



HEROQUEST



HeroQuest Voices

Peoples of Glorantha

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A Personal View of Praxian Life

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Tales of the Wastes

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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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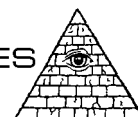
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A Personal View of Bison Life

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, Narneed 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!

What is evil?

Chaos is evil. Everything that is bad is because of Chaos. Chaos laid waste to our land. Chaos killed the spirit giants, like Genert. Chaos still harms us. Broos abound. Chaos helps outlanders to attack us, too. We grow old and die because of Chaos, we are sad, hungry, and lonely because of Chaos. Chaos makes holes in our clothes and wears the edge off our swords. Chaos is evil.

Horses are taboo, and you must never touch a horse, especially not to eat it! You should kill horses whenever you can. You *can* eat cattle and other lesser beasts if you must, but never horses or their spawn, the outlander donkeys and ponies.

What is my lot in life?

Goals are important. You should get many wives, who have many herds. Men will come to your command and you will live among a big herd. You must strive to be a tough and strong fighter, and try to capture many herd beasts of your own.

To show your greatness you must be brave. You will become tougher and master many skills as you grow. Every day is a challenge, and you must fight or die. If you want to be the best, you will visit the Chaos marshes and kill the worst evil in the world. Only fighting Chaos can truly make you greater than other men.

What is the difference between men and women?

Men own weapons, slaughter animals, kill men, and serve the forces of Waha the Butcher. Women own the cows and serve the forces of Bison-Eiritha. Never knock heads with a woman, and never come between a mother and her child. Together we bear children and raise calves, protect each other from dangers we can see and dangers we can't, and serve the great spirits.

How do we deal with others?

You can trust everyone in your family and clan. We always help each other in times of need. If all your beasts die or are taken, if you are crippled, or if your wife or children are taken as slaves, your people will aid and provide for you. Other Bison clans are our friends, but they only *have* to help us against Chaos or when we're in big trouble, and you must always pay them back. We're better than they are, but we all have the same Founder.

Watch out for people from other tribes. Although they follow Waha's Way, they are sneaky, and they all want to steal your animals and enslave or kill you. It is only safe to talk to them at the Paps, when you are strongest, or when all the Dedra have allied under a khan of khans to fight a great enemy, such as when Jaldon Toothmaker led us to destroy Pavis and raid the Sunset Lands called Dragon Pass.

People from outside the Greatlands are our prey. Their weakness is good only for robbing. Never trust them, lie to them if you want, kill them and take their goods if you wish. They don't know Waha's Way at all, and that means they aren't proper humans, even lower than the despicable morocanth, who *are* people even though they look like beasts.

Who are our enemies?

Chaos is our first enemy. Vrak Kargl Vozn the Devil made all that is evil, and we must combat it. To slay the evil is to be great. Bellow to Storm Bull for his help against Chaos.

The pesky Impala People, stuck-up High Llama People, crafty Sable People, and cheating Morocanth are all enemies. They steal cattle, take our daughters and sisters, and kill our sons and brothers. Don't ever be caught by them and end up as a slave. The lesser peoples of the Greatlands are our enemies, too—the upside-down unicorn women, pygmy bird lizard folk,

silly ostrich riders, and the foreign Walkers.

We are at war with the horsemen from the north. They come at us from the north and east and west, the bastards. A ridden horse is the mark of an outlander or a Pentan devil, and both are our enemies.

Who are my spirits?

All the Great Tribes, and most of the lesser ones, follow the Way of Waha, Father of Khans. Men worship Waha the First Khan, and women worship Eiritha, beloved Herd Mother. We love the Storm Bull, father of Waha, even though his Desert Wind sometimes batters us, for he is the destroyer of Chaos.

There are lots of lesser spirits wandering the Greatlands, left over from the old days when the spirit giants lived. The horned men can talk to these spirits and make them work for us. Prax is our holy land, and most clans go there once in a lifetime. Our own clan visits the Paps every ten-hands-plus-one years, following our beasts' great migration across the Greatlands. You were born there, and I do not expect us to return in my lifetime.

What is there to do around here?

Life is work, and work is life. Deadly winds and poison rain can come on us. Hyenas and pack lizards prey on the herds. Morocanth spy on us, seeking slaves and cows. Broos and scorpion men roam the plain. When we've beaten them, or on great spirit days, we have fun. The best fun is when we raid our enemies, hold head-butting contests, or have a big butchering and calving day. And slave women, they're fun, too. You'll see, one day.



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.

Great Spirits of Prax

Daka Fal, Guide to the Ancestors

When the world was cursed by Chaos, the people who survived were hard-pressed. They were beset by spirits and demons, and the living and dead mingled in a communal horror of fear and confusion. Then the Daka Fal walked the world and separated the living from the dead, setting each in its place, telling all their duties and affairs. This established order in the world, and was the first successful worship.

Eiritha, Protectress

Eiritha is our mother. She sends us calves and children, and helps cows and women make rich milk for our tribe. All of the people and herd beasts of Prax are her children. We love her and spend our lives to protect her, even as she protects us.

Foundchild, the Hunter

Waha brought Foundchild when we were starving and fighting each other. Foundchild taught us how to use the tools of war—spears, bows, and throwing sticks—to hunt animals instead of each other. He taught us how to eat those animals that do not come from Eiritha, so that we would not starve while Waha quested to free the herd sisters.

The Horned Man, Father of Shamans

The Horned Man is the first shaman. During the Long Night, he sang great runes using his wit, skill, and deadliness, to trick Chaos into letting him go. He sometimes visits young children in their sleep, and if they do not cry out then they are destined to follow him. The mightiest shamans draw on his power to create magical Soul Winds that can devastate whole armies.

Oakfed, Wildfire

When Chaos came, it crept up the sky like a river, and the Sun exploded in a great rain of fire. That fire is all that kept some people alive in the Long Night, for it burned away Chaos and kept the shadows at bay. When it started to dwindle, the people chopped down the forests to feed it, diminishing the world but allowing them to survive. When Oakfed burned out of control, Waha came to conquer him, and now he serves us.

Storm Bull, Chaos-killer

The Storm Bull is the best spirit in the world, for he stopped Chaos when he killed the Devil. When everything else was dead or sick unto death, he bellowed his war-cry and charged across the universe to meet Chaos with his strength. Now he rules the sky, and his storms forever scour the world. He lives in the ruins of the Spirit Giants' Palace and sends his winds in all directions, seeking Chaos.

Waha the Butcher, Founder

Waha is the son of Eiritha and Storm Bull, and all life must be grateful and give him respect. He saved us and made the world livable. His deeds are many—everyone knows them. Waha Flamebringer tamed Oakfed, the corrupt spirit of wildfire, and turned him into the friendly campfire. Waha the Wise taught us our knot language. Waha Father-of-khans is the father of all our chieftains. Waha the Restrainer made the earth be still. Waha Killer-of-Chaos cleansed the land to make it safe. Waha Khan-of-khans liberated the Founders and freed the Protectresses of our tribes. Waha the Warrior taught us weapons work, so we can protect our herds. Waha the Provider taught men the Peaceful Cut, which sends our beasts' souls back to the Mother of Beasts when they are butchered. Waha the Protector dug a great canal and ordered it to digest the foul body of the Devil

that lay there corrupting the very earth. Waha the Teacher taught us to ride our animals. All life exists now because of Waha, the Great Khan.

The Wild Hunter

The Wild Hunter rides a devil steed that gallops upon air, land, or sandstorm, and he holds a long-reaching barbed spear. Fierce winds circle around him and sting like red-hot hail. His followers are drooling spirit wolves and a howling horde of the dead. He rides in all the worlds, seeking food for his hunt. No one is safe from him.

