



HEROQUEST



HeroQuest Voices *Peoples of Glorantha*

Concept: Nick Brooke. § *Project Manager:* Nick Brooke.

Edited by: Mark Galeotti and Nick Brooke, with Chris Gidlow and Stephen Martin.

Illustrations: Manoel Magalhaes, Tom Sullivan.

Layout: Stephen Martin. § *Runes:* Issaries, Inc.

A Personal View of Praxian Life

Greg Stafford and Sandy Petersen; additional material by Nick Brooke

Tales of the Wastes

Greg Stafford and Sandy Petersen



*Legion are the peoples of the world, many and varied are their ways.
All are connected by the cosmic webs of Arachne Solara
Who brings and binds all together, in life as in this book,
Who takes and rends apart those who would tear her webs.*

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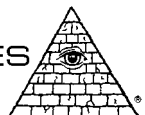
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A Personal View of Bison Life

What My Father Told Me

Who are you?

I am Vanish Rib-Crusher, warrior of the Bison People.

Who are we?

We are the Skull Bat Clan of the Bison People, also called the Flower Bison Clan. You can know the animals of our clan by the bat branded on their backsides. The bone beads in our beards mark the men of our clan, and you can tell the women of our clan by the narl-flower necklaces they sing to.

Waha is the Founder of all the Dedra, we riders of Eiritha's children. He saved us during the Long Night, and we have done what he says ever since. He told us if we followed all his rules we could live anywhere, even if Storm Bull died and Chaos returned. We cross the empty Greatlands with his help. Many tales tell of true people who fell prey to the soft living of the Western or Eastern folk, and died badly because of it.

What makes us great?

We are the best people in the world. We have big herds. The cows bear many calves and we keep them alive. We have stolen many animals. Our warriors are strong and tough. Each has taken an enemy beast to earn his cheek scars. When the Bison People meet our foes, our clan is always the first to charge. Our Khan is mighty, too, and when the Bison khans meet in council, he can show many scars.

Where do we live?

All of the Greatlands are our home. Waha set aside this place for us because it is the best place for us to live. Eiritha's Paps are our spirits' home. If you are lucky, you will visit the Paps some day.

How do we live?

We live on the good things Bison-Eiritha gives us. We drink the milk of our bison and eat the meat of other tribes' beasts. Some plants are good for us to eat: the sacred skullbush our bat spirits visit, arrowstalk root, freeberry, and Eiritha's holygrain; our women gather those when they are ready. Others are forbidden, such as the dreamweed that only shamans may eat, or Tada's Tears. Do not eat forbidden plants.

We wear the same tough skin as Bison-Eiritha. Our clothes are of the hides of our own and our enemies' beasts. In spring, our bison rub off much of their hair; our women gather this up and spin it into rugs, blankets, and cloth.

We fight with the weapons of our Bison Founder: bone and horn, sinew and strength, and heads so hard they cannot be broken. Our khan, Narmed Whirlvishbane, is rich. He owns five iron-tipped arrows, a magic piece of the Block, and a glass gourd with firewater from the Lands Beyond the Sunset.

We are protected by Bison-Eiritha's love. We live in tents made from the hides of our bison. When many of us meet together, or when we must protect our bison from Wild Hunter's storms, we join many tents to make a single one large enough to hold all of our people and bison. And each of us has his own blanket to roll up in when he is alone on a hunting trip or raid.

I am a rich man, with two herds. My wife owns more than five hands of cows, and I own seven bulls. In my herds are four impalas, two llamas, and a captured gern, which is a beast even though it looks like a person.

What is important in my life?

The year you were born, we marked your birth in the Calving Festival with the other new parents. The Bison Queen blessed you to have many sons. Our khan blessed you to kill many foes. And I blessed you and gave you your name.

You are still a boy. Until you are a man, you will live in my tent. You must learn to fight as well as you can ride, and you must learn magic and the Peaceful Cut ceremony. When you think you are ready, at the Butchering Festival you must go before our khan with the other youths and show yourself to him. If you have not shamed us, and you can ride, and fight, and have learned some of Waha's Survival Tricks and the secret ways of our people, then you will be made a man. Most boys become men when they are four hands-of-years old.

When you are a man, you will live in the Bachelor's Tent until you are married. You may marry only a woman of the Bison People, and you may not marry one from our clan, for all of our women are your sisters. Your wife will bring her cows to you, possibly many cows if her family's herds are great. Once you are married, you will be a warrior of our clan, and you and your wife will have your own tent. But you must prove yourself to your wife's parents before you can marry. The best way to do this is to show her father that you are brave and strong, and to prove to her mother that you will be a good provider for your children. You may only have one wife, unless you become a khan someday, but you may have many concubines. I like the tall llama women best.

When you die, the clan will commit your body to a great burning. All the warriors of the clan will pray to the Daka Fal that your strength remain with them.

Who rules us?

Our elders rule us, for they have all proven themselves. Each man has stolen an animal from each of the other Great Tribes, and they know all the old wisdom of our clan. They give wise advice to our khan, and then choose a new khan upon his death. When the great khan of all the Bison People dies, the clans all meet to choose the next.

The great khan leads us in battle. When many clans meet, he is advised by all the lesser khans. You are not the son of a khan, but my father's father was, and so you can be one some day, for you trace your ancestry to Waha himself.

Our Bison Queen is the best woman. She has the most cows, the healthiest children, and the deepest wisdom. She can find water in a drought, and can sniff out the best path even in the trackless season.

All Bison People, wherever they live, belong to the Great Bison Tribe. There are many bison clans, each ruled by its own khan, bison queen, and council of elders. Clans often meet each other to exchange goods, worship the spirits, and seek wives. My wife was born in the Bull's Blood Clan.

What makes a man great?

Bravery, stubbornness, and endurance make a man great. A great warrior has stolen many beasts from other tribes, and so has many animals to feed his family. Destroying Chaos makes a man truly great!

HEROQUEST VOICES

Tales of the Wastes

Wisdom from the Tribal Shaman

Where did the world come from?

Genert and the spirit giants made the world so long ago no one remembers. They were strong, and lived in a fertile garden. Food was everywhere: jackrabbits came freely to the eating, and if you dropped a seed you had to jump back when the tree sprang up with much fruit. But the dead giants failed at last—they tried to deal fairly with the Devil.

When Chaos came, Genert mustered his clans: the golden people, the copper warriors, the sky-spears, the white elves, and our ancestors. And he fought as hard as he could and as well as he could. But he was destroyed, his armies turned to sand, and his garden turned into an acid bog. The Devil slew the spirit giants, blasted the land, and killed everybody he could find. Only the Storm Bull and his friends could fight him, and Storm Bull finally imprisoned the Devil beneath the Block. Now the old ways are gone, maybe forever.

Waha is Storm Bull's son. He came out of the soil into a world of darkness and Chaos. People still walked the blasted land, dazed and dying of stupidity. But Waha the Tracker gathered us and showed new ways to live. He freed the herd beasts and founded many families. Through Waha's deeds, the yellow-bellied giant felt brave enough to come out of his hiding hole and began to shine on us again.

Where did I come from?

At first, everything starved alike: bison, impala, llama, sable, morocanth, and human. There was too little food. Then Waha made the Survival Covenant. Some became animals, able to eat thornbush, weeds, and roots of the earth. Others became people and ate the plant-eaters. We drew lots to see who would eat and who would be eaten. In every case but the cheating morocanth, we humans won and became people. That is why we ride and eat the herd animals, and why morocanth are people also.

Why am I here?

You are a relic from Genert's time—you hold the holy life force. Your fathers and mothers lived through the Long Night and so, through them, did you. They lived, and you live, to fight Chaos, to spread life and death.

Why do we die?

Before Waha came, everything was dead or dying, and that is the way of the world. Waha taught us death's secrets; how to use it for life. He taught us the Peaceful Cut that returns our sister-animals to bliss within the womb of Eiritha, supplying our tribe with food from the Mother. And Waha taught us the warlike blows, whereby we send our foes to dark hells.

What happens after we die?

Our souls go to the Spirit World, to the Great Grasslands of the Happy Herding Ground. Eiritha is there, with endless ghost herds, and Waha is there, too, with all of the ancestors.

How do I do magic?

Waha came when all was gray, and he taught us how to survive; his tricks are still the first magic that our children learn. The Horned Man came later and taught our shamans how to talk to spirits from lost ages. These spirits do mighty magic, but the mightiest magic is done by our khan, who can call the Founder of our tribe to war.

I have heard of other spirits and powers. Can you tell me the truth about them?

All the world was hurt by the evil of Chaos. We escaped because of Storm Bull and Waha. Others were unlucky, weak, or stupid, and now exist as bodiless spirits, not living or dead. Some are old companions, some are ancient foes.

...Chaos?

Everything bad, painful, and ugly in this world came because of the Devil. Chaos is evil and should be killed by every living soul. Bless Storm Bull who fights it so ferociously.

...Darkness?

Dark Eater is our friend and our foe. He helps us against Chaos, for he hates it as we do. But he also wields the powers of night and shadow that plunder our herds and make our women barren. The inhuman morocanth love him too much.

...the Earth?

The earth is everything's mother. She did not fight Chaos when it came, thinking her peace would save her. It did not. Now only Eiritha, her best daughter, lives to aid us.

...Forests?

Once the world was covered with lush plants, all of which stemmed from a great spirit. She failed her people because she did not see what Chaos would do to her. Her leaves withered to brown, and her trunks fed the great fire of Oakfed. She no longer blesses the Greatlands.

...the Moon?

The Red Moon is evil, brought by bad men to destroy us and our kind. She was born at the edge of the world, but reaches everywhere, even into our hearts, with temptation, lies, and fear. The traitorous Sable People worship her, proof of their evil.

...the Ocean?

The sea khan was a mighty giant before the Long Night. He tried to fight Chaos through cunning and tricks, but like everyone else he failed. Now he is a shadow, pierced forever by the Devil's invisible spear. His serpents that twist across our lands must never be trusted.

...Sorcerers?

These fools are under the sway of the Devil, for they know no true magic. They curse the name of Storm Bull who scourges the world of Chaos. They are empty, without spirits.

...the Sun?

This old giant tried to fight Chaos with high rules and distant powers. Like all the rest who did not fight the evil with their whole selves, he died and is now but a hollow glowing shell. Yet he is our Bright Treasure, for he sends the dark away.

...the Wind?

The great wind from the west is Storm Bull's brother, and like the Bull he is dangerous. His tricks allowed evil into the world. He did great wrongs, but when he tried to fix them he made more mistakes that made the world even worse. But we brave Bison People respect him, because he is so strong and tough.

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