst his mounts recover the strength to fly back to the Dardarrick border. If they accept, a gentle nudge from SpellCom will remind them of their primary mission.

Mission Segment 0.1.6: Hostile Territory

Setting sail, the PBR soon begins to eat up the remaining distance to the Great Black Wild. The sun continues to shine, turning the boat into a hellhole of hot, sticky humidity, only incidentally broken by the relief of a passing downpour. Although the water looks tempting, the chief points out that it is home to some of the largest crocodiles and wyrms in Rardarri. You soon begin to wish that the lake crossing will soon end, so you can hide from the merciless heat under the canopy of trees again

Situation: Lake Trogg is a very dangerous place and will take three days to sail across. The heat is crippling and those wraiths

who insist on still wearing armour have a fatigue level of Tired due to the mild heat exhaustion they suffer. Their paranoia may be justified however. The pibber is attracting attention from large predators in the lake and unfortunately for the chief, his words of warning will not save his own life. Whether the team notice the two crocodiles stalking them or not, the chief will be the first one attacked. It is intended that the chief be dragged into the water and killed, leaving the second beast to take on the team.

Objective: To survive the crocodile attack.

Complication 1 – Notice being stalked

Primary Skills: Perception.

Perception (difficult opposed): Keeping alert in the punishing heat is tough but vital.

Success: The wraith manages to spot the wake of something large swimming under the surface and may call out a warning or grab his weapons.

Failure: The crocodiles attack the boat with surprise.

Complication 2 – Drive off the second crocodile

Primary Skills: Combat

Success: If the wraiths manage to inflict a serious wound on the crocodile's head or forequarters, it will get the point and swim off in search of easier prey.

Failure: If the crocodile manages to achieve a Combat Manoeuvre with its bite, it will choose Grip and drag the victim underwater. The other wraiths will have to continue the fight in the lake, if they are brave enough to dive in. The gripped victim, if still conscious, will need to switch to a dagger or something similar to continue the fight (see Unusual Combat Conditions on page 92 of the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*).

Consequences: There is a good chance of losing a team member in this encounter. If so, allow the player to roll up a new Adventurer, giving him a bonus of 10 'free' improvement rolls. This new Adventurer will be the one remaining un-brainwashed member of Wraith Recon Eleven, encountered in the next segment.

Mission Segment 0.1.7: Gathering Storms

Taking command of the PBR, blood splatters across the inner hull still fresh, you sail onward towards the eastern shore of Lake Trogg. Eyes are kept peeled but no further attacks occur. The following day a dark line on the horizon slowly resolves itself into tropical jungle. As the boat crawls the remaining distance the sky clouds over and the wind freshens, causing the lake surface to become at first choppy, then a dangerous swell of cresting waves. Spotting what appears to be a narrow river mouth, you struggle to keep the boat from capsizing before you reach land.

Situation: Aerial reconnaissance has spotted an unusual number of dead bodies float from this particular waterway, so SpellCom has guided the team here on the premise that Colonel Kurst and his native troops are active somewhere upstream.

Objectives: Get the PBR safely to the river mouth and continue upstream.

Primary Skills: Boating or Shiphandling.

Boating or Shiphandling (regular unopposed): Nothing but a familiarity with river craft or seamanship will allow the boat to reach the shoreline.

Success: The steersman manages to guide the boat into the river safely.

Failure: If the first roll fails, make the contest best two out of three. If the wraith still fails, then the PBR capsizes.

Consequences: Each wraith must make a *difficult unopposed* Swim test to reach the shore. If heavily encumbered, a wraith may suffer a further penalty to the roll. Failing this the wraith slips under the surface and begins to drown. Those who survive find several log canoes drawn high up the river bank, seemingly abandoned. They are still river-worthy.

Mission Segment 0.1.8: Planted Evidence

For a few hours you continue up the narrow river, the overcrowding trees further cutting down the little light penetrating the black clouds roiling above. Within the shelter of the jungle the wind can be heard above, making a strange wailing counterpoint to the lashing of the canopy.

Situation: Unimagined by SpellCom, Kurst has deliberately seeded the river with corpses, to bait his trap. Rather than having a *conscious* deathwish, the colonel wants more Wraith Recon operatives to turn to his cause. As they journey upriver they will discover many gruesome sights, the first of which is a former member of Wraith Recon Eleven, crucified on the trunk of a huge tree that hangs, half fallen, across the river. The man is still alive but somewhat psychologically unbalanced. Worse still is that the tree has been booby trapped.

Objectives: Rescue the crucified wraith, pump him for information and continue the trip without going a little crazy themselves.

Complication 1 – Booby traps

Primary Skills: Athletics, Mechanisms and Perception.

Athletics (regular unopposed): Needed to climb up the immense tree.

Perception (difficult unopposed): To spot the sprung loaded branch trap.

Mechanisms (simple opposed): Required to disarm the booby trap.

Success: If the wraith manages to succeed in all three tests, the crucified man is rescued successfully.

Failure: Depending on the stage where the operative failed, he either fails to climb the trunk and falls into the river; fails to spot the trap and suffers 2D8 damage to a random location as a branch fitted with sharp toothpegs hidden under some vines, smacks into them; or mistakenly triggers the trap whilst trying to disarm it and it hits the crucified man instead – who dies with the toothpegs lodged across his throat, managing to whisper ‘The horror, the horror...’ before expiring in a gurgle of blood.

Complication 2 – Medic, medic.

Primary Skills: First Aid or Healing.

First Aid or Healing (regular unopposed): Use medical skills to treat the crucified man’s wounds.

Success: If the victim is a Non-player Character he recovers to the point of being able to speak with difficulty (even if magically healed the man remains half catatonic). If on the other hand the victim is the replacement Adventurer, he can be healed to one Hit Point on each limb but remains somewhat unhinged.

Failure: Sadly the wounds have become infected. The victim dies in the next 12 hours, in gradually increasing raving paroxysms. Before he dies however he will still give out some useful information.

Insights of Madness

The rescued operative of Wraith Recon Eleven has suffered greatly over the last three weeks. He has been repeatedly indoctrinated and tortured, breaking a part of his mind. He spends much of the time staring into space seemingly lost in memory – but is actually preserving what sanity he has left by simply not thinking at all. If destined to become an Adventurer then he will slowly recuperate over time.

Otherwise the man can be coaxed into revealing some information. A *difficult opposed* Influence roll is required for each question, failure resulting in a non-sensible answer or continuing catatonia. Success will return an answer but not until a few more questions are asked, or a random period of time passes.

The operative knows the following:

Kurst is insane and must be stopped.

The tribes inhabit an ancient ruined city further upstream.

The colonel wants SpellCom to find him.

Kurst’s warriors are primitive warriors of deadly stealth.

The tribes are waging a war of genocide against everyone.

The colonel is worshipped as a god.

His quarters are located in the hollowed head near the centre of the ruins.



Consequences: If the crucified operative is left hanging on the tree, the ruthless decision will be noted by SpellCom and the squad will be challenged over their decision during debriefing. If no good explanation is presented, Wraith Recon Thirteen will suffer a lot of anger and resentment from the other Wraith Recon teams and even some members of SpellCom will treat them coolly.

Complication 3 – Psychological Warfare.

Primary Skills: Persistence (see Glimpses of Insanity).

Persistence (regular unopposed): Using iron will to remain unaffected by the gruesome sights.

Success: The Adventurer remains unaffected by the growing horror of the sights. Perhaps they are already numbed psychopaths?

Glimpses of Insanity

As the team travel the final stretches of the river, they begin seeing the signs of Colonel Kurst's genocidal war. These images are designed to instil an increasingly awful dread; that the man they are about to face has lost all traces of humanity or self restraint.

The following are a list of scenes the Games Master can use to shock the players. Take pains to describe the dim, dappled light of the jungle, the noises of its bird and insects, and the occasional silencing of the entire jungle when passing some of the more gruesome sights.

- ☉ The carcass of a giant eagle the size of a Roc hangs from the trees, half its head eaten away by predators and the skeletal body of its pilot, still dressed in flying leathers, dangling from rotted flight harnesses.
- ☉ A Lornish warboat lodged in the river bank. There is no sign of the crew but bloody handprints cover the decks and gunwales as if the crew were dragged off one-by-one.
- ☉ From a cable stretched across the river dangle countless bones, which chime against each other as the boat passes underneath and disturbs them. The cable turns out to be knotted intestines.
- ☉ Bodies, dozens of them, hang impaled from branches or trunks. There are lizardfolk, troglodytes, serpentmen, humans, hobgoblins and other races unknown to the wraiths. Each and every one has been flayed, the skin pinned back around the vegetation supporting it.
- ☉ Through a rising mist come tiny lights. As the objects draw closer they are revealed to be floating lanterns made from severed heads, faces drawn into awful expressions of agonised horror. The first few drift past before it becomes apparent the entire river is full of them. Any attempts to count them lose track after 200.



Failure: The horrific scenes start to unhinge the wraith. For the remainder of the mission they suffer a -10% penalty to *all skills* whilst their minds struggle to cope with what they have seen.

MISSION UPDATE:

When SpellCom observes the scale of the madness they send a mission update.

Wraith Recon Thirteen, we believe you are drawing close to the ruins of a legendary city, which was purported to have dated from before the Dawning. From the physical evidence, it seems likely that Colonel Kurst has raised an entire army that must be located in the ruins.

You are ordered to penetrate the city, locate the centre or headquarters, then unwrap and leave the 'package' assigned to you in a well hidden place overlooking that location.

After which you will find Colonel Kurst and terminate him. Terminate with extreme prejudice.

If you survive, then clear out of the target zone – for all hell will be descending on it like the wrath of Praxious. An Air Cav pickup will be waiting a few hundred clicks upstream on the Redwater River.

Mission Segment 0.1.9: City of Death

The disconcerting voyage upriver is nearing its end. Up ahead lays the long lost and forgotten city of Tzarkesh, a place where men challenged the gods, or so the legends say. Now a new god sits in the ruins of the ancient glory, a god of death, a deity of total destruction. With the fanatical tribes who worship his ruthless purity, Colonel Kurst threatens not just eastern Torres but Port Baumegard, Saerding Keep and perhaps the entirety of Rardarri.

Situation: The city is filled with hundreds of deadly lizardman warriors, trained by Colonel Kurst in advanced methods of guerrilla warfare, psychology and commando skills. They are the match of the wraiths and outnumber them significantly. However, Kurst does not want his assassins killed. Rather he wants to convince the wraiths to turn against Dardarrick. If they can be 'enlightened' they can be used to destroy SpellCom from within, so saving all the kingdoms from the warmonger commanders who lead it.

The city is a mouldering collection of ruins covered with dense undergrowth, colossal trees grown up through what were once beautiful courtyards. The few standing buildings are constructed from cyclopean stone blocks. Images of animals and dancing figures carved upon them, eroded by millennia of rain. The chaotic jumble provides plenty of places to hide whilst sneaking towards the heart of the city; a plaza which at the river's edge, drops to the water in a series of steps. In the centre is a ceremonial well dropping to darkness. At the other side is a temple, shaped in the

form of a huge head – a pudgy-faced human head with more than a passing resemblance to the portrait of Kurst in his personnel file.

With the lizardfolk natives being deliberately lax in their security, the few guttering torches located in a desultory manner, which deepens the shadows rather than dispels them; all Kurst has to protect him are the former members of Wraith Recon Eleven, thoroughly compromised and willing to lay down their lives to defend their leader. They, unlike the savages, will do their best to kill their former compatriots.

Objectives: Sneak into the city, plant the package given to them at the start of the mission (it is an Omnicriex crystal shard), then fight their way past Wraith Recon Eleven.

Complication 1 – Entering the city

Primary Skills: Lore (Tactics), Stealth, Swim.

Lore (Tactics) (regular unopposed): One team member provides a distraction whilst the others sneak past.

Stealth (simple opposed): Sneak in using the convenient shadows and ruined walls to provide cover.

Swim (regular opposed): Swim under the surface of the river, entering the centre of the city and bypassing most of the guards.

Success: The wraith manages to slip past the guards unobserved.

Failure: The wraith is noticed by a guard. However, since the guards have been ordered to let the team pass unhindered, the guard will approach an area close to where the wraith is actually hiding, make a cursory search then wander back to wherever they were originally standing. If the wraith, in fear of discovery, attacks the lizardman, the savage will die complaisantly and quietly, happy to have died in his god's service.

Complication 2 – Placing the 'package'

Primary Skills: Sleight or Stealth

Sleight (simple opposed): You casually slip the crystal into a section of broken masonry so subtly that your own team barely notices.

Stealth (regular opposed): You sneak up a high outcrop or ruin and leave the crystal atop it.

Success: The wraith manages to deposit the crystal without being noticed doing it.

Failure: The wraith was spotted doing something suspicious. After the wraith departs the area, a sentry comes to check what he was doing and finds the Omnicriex.

Consequences: The crystal will be reported to Colonel Kurst who will then either dispose of it or show it to the wraiths as part of his attempt to co-opt them.

Complication 3 – Entering the temple

If the squad has had too easy a time of it thus far, reprise the Complication 1 challenge to covertly enter the huge head shaped temple, to keep the tension high.

Complication 4 – Broken arrows

Primary Skills: Combat or Stealth.

Stealth (regular opposed): You try to sneak up on the inner sanctum guards.

Success: The wraith manages to get the drop on one of their former compatriots. Recognising the target as a Wraith Recon Eleven team member, they have a moment to decide whether they will attempt a silent kill or not.

Failure: The wraith Adventurer, instead of ambushing the Wraith Recon Eleven operative is instead himself stalked. The Adventurer has to win a *regular opposed* Perception test or else be surprised.

Wraith Recon Eleven

⊕ Operatives equal in number and skill to Wraith Recon Thirteen (*routine*).

This is the most brutal combat in the entire mission. All the fighting will be eerily silent, both sides professionals in assassination. The Wraith Recon Eleven operatives will be armed with enchanted wraith daggers similar in capability to Wraith Recon Thirteen's own weapons but wear no armour. If facing a range disadvantage they will close the range the first Combat Manoeuvre they get.

Judicious use of Hero Points or an augment from SpellCom should turn the tide in their squad's favour.

Mission Segment 0.1.10: Facing Evil

Panting, blood and sweat trickling down your bodies, you look down in anger at the corpses of those who were once your friends. Oddly, even in death, their faces retain an expression of fierce exultation, the mask of the zealot. From behind ajar double doors of dragon embossed copper, drifts a voice commanding your entry; its soft rasping tones chilling you, even as you feel its enthralling power.

Situation: The team must now face Colonel Kurst and listen to his words, his thoughts and ultimately his plea for Wraith Recon Thirteen to become his tools in finishing the war. This is a chance for the Games Master to pull out all the stops and act out the role of an illuminated psychotic, who can truly see how the world works and manipulate it for an ideal.

Impatient Killers

The biggest challenge to this final climax may be players who wish to cut down Kurst immediately on seeing him. To try to prevent this, have any player who wishes to attack the Colonel attempt an opposed test of their Persistence against Kurst's Influence skill of 140%. If the colonel fluffs the roll, then that's life and they can hack him down and miss out on some psychological fun.



Unless the players are not going to give the colonel a chance to speak, this mission segment has no rolls or tests. Kurst has no weapon and will not defend himself. He is utterly sure of his ability to convince others and that the team members will see his perspective and willingly change sides. Perhaps they will.

The only challenge in this section is for the Games Master to convince the players that Kurst is still rational and has a greater purpose. It is a test of morality.

As the Adventurers enter, read the following:

Within the yellow orange glow of the candlelit chamber, you see a few low wooden tables, some scrolls and on a bench built into the ancient stone wall reclines Colonel Kurst, eying you with an unreadable expression. His presence fills the room, there is a fascination about the man that you cannot define. His eyes glitter in the sallow face, commanding your attention. 'Come, sit. I am unarmed, I will not fight you.' He raises his open hands to prove his words and with an offhand gesture waves welcome into the room.

'You have come to kill me, I know that. I will not resist. Only one thing I ask before you gut me. Let me speak freely, to tell you what I know. Why the Pillars of Dardarrick wish me dead. Give me this honour and I will kneel before you, allow your blades to remove my head cleanly. For my head will give you passage away from this doomed place, the heart of Tzarkesh'.

He looks at each one of you, his eyes pleading but his posture proud and self possessed.

Then Colonel Kurst will begin his oratory, presenting various perspectives on his experiences in the Dardarrick military and the gradual corruption of the kingdom's leadership, that they are leading the Lion of Rardarri to a genocidal war for ownership of the entire continent.

In the course of answering questions he makes the following points, in addition to any others the Games Master comes up with. Those who are perhaps uncomfortable with engaging in such a significant debate can simply read the following as a long soliloquy, with suitable drama.

- ☉ *You think I am an evil man? A murderer? You have no right to call me a murderer. Those I have killed for Dardarrick was done at the behest of its king, is he not more of a murderer for commanding a death than I for obeying?*
- ☉ *Those bodies you see hanging in the jungle. Am I evil for slaying them? What have I done, save protect the lands of my people from invaders and despoilers. Is it not said by the All Father that 'Defend your home and neighbours. Do not seek conflict; it is better to be the shield than the sword'. Surely for I to be accused of wrong-doing, is to accuse the All Father also?*

☉ *Is it not better that Dardarrick question their own leaders. The last two wars started with Dardarrick troops crossing the Lorn border. Have not our people's own priests led jihads of genocide against the hobgoblins? Why is it so strange that the persecuted work to our downfall when provoked so?*

☉ *When I was a young soldier I joined the Special Forces. I was sent into foreign territory to track down thieves and raiders. After we found them, we were ordered to hamstring the prisoners, to prevent further incidents – then castrate them so they would not breed. I followed orders and heard the man's curses, then realised he was a Dardarrian, a man forced into beggary by the excessive taxation used to pay my own wages. Our kingdom with its mighty military was creating its own enemies by draining them of everything they owned; crops, money and sons. The elegance of the self-sustaining circle of strife was beautiful.*

☉ *Another time I was sent into Torres escorting the pilgrims of Praxious. I saw them forcibly baptise young lizardfolk children, branding the sign of the Brazen One into their arms. After we left this old lizardman came running after us and he was crying. We went back there; the tribe had come and hacked off every branded arm. There they were in a pile... a pile of little arms. I remember I wept, overcome by the horror of it. And then I realised, like I was shot, like I was shot with a diamond ballista bolt right through my forehead... And I thought: My God... the genius of that – the will to do that. And then I realised they were stronger than we were, because they could stand doing that to their own children. Because these were not monsters... these were men too... lizardmen who fought with their hearts, who had families, who had children, who were filled with love... but they had the strength... the strength... to do that.*

☉ *I have seen the problem. The problem of those with power but no responsibility. Those who order men like me, men like you to go and kill because they cannot, will not have blood on their own hands. After you have killed me, there will be others; I am but the first in a sea of blood you will spill. For what? To prevent a war incited by the very act of deploying you? Is that not madness?*

☉ *I say to you, my brothers in arms, that if the Pillars of Dardarrick were removed from power, our forces pulled back and forbidden from pre-emptive striking, then our kingdom would not be seen as the aggressive empire builder it truly is. Why does the king invest so much wealth in building a vast navy? We have but a single port and no other coast to speak of. What purpose is there for dozens of warships save to send them overseas to attack others. The hypocrisy of it all is staggering...*

At the conclusion of his powerful words, Kurst taps his finger to where the wraiths wear their Omniciex lenses. They belatedly notice that the crystals are not functioning. The entire conversation has been held within an area of neutralised magic, which has severed their connection to SpellCom. If his sentries discovered the planted crystal outside, the colonel gives it back to them at this point.

'Why did I spare your lives? I could have had you killed a dozen times over whilst you crept into the city. But I have to have men who are moral... and at the same time who are able to utilise their primordial instincts to kill without feeling, without passion, without judgement... without judgement, because it's judgement that defeats us.'

'You may kill me now. I have said what I will, what I needed. Think on my words in the coming days – when the world turns mad, armies butcher first each other and then the women and children after. Remember who is to blame when you must kill your first baby... 'for expediency's sake'. They will always justify the cost. But one day, my seeds will germinate like gardenias and you will see what I see and know what I know must be done. For I am a hollow man, who has stared into the Heart of Tzarkesh. We were once so much more...'

He then kneels awaiting whoever will be his executioner. Then staring deep into his eyes he will whisper 'Pray for your father' and awaits the blow.

Resolution: It is completely up to the players to decide whether or not they kill him.

Consequences: If they do, Colonel Kurst is true to his word. His severed head does grant the wraiths passage out of the city. As they depart they will notice the lizardfolk walking to the wide circular well in the centre of the plaza and one-by-one jumping in. In the eerie silence, neither splash nor scream is heard.

If the wraiths do not kill the colonel, then he and his adopted people vanish deeper into the jungle; perhaps to return at a later date.

What was the Heart of Tzarkesh?

Kurst makes especial emphasis about the Heart of Tzarkesh. Was he speaking rhetorically? Or did the reference mean something more? In addition, why were the lizardmen jumping into the odd well and why was there a well when the river was only yards away. Why was there no sound of impacts? After the destruction of the city, such mysteries must remain buried for a little while longer...



MISSION UPDATE:

As they are leaving the temple, presumably carrying Kurst's head to prevent the lizardfolk from attacking, the surviving members of the team see the Omnicix crystal they planted (or are currently holding) burst into blinding light and they recover their connection with SpellCom.

'Wraith Recon Thirteen, calling Wraith Recon Thirteen, this is Divine Hammer. Arcana artillery incoming, arcane artillery incoming. I sure hope you boys can hear us, cause this is the biggest gods damned mother we've ever cast, a real wrath of hellish proportions. I pray you can hear us, because this is going to obliterate the entire city... Frack. Wraith Recon Thirteen, calling Wraith Recon Thirteen, this is Divine Hammer...'

Mission Segment 0.1.11: Bug Out

Situation: Armageddon is coming.

Objectives: Get out of the city before it is blown to hell. Options are to run, leap and scabble back through the ruins towards the boat, or dive into the river, swim to the other side and run like hell into the jungle. Either way there are only a few minutes to get clear.

Primary Skills: Acrobatics, Athletics, Swim.

All (regular unopposed): You move as fast as humanly possible.



Success: The wraiths get far enough clear before taking cover. However, they remain deaf for the next three days.

Failure: Spend a Hero Point or become crispy fried when a series of titanic lightning bolts strike all over the city, blasting already ruins into scattered stone blocks. The strikes are so intense that the jungle itself catches fire, illuminating the sky for kilometres. Anyone who did not get clear dies.

Mission Segment 0.1.12: Home Sweet Home

The squad experience no other difficulties reaching the rendezvous as the the entire region has been depopulated, so no threats remain. They are collected by a Screaming Eagle of the 8th Air Support and flown back to SpellCom headquarters in shifts.

During the post-mission debriefing Major Ruhrk, Lich Commander of the Wraiths and Arcanist General Raspeng carefully grill the Adventurers over what happened when the Omnicix surveillance went down. Not only is such an event unprecedented but they are interested in what Colonel Kurst said and, more importantly, whether he is dead. Both officers will take the Adventurers at their word, even if they lie through their teeth.

Since Kurst's native army was either destroyed or dispersed, and the colonel himself vanished, the mission is treated as a success.

Post-Mission Debriefing (Success):

I do not say this often, my Wraiths, but I am proud of you. A novice team, you went into a situation above your heads and succeeded. If you were all regular Ground Corps I'd be pinning medals on your chests right now. Medals by the fistful.

While we cannot be sure that the Great Black Wild will remain trouble free, we won't be hearing anything from there for the foreseeable future. I understand that a number of lizardman females and young were killed in the sorcery attack but unfortunately such civilian casualties are an unavoidable consequence in times of war. Despite being savages their loss was necessary for the greater good.

The Pillars of Dardarrick are overjoyed that you managed to 'neutralise' Colonel Kurst. His methods were obviously unsound and of course you will not repeat the atrocities he performed outside these walls. Neither will you tell anyone, ANYONE, about what happened to the rest of Wraith Recon Eleven. We cannot have morale undermined eh?

Oh well. It was a good day and I want you all to celebrate your victory. Parenaxian schnapps is on me gentlemen! A toast to you, to Wraith Recon Thirteen and to the future of a peaceful, free Dardarrick.

Huzzab!

THE STORY CONTINUES...

The events that take place in this mini-campaign are just the beginning; a touch upon the greater story unfolding across the world of Nuera.

Wraith Recon Thirteen will soon be called upon again for king and country. Travelling across Rardarri to remove threats before they can blossom; risking their lives under a blanket of secrecy to keep a population free and blissful in a world that does its damndest to rob them of it at every turn.

But as the struggle continues and the rules of decent behaviour become more undermined, perhaps the members of Wraith Recon Thirteen will remember the prophetic words of Colonel Kurst, seeing the spectre of global annihilation looming, unless someone takes responsibility to do the unthinkable in order to save the world.

They will do it because they have to.

They will do it because they can.

They will do it because they are Wraith Recon.

APPENDIX



ADVENTURE ENCOUNTERS

The following stat blocks provide the arms, armour, Hit Points and Hit Locations for the encounters described in the adventure. These have been gathered together for easy reference or photocopying for those Games Masters who prefer to print out the details for easy marking off.

Skill Challenge	Static Skill Value
Easy	40%
Simple	60%
Routine	80%
Difficult	100%
Hard	120%

Since skill challenges are designed to be scalable to the Adventurers (see page 145), each encounter lacks detailed skill values. Only its difficulty rating is listed. Those Games Masters who prefer static values can use the Skill Challenge table to come up with a suitable number.

Mission Segment 0.1.1: Southwatch

City dock patrol: The patrol will initially stop the Adventurers and request they accompany them to the local lockup for questioning. If the Wraiths attempt to flee, the patrol will use force to prevent their escape but limit themselves to non-lethal manoeuvres. If the Adventurers attack the patrol with weapons, then the patrol will make no attempt to preserve life.

Patrol Officer

		1D20	Location	AP/HP
Challenge	Routine	1–3	Right Leg	3/6
Race	Human	4–6	Left Leg	3/6
Combat Actions	3	7–9	Abdomen	3/7
Damage Modifier	+1D4	10–12	Chest	3/8
Movement	8m	13–15	Right Arm	3/5
Strike Rank	+10	16–18	Left Arm	3/5
Armour	Ringmail	19–20	Head	4/6

Weapon	Damage	Size	Reach	AP/HP
Longsword	1D8+1D4	M	L	6/12
Shield	1D4+1D4	L	S	6/12
Unarmed	1D3+1D4	S	T	As Location

Five Rangers

		1D20	Location	1 AP/HP	2 AP/HP	3 AP/HP	4 AP/HP	5 AP/HP
Challenge	Simple	1–3	Right Leg	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6
Race	Human	4–6	Left Leg	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/6
Combat Actions	3	7–9	Abdomen	3/7	3/7	3/7	3/7	3/7
Damage Modifier	+1D2	10–12	Chest	3/8	3/8	3/8	3/8	3/8
Movement	8m	13–15	Right Arm	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5
Strike Rank	+9	16–18	Left Arm	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5	3/5
Armour	Ringmail	19–20	Head	4/6	4/6	4/6	4/6	4/6

Weapon	Damage	Size	Reach	AP/HP
Longsword	1D8+1D2	M	L	6/12
Shield	1D4+1D2	L	S	6/12
Unarmed	1D3+1D2	S	T	As Location

Drunken Sailors: Thrown into a jail cell with a group of belligerent drunks who are spoiling for a fight. If they are unable to talk their way clear, the river men take offense at the northern strangers and start a brawl. Disarmed and incarcerated, the fight is limited to unarmed combat. Fallen opponents will be left alone. The Strike Rank of the drunks is lowered due to their inebriation.

Drunken Bruiser

		1D20	Location	AP/HP
Challenge	Routine	1-3	Right Leg	0/6
Race	Human	4-6	Left Leg	0/6
Combat Actions	3	7-9	Abdomen	0/7
Damage Modifier	+1D2	10-12	Chest	0/8
Movement	8m	13-15	Right Arm	0/5
Strike Rank	+8	16-18	Left Arm	0/5
Armour	None	19-20	Head	0/6

Weapon	Damage	Size	Reach	AP/HP
Unarmed	1D3+1D2	S	T	As Location

Five Inebriated Sailors

		1D20	Location	1 AP/HP	2 AP/HP	3 AP/HP	4 AP/HP	5 AP/HP
Challenge	Simple	1-3	Right Leg	0/5	0/5	0/5	0/5	0/5
Race	Human	4-6	Left Leg	0/5	0/5	0/5	0/5	0/5
Combat Actions	3	7-9	Abdomen	0/6	0/6	0/6	0/6	0/6
Damage Modifier	None	10-12	Chest	0/7	0/7	0/7	0/7	0/7
Movement	8m	13-15	Right Arm	0/4	0/4	0/4	0/4	0/4
Strike Rank	+8	16-18	Left Arm	0/4	0/4	0/4	0/4	0/4
Armour	None	19-20	Head	0/5	0/5	0/5	0/5	0/5

Weapon	Damage	Size	Reach	AP/HP
Unarmed	1D3	S	T	As Location

Mission Segment 0.1.2: Native Aggression

Four Native Canoes: Each boat is crewed by one leader wearing full armour of woven bone with a crocodile skull helm; and three paddlers with bone torso armour and wicker helms. Only the leader can attack with missile weapons whilst the paddlers close the distance. If they manage to board then they all fight, preferring to stun foes and take them alive for later eating back at their village.

Canoe One

		1D20	Location	Leader AP/HP	Paddler 1 AP/HP	Paddler 2 AP/HP	Paddler 3 AP/HP
Challenge							
Leader	Routine	1-2	Right Leg	4/6	2/5	2/5	2/6
Paddlers	Simple	3-4	Left Leg	4/6	2/5	2/5	2/6
Race	Lizardman	5-6	Tail	2/6	2/5	2/5	2/6
Combat Actions	3	7-9	Abdomen	4/7	4/6	4/6	4/7
Damage Modifier	+1D2	10-12	Chest	4/8	4/7	4/7	4/8
Movement	8m	13-15	Right Arm	4/5	2/4	2/4	2/5
Strike Rank	+13	16-18	Left Arm	4/5	2/4	2/4	2/5
Armour	Bone	19-20	Head	5/6	4/5	4/5	4/6

Weapon	Damage	Size	Reach	AP/HP
Javelin	1D6+1D2	L	-	3/8
2H Spiked Club	1D12+1+1D2	H	L	4/8
Unarmed	1D6+1D2	S	T	As Location

Canoe Two

		1D20	Location	Leader AP/HP	Paddler 1 AP/HP	Paddler 2 AP/HP	Paddler 3 AP/HP
Challenge							
Leader	Routine	1–2	Right Leg	4/6	2/6	2/5	2/6
Paddlers	Simple	3–4	Left Leg	4/6	2/6	2/5	2/6
Race	Lizardman	5–6	Tail	4/6	2/6	2/5	2/6
Combat Actions	3	7–9	Abdomen	4/7	4/7	4/6	4/7
Damage Modifier	+1D4	10–12	Chest	4/8	4/8	4/7	4/8
Movement	8m	13–15	Right Arm	4/5	2/5	2/4	2/5
Strike Rank	+13	16–18	Left Arm	4/5	2/5	2/4	2/5
Armour	Bone	19–20	Head	5/6	4/6	4/5	4/6

Weapon	Damage	Size	Reach	AP/HP
Javelin	1D6+1D2	L	-	3/8
2H Spiked Club	1D12+1+1D2	H	L	4/8
Unarmed	1D6+1D2	S	T	As Location

Canoe Three

		1D20	Location	Leader AP/HP	Paddler 1 AP/HP	Paddler 2 AP/HP	Paddler 3 AP/HP
Challenge							
Leader	Routine	1–2	Right Leg	4/6	2/6	2/5	2/5
Paddlers	Simple	3–4	Left Leg	4/6	2/6	2/5	2/5
Race	Lizardman	5–6	Tail	4/6	2/6	2/5	2/5
Combat Actions	3	7–9	Abdomen	4/7	4/7	4/6	4/6
Damage Modifier	+1D2	10–12	Chest	4/8	4/8	4/7	4/7
Movement	8m	13–15	Right Arm	4/5	2/5	2/4	2/4
Strike Rank	+13	16–18	Left Arm	4/5	2/5	2/4	2/4
Armour	Bone	19–20	Head	5/6	4/6	4/5	4/5

Weapon	Damage	Size	Reach	AP/HP
Javelin	1D6+1D2	L	-	3/8
2H Spiked Club	1D12+1+1D2	H	L	4/8
Unarmed	1D6+1D2	S	T	As Location

Canoe Four

		1D20	Location	Leader AP/HP	Paddler 1 AP/HP	Paddler 2 AP/HP	Paddler 3 AP/HP
Challenge							
Leader	Routine	1–2	Right Leg	4/5	2/6	2/6	2/6
Paddlers	Simple	3–4	Left Leg	4/5	2/6	2/6	2/6
Race	Lizardman	5–6	Tail	4/5	2/6	2/6	2/6
Combat Actions	3	7–9	Abdomen	4/6	4/7	4/7	4/7
Damage Modifier	+1D4	10–12	Chest	4/7	4/8	4/8	4/8
Movement	8m	13–15	Right Arm	4/4	2/5	2/5	2/5
Strike Rank	+13	16–18	Left Arm	4/4	2/5	2/5	2/5
Armour	Bone	19–20	Head	5/5	4/6	4/6	4/6

Weapon	Damage	Size	Reach	AP/HP
Javelin	1D6+1D2	L	-	3/8
2H Spiked Club	1D12+1+1D2	H	L	4/8
Unarmed	1D6+1D2	S	T	As Location

Mission Segment 0.1.3: Night Paddle

Guard Boat Crew: If the Wraith's vessel is caught by the guard boat, a swarm of lizardmen board them with the objective of capturing the Adventurers alive. The captain will coordinate the boarding action, only entering the fight when no other option remains. He wears iridescent dinosaur hide armour with a feathered dinosaur skull helmet. Each marine is armed with a net, an axe or club, and wears wood slat armour and crocodile skulls.

Guard Boat Captain		1D20	Location	AP/HP
Challenge	Routine	1–2	Right Leg	6/7
Race	Lizardman	3–4	Left Leg	6/7
Combat Actions	3	5–6	Tail	2/7
Damage Modifier	+1D4	7–9	Abdomen	6/8
Movement	8m	10–12	Chest	6/9
Strike Rank	+11	13–15	Right Arm	6/6
Armour	Dino Skin	16–18	Left Arm	6/6
		19–20	Head	6/7

Weapon	Damage	Size	Reach	AP/HP
Javelin	1D6+1D4	L	—	3/8
2H Spiked Club	1D12+1+1D4	H	L	4/8
Unarmed	1D6+1D4	S	T	As Location

Seven Marines

Challenge	Simple
Race	Lizardman
Combat Actions	3
Damage Modifier	+1D4
Movement	8m
Strike Rank	+15
Armour	Wood Slat

1D20	Location	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
		AP/HP	AP/HP	AP/HP	AP/HP	AP/HP	AP/HP	AP/HP
1–2	Right Leg	5/6	5/6	5/6	5/6	5/6	5/6	5/6
3–4	Left Leg	5/6	5/6	5/6	5/6	5/6	5/6	5/6
5–6	Tail	5/6	5/6	5/6	5/6	5/6	5/6	5/6
7–9	Abdomen	5/7	5/7	5/7	5/7	5/7	5/7	5/7
10–12	Chest	5/8	5/8	5/8	5/8	5/8	5/8	5/8
13–15	Right Arm	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5
16–18	Left Arm	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5
19–20	Head	5/6	5/6	5/6	5/6	5/6	5/6	5/6

Weapon	Damage	Size	Reach	AP/HP
Stone Axe or Spiked Club	1D6+1+1D4	M	M	6/6
Net	—	—	—	4/3
Unarmed	1D4+1D4	S	L	2/20
	1D6+1D4	S	T	As Location

Mission Segment 0.1.4: Grave Mistake

Skeletal Horde: The horde starts out with 20 skeletons per Adventurer but the total will be thinned out by SpellCom on request. Each skeleton is an easy challenge and the Wraiths should be able to use tactical positioning in their favour, to reduce the number they face each round. The bony horde is composed of different humanoid creatures, with dead lizardfolk predominating, and has little protection save a corroded or rotted shred of armour here or there. For ease of tracking, all the skeletons share the same Strike Rank.

Skeletal Horde

Challenge	Easy
Race	Varies
Combat Actions	2
Damage Modifier	Varies
Movement	8m
Strike Rank	+8
Armour	Varies

Human 1D20	Reptilian 1D20	Location	1 AP/HP	2 AP/HP	3 AP/HP	4 AP/HP	5 AP/HP	6 AP/HP
1-3	1-2	Right Leg	0/4	0/5	2/4	0/5	0/4	4/3
4-6	3-4	Left Leg	0/4	0/5	0/4	0/5	0/4	4/3
	5-6	Tail		0/5	0/4		0/4	4/3
7-9	7-9	Abdomen	1/5	0/6	2/5	0/6	0/5	4/4
10-12	10-12	Chest	1/6	0/7	1/6	1/7	0/6	4/5
13-15	13-15	Right Arm	0/3	0/4	0/3	1/4	0/3	4/2
16-18	16-18	Left Arm	0/3	0/4	2/3	1/4	0/3	4/2
19-20	19-20	Head	1/4	0/5	0/4	1/5	0/4	4/3

Weapon Damage Bonus	Club None	Axe +1D2	Axe +1D4	Sword +1D2	Club +1D2	Sword +1D4
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Human 1D20	Reptilian 1D20	Location	7 AP/HP	8 AP/HP	9 AP/HP	10 AP/HP	11 AP/HP	12 AP/HP
1-3	1-2	Right Leg	2/4	0/4	0/5	0/3	0/4	0/5
4-6	3-4	Left Leg	2/4	0/4	0/5	0/3	0/4	0/5
	5-6	Tail	0/4	0/4		0/3	0/4	0/5
7-9	7-9	Abdomen	2/5	0/5	0/6	2/4	0/5	6/6
10-12	10-12	Chest	0/6	0/6	0/7	2/5	0/6	6/7
13-15	13-15	Right Arm	0/3	0/3	0/4	2/2	0/3	0/4
16-18	16-18	Left Arm	0/3	0/3	0/4	2/2	0/3	0/4
19-20	19-20	Head	2/4	0/4	0/5	0/3	4/4	0/5

Weapon Damage Bonus	Axe +1D2	Sword +1D4	Club +1D2	Axe None	Axe +1D4	Sword +1D2
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Human 1D20	Reptilian 1D20	Location	13 AP/HP	14 AP/HP	15 AP/HP	16 AP/HP	17 AP/HP	18 AP/HP
1-3	1-2	Right Leg	0/5	0/4	0/3	0/4	0/5	0/4
4-6	3-4	Left Leg	0/5	0/4	1/3	0/4	0/5	0/4
	5-6	Tail	0/5		0/3	0/4		0/4
7-9	7-9	Abdomen	0/6	5/5	1/4	0/5	2/6	0/5
10-12	10-12	Chest	0/7	5/6	1/5	3/6	2/7	0/6
13-15	13-15	Right Arm	0/4	5/3	1/2	0/3	0/4	0/3
16-18	16-18	Left Arm	0/4	5/3	0/2	0/3	0/4	0/3
19-20	19-20	Head	0/5	0/4	1/3	3/4	0/5	0/4

Weapon Damage Bonus	Sword +1D4	Axe None	Sword +1D2	Club +1D2	Club +1D4	Axe +1D2
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Weapon	Damage	Size	Reach	AP/HP
Chipped Axe	1D6+1	M	M	5/4
Splintered Club	1D6	M	M	3/3
Rusty Sword	1D8	M	M	5/8
Unarmed	1D3 or 1D6	S	T	As Location

Mission Segment 0.1.5: Death From Above

Ballista Crews: Although bearing weapons the unprepared ballista crews are not wearing armour in the pre-dawn muggy heat. When half the hobgoblin crew have been seriously injured or killed, the remainder will flee.

Ballista Crew One

		1D20	Location	1 AP/HP	2 AP/HP	3 AP/HP	4 AP/HP
Challenge	Routine	1-3	Right Leg	0/6	0/5	0/5	0/5
Race	Hobgoblin	4-6	Left Leg	0/6	0/5	0/5	0/5
Combat Actions	3	7-9	Abdomen	0/7	0/6	0/6	0/6
Damage Modifier	+1D4	10-12	Chest	0/8	0/7	0/7	0/7
Movement	8m	13-15	Right Arm	0/5	0/4	0/4	0/4
Strike Rank	+13	16-18	Left Arm	0/5	0/4	0/4	0/4
Armour	None	19-20	Head	0/6	0/5	0/5	0/5

Ballista Crew Two

		1D20	Location	1 AP/HP	2 AP/HP	3 AP/HP	4 AP/HP
Challenge	Routine	1-3	Right Leg	0/6	0/5	0/6	0/5
Race	Hobgoblin	4-6	Left Leg	0/6	0/5	0/6	0/5
Combat Actions	3	7-9	Abdomen	0/7	0/6	0/7	0/6
Damage Modifier	+1D4	10-12	Chest	0/8	0/7	0/8	0/7
Movement	8m	13-15	Right Arm	0/5	0/4	0/5	0/4
Strike Rank	+13	16-18	Left Arm	0/5	0/4	0/5	0/4
Armour	None	19-20	Head	0/6	0/5	0/6	0/5

Ballista Crew Three

		1D20	Location	1 AP/HP	2 AP/HP	3 AP/HP	4 AP/HP
Challenge	Routine	1-3	Right Leg	0/5	0/5	0/6	0/5
Race	Hobgoblin	4-6	Left Leg	0/5	0/5	0/6	0/5
Combat Actions	3	7-9	Abdomen	0/6	0/6	0/7	0/6
Damage Modifier	+1D4	10-12	Chest	0/7	0/7	0/8	0/7
Movement	8m	13-15	Right Arm	0/4	0/4	0/5	0/4
Strike Rank	+13	16-18	Left Arm	0/4	0/4	0/5	0/4
Armour	None	19-20	Head	0/5	0/5	0/6	0/5

Weapon	Damage	Size	Reach	AP/HP
Battleaxe	1D8+1+1D4	M	M	4/8
Mace	1D8+1D4	M	S	6/6
Sword	1D8+1D4	M	M	6/10

Mission Segment 0.1.6: Hostile Territory

Crocodile: The 8m crocodile attacks by lunging out of the water to make snapping attacks. A Serious Wound to the head or forequarters will force it to swim off. If not driven off, it will eventually sink the PBR. If the crocodile manages to achieve a Combat Manoeuvre with its bite, it will choose Grip and drag the victim underwater. The battle may continue under the surface, subject to the rules for fighting underwater.

Large Crocodile

		1D20	Location	AP/HP
Challenge	Simple	1-3	Tail	7/14
Race	Crocodile	4	R Hind Leg	7/11
Combat Actions	2	5	L Hind Leg	7/11
Damage Modifier	+2D8	6-9	Hindquarters	7/15
Movement	10m swim	10-14	Forequarters	7/16
Strike Rank	+7	15	R Fore Leg	7/11
Armour	None	16	L Fore Leg	7/11
		17-20	Head	7/14

Weapon	Damage	Size	Reach	AP/HP
Bite	1D8+2D8	L	M	As Location

Mission Segment 0.1.9: City of Death

Wraith Recon Eleven: The team is highly skilled and armed with enchanted daggers which ignore the first six points of armour. They are not wearing armour themselves, understanding that it would be pointless, instead seeking the advantage of a higher Strike Rank. If facing Medium sized weapons or greater, they defend themselves until they win a Combat Manoeuvres to close into close quarters. Once at knife range they prefer to Disarm foes or Grip their weapon arm to render them defenceless whilst continuing to stab with the other hand. This is a brutal fight to the death with no quarter given.

Wraith 1 – Scarred Leader

		1D20	Location	AP/HP
Challenge	Routine	1–3	Right Leg	0/6
Race	Human	4–6	Left Leg	0/6
Combat Actions	3	7–9	Abdomen	0/7
Damage Modifier	+1D2	10–12	Chest	0/8
Movement	8m	13–15	Right Arm	0/5
Strike Rank	+15	16–18	Left Arm	0/5
Armour	None	19–20	Head	0/6

Weapon	Damage	Size	Reach	AP/HP
Enchanted Dagger	1D4+1+1D2	S	S	6/8

Wraith 2 – Swift Elf

		1D20	Location	AP/HP
Challenge	Routine	1–3	Right Leg	0/5
Race	Elf	4–6	Left Leg	0/5
Combat Actions	4	7–9	Abdomen	0/6
Damage Modifier	None	10–12	Chest	0/7
Movement	10m	13–15	Right Arm	0/4
Strike Rank	+19	16–18	Left Arm	0/4
Armour	None	19–20	Head	0/5

Weapon	Damage	Size	Reach	AP/HP
Enchanted Dagger	1D4+1	S	S	6/8

Wraith 3 – Tough Dwarf

		1D20	Location	AP/HP
Challenge	Routine	1–3	Right Leg	0/7
Race	Dwarf	4–6	Left Leg	0/7
Combat Actions	3	7–9	Abdomen	0/8
Damage Modifier	+1D2	10–12	Chest	0/9
Movement	6m	13–15	Right Arm	0/6
Strike Rank	+13	16–18	Left Arm	0/6
Armour	None	19–20	Head	0/7

Weapon	Damage	Size	Reach	AP/HP
Enchanted Dagger	1D4+1+1D2	S	S	6/8

Wraith 4 – Hardnut Hobgoblin		1D20	Location	AP/HP
Challenge	Routine	1–3	Right Leg	0/6
Race	Hobgoblin	4–6	Left Leg	0/6
Combat Actions	3	7–9	Abdomen	0/7
Damage Modifier	+1D6	10–12	Chest	0/8
Movement	8m	13–15	Right Arm	0/5
Strike Rank	+13	16–18	Left Arm	0/5
Armour	None	19–20	Head	0/6

Weapon	Damage	Size	Reach	AP/HP
Enchanted Dagger	1D4+1+1D6	S	S	6/8

Wraith 5 – Lithe Human		1D20	Location	AP/HP
Challenge	Routine	1–3	Right Leg	0/5
Race	Human	4–6	Left Leg	0/5
Combat Actions	3	7–9	Abdomen	0/6
Damage Modifier	+1D2	10–12	Chest	0/7
Movement	8m	13–15	Right Arm	0/4
Strike Rank	+17	16–18	Left Arm	0/4
Armour	None	19–20	Head	0/5

Weapon	Damage	Size	Reach	AP/HP
Enchanted Dagger	1D4+1+1D2	S	S	6/8

Wraith 6 – Squat Human		1D20	Location	AP/HP
Challenge	Routine	1–3	Right Leg	0/5
Race	Human	4–6	Left Leg	0/5
Combat Actions	3	7–9	Abdomen	0/6
Damage Modifier	+1D4	10–12	Chest	0/7
Movement	8m	13–15	Right Arm	0/4
Strike Rank	+14	16–18	Left Arm	0/4
Armour	None	19–20	Head	0/5

Weapon	Damage	Size	Reach	AP/HP
Enchanted Dagger	1D4+1+1D4	S	S	6/8

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