



HEROQUEST



HeroQuest Voices *Peoples of Glorantha*

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A Personal View of Rathori Life, Secrets of the Invisible World
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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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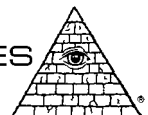
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A Personal View of Rathori Life

What My Uncle Told Me

Who are you?

I am Gaskor Biggowl, son of Armorthi of Greyknoll, descendant of Bariod Mother of Fifteen Kings, daughter of the line of Karringorth Spotted Bear, second son of the Black Bear.

Who are we?

We are the Greyknoll Clan of the Black Bear People.

What makes us great?

We are children of the Bear. We are the most courageous of all people alive. Nothing daunts us in war or peace. We are survivors, and keepers of the secrets of old. We are the protectors of Grandmother Earth.

Where do we live?

This is the Woodland of the Bear. It is the center of the world.

How do we live?

Three honorable ways exist for us to survive: hunting, trading, and raiding. We take whichever path offers us the most wealth and best advantage.

Our food is plentiful. We are hunters, trappers, and harvesters of the wild. In the lean season we eat rabbits and tree bark and whatever the mothers have stored in the dens. In the fat season we feast on salmon and apples, the five nuts, and the twelve grubs.

Our clothing is simple but finely crafted. These leather clothes have served the bear people well since Old Lady clothed us against the snow. If you are lucky you will see us all in our ceremonial robes in the ancestor dance. But my favorite cloak is the one of magic we wear when the dancing is good, the one which grows from my naked skin.

This tent will be your home for the next five years. That pack is all you own. We won't use it in the summer but we'll still carry it. Each winter we will come back here, to the den, to spread our hides before the mothers and tell our tales over the fires.

We hold good property. We own everything we carry here, and part of everything that the mothers keep.

What is important in my life?

When you were born the Blue Star rose, and your water-boiler gave you the timber rattlesnake, so they are important to you. Their signs were tattooed on your wrists at birth. You were lucky that the fletcher gave you one of the iron arrowheads as a tooth gift, for some day you may conquer that spirit and learn his magic.

Soon you will come to be an adult. After your initiatory spirit vision you will meet the ancestors. Maybe you can learn more magic from them. You showed me your running magic, and everyone knows the bluejay badge stops bleeding. Maybe you will qualify for magic like mine: this opossum rib cage holds a spirit who makes arrows bounce off of my skin; this pouch of eyeballs lets me see into the Spirit World; this carved stick can light a fire.

Marriage is an important part of life. It is a joyous occasion when men and women find spiritual harmony, good hunting, and many things to laugh about together. It is usually good while it lasts, and we think it is more and more incredible as it

lasts longer. Grandmother Garestal was married to her second husband for 47 years before he died.

Remember that you must be ready to teach your sister's cubs the way of our people. A father feeds and guards, but it is an uncle who teaches.

Death comes to all, for Trickster made it so that we all die. When the life force leaves our bodies we join the Ancestors, a powerful clan who live in the Den of Power Dreams. If we are fortunate and powerful our stay among them will be long. If not, then we will be reborn here as bears and Rathori again.

What is the difference between men and women?

We are the Hunters and they are the Keepers. The Mothers are the Keepers of the Life Force, the carriers of the river of life. We are the protectors and assistants to the Life Force, honored to be separated from it as men. They carry it, we keep its balance. Together men and women can achieve the balance required to preserve our Grandmother Earth from further harm.

Who rules us?

Gromavon Who Sees Special is our ruler. She guides our Den with the wisdom of a seer. When I outfought the Soldier of Gold three years ago, it was my strike that slew him, but Gromavon's rune carved into the spearhead which allowed me to strike. Once I saw her attach your own mother's severed arm. Your father came here because Gromavon sent him word it would be good luck to do so. You'd better pay attention whenever she speaks to you.

What makes a man great?

The number of followers marks a man's greatness. We follow only leaders who are greater than we are. You decide when you should follow, and when you should stand beside the leaders and speak to Gromavon or to face the angry weapons of foes who wish to kill you.

What is evil?

Remember our taboos. You must never do women's work unless you are walking the shaman's path. You must never cut the Grandmother's skin with a plow, nor bind beasts to work like a slave. You must never forget the secret of language or of fire, or else the bears will lose their status as rulers of animal-kind. You must never kill a creature without purpose, nor without saying the Great Prayer first, nor slaughter it without the Lesser Prayer. You must always attend the Sacred Time dances, or else the Sun will not rise and the world will end.

Beware of the vices that destroy a man. Eating food in secret is corrupt. Slaying a person of the Rathori People is wrong, even if they are of the black or blue bears. Looking at women's secrets is forbidden—you will be struck blind or lame, maybe torn to bits. Telling men's secrets to women is taboo: if lightning does not strike you down then your eyes will dim, your arm weaken, and brain worm spirits kill you slowly.

What is my lot in life?

We are men, born to assist the Life Force. In the old days, Old Man chose not to bear children. Don't believe what your mother said about women having babies alone—only the goddesses have babies without men.

There are many roads to advancement. We all strive to be great. Perhaps some day you will lead a band of men to war, to hunt bears or mammoths, or to the river city to trade.

Are there more people like us?

No people are as close to Grandmother as the Rathori, but there are others who share at least part of our sacred bond with her and our kinship with the animals. They can be found far and wide. You know of the reindeer people, the Uncolings, who live to the north, under the shadow of the Great Glacier, but there are others who live much further away. I have heard of boar people and wolf people to the south, and old Haznaral has said that in his spirit-free-flying dreams he traveled far, far to the east and saw even stranger folk, but he drinks too much mushroom ale to believe.

How do we deal with others?

The members of your family are your first concern. Live and die for the family and ancestors. Without them, we are lost like salmon without a river.

Other Rathori can be good friends. We love to see relatives. Every year we meet the Green Oak Clan and Greyrock Dance Clan at the high oaks at acorn time. This year we'll go see the people along the River of the Old Woman's Laughter. Many of the men from our clan married women from that area.

Be wary of foreigners, and don't make the mistake of thinking all foreigners are the same. Some are easier to understand and safer to deal with than others. The Uncolings are good, but they don't have much to trade except metal goods from the Third Eye Blue.

The foreigners who wear the gold are not to be trusted. There are those women in red, who worship the Red Moon, who come to the Salmon Run each fall—I don't trust them. The elves are our friends. They do not like to deal with outsiders but have often come among us. Once, our people and they had an alliance and we conquered many foes. Since then we have shared this forest as equals.

Who are our enemies?

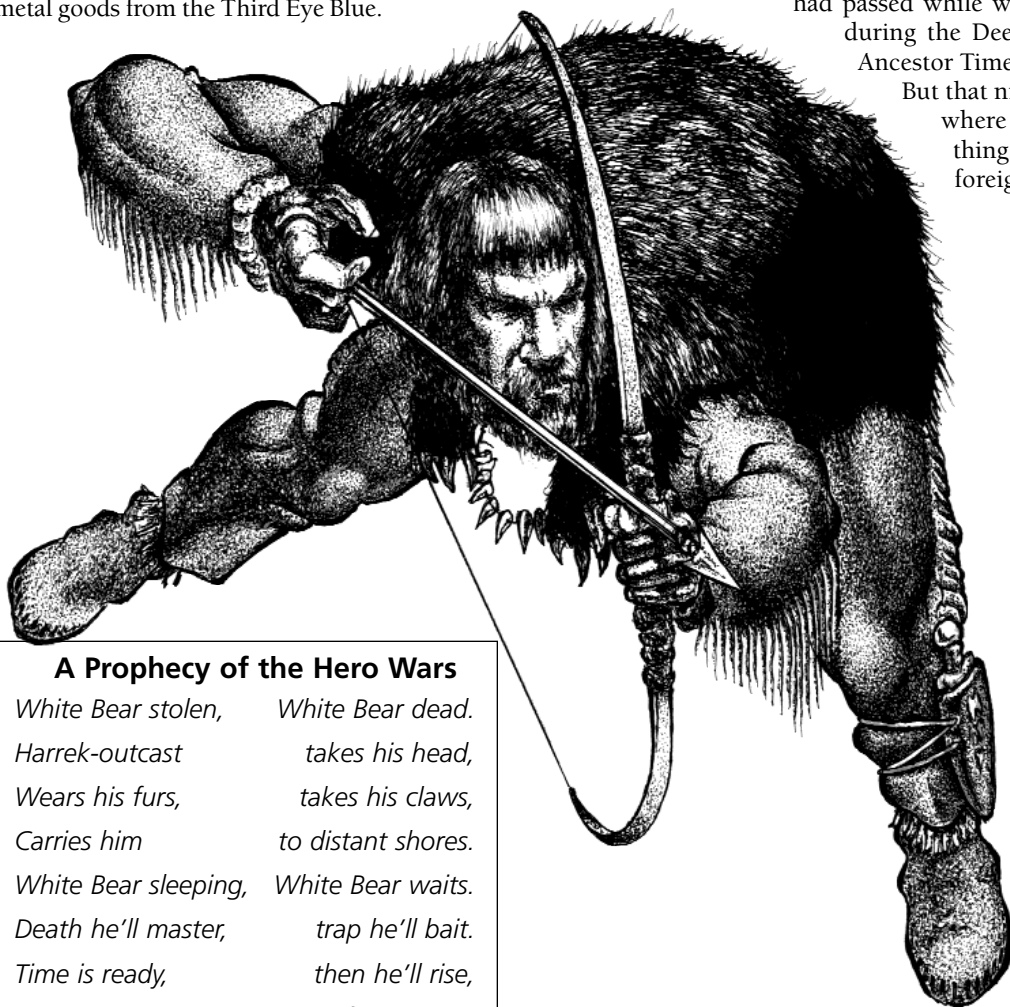
Trickster is our enemy. His troublesome acts robbed Grandmother Earth of her bounty and made the world a place populated by spirits of death, disease, devils, and such evil practices as sorcery, rending the earth with plows, and building cities.

Who are my spirits?

Rathor is our greatest spirit, the Great Bear, our Ancestor who dug the rivers, raised the mountains, and shaped the sky. His boon companions are our protectors: Agikoros the Fire, Silent Stalker, and Enimipol the Mother of Beasts. I think your arrow head will especially acquaint you with Silent Stalker, the hunting spirit. You are advised to sacrifice to Dog Brother, and if you are lucky then Gromavon will summon Harastos of the Salmon to teach you. Thanz, the Acorn Spirit, is one of our mainstays, and Burrowing Toad Mother is our healer. Bluben the nymph of the stream blesses us when we visit her.

What was the Deep Sleep?

Most people think that we slept through a terrible cursed time. When I woke the foreigners we met insisted that time had passed while we slept. I disbelieved—my dreams during the Deep Sleep were the same dreams of Ancestor Time we have every mid-winter festival. But that night the planets were not in the sky where they should have been, so something major changed, and I think that the foreigners are probably right.



A Prophecy of the Hero Wars
White Bear stolen, White Bear dead.
Harrek-outcast takes his head,
Wears his furs, takes his claws,
Carries him to distant shores.
White Bear sleeping, White Bear waits.
Death he'll master, trap he'll bait.
Time is ready, then he'll rise,
Gods his prey, Life his prize.

Secrets of the Invisible World

The Bear Shaman Speaks

Where did the world come from?

Korgatsu Earthmaker swam across the endless waters, seeking a place to rest. For ages she swam, sometimes meeting creatures who told of their own wanderings. At last she realized that there was no land, and she decided to make it. She called together her companions, and set to work.

Her First Four Companions were Turtle, from the South, whose wide shell was the platform they worked upon; Loon, from the North, who dived to the bottom and brought up mud; Otter, whose paws shaped the mud, and who slid through it to form rivers; and Swimming Eagle, who brought magic flints from the east to make the land hard. A star shined on them from Above, and a fish swam Below.

The five companions sang songs as they worked, and those are the songs we sing at Holy Time when the earth is renewed. We also sing songs to the Four Earth Powers (Bear, Lion, Wolf, and Weasel), the Powers of Above (Sun Eagle, Red Hawk, Dusk-flying Bat, and Winter Owl), and the Powers of Below (Whale, Mole, Toad, and Rattlesnake).

Where did I come from?

Earthmaker set to making the First People. They were all spirits who lived as equals in those days. Some of them were animals, who are ancestors of tribes and clans. Others were plants, stars, rivers, or even things that no longer seem alive to us today, such as the drum and cooking tripod. One of them was Old Man.

Old Man travelled about, a servant of the Life Force working to manifest creation to advantage. He was a friend and companion of Trickster, the animals spirits, and the powerful tools. Whatever he did, we must all now do, for that is the way of the world. All creatures have their place in the cosmic scheme, and Old Man's was to make people. He met many wonderful beings then, and had many children with them.

At first, everyone was confused, but then Rathor came. He taught people to dance and sing with the rhythms of nature. Tribes were made, speech was invented, and Trickster stole fire for mankind.

Why do we die?

Earthmaker once asked man if he wanted to live like a rock or die like a tree. Living like a rock meant that no one would have to die, but no one could grow or have children either. Old Man chose to be like a tree instead, and that is why we live, have children, die, and are reborn their children.

So Rathor came again and taught people a new dance, and everyone began to die. This was not a bad thing, but Bad Man fooled people into being afraid of death. They forgot part of the dance, and so they grew fearful. Now everyone who does not understand their part in the rhythm of the universe is afraid.

What happens after we die?

When you shed your body your spirit will be met by your spirit allies. They will guide you to the Other Side. They will take you to the place with the ancestors in the Invisible World that you have sought during your life. If your spirit is healthy you will be like a hero and a shaman, but if your spirit is unhealthy you will become like a rabbit that runs before the wolves.

Why am I here?

Earthmaker is infinite and mysterious, but through magical effort we can get glimpses of his magnificence. Those glimpses all say one thing: live! We are here to serve that command.

In the dance of your life you will put on many clothes, and take off many. First you put on the loincloth of adolescence, then the jerkin of adulthood, and finally the cloak of age that weighs men down. In your life you will take off the ignorance of childhood, the inexperience of youth, and the uncertainty of adulthood.

How do I do magic?

Magic is from the Invisible World, where spirits live. Spirits can teach us many charms to overcome our foes, help us to hunt, or make our lives easier. When you become a man, you will seek a spirit ally. One might find you soon, or it may take many years of searching until you find the spirit that has selected you. It might test you during that time, to make sure that you know the ways of our people and are worthy of its help.

I have heard of other powers. Can you tell me the truth about...

...Aldrya?

The Mistress of the Woods is a powerful and changeable goddess. She controls all of the woods and its spirits. If treated respectfully, she will usually ignore you and your work.

...Chaos?

Chaos is the cause of the world's wrongs. If not for Chaos, children would never get sick, no person would ever go hungry, and no one would die before their time. We wouldn't have to toil for a living, and berries would sprout all year long, but for Chaos.

...Gods?

Please, before you begin to list the gods you have heard of, let me tell you the greater truth about gods. Some gods, like Earthmaker, King of Above, or Silent Stalker, can be treated with by a shaman, but the others must not be trusted. They are great and immense spirits, but all seek after their own power. They do not cooperate, they control, and anyone who submits himself to their command, like the priests who worship the sun or storm, is a slave forever. They have lost Earthmaker.

...the Moon?

The Moon Goddess is typical of the gods of the world. She is self-seeking, and she made herself into an immortal at the expense of many others. Worse yet, she is mistress of Chaos and aids the evil of the world.

...the Ocean?

The brooding God of the Deeps is the greatest of the slave-makers. But he is subject to the power of King of Below, and because of that he hates all life on earth.

...Sorcerers?

Worse than voluntary slavery to selfish gods is the empty worship of raw Power. Sorcerers are heedless of nature and cause irreplaceable ruin. Their arts do not seem dangerous to them, but their spirits are like ashes. They have lost Earthmaker.

...the Storm God?

This violent and brutal god delights in upsetting the gentle flow of nature. His storms are capricious and unpredictable, and usually bring more ill than good.

...the Sun?

The sun god is King of Slaves; he even enslaved the other gods into his command. Only the lesser spirits, which he thought beneath his notice, have escaped the chains of his worship.

Spirits of the Rathori

Bad Man

This malignant spirit strives to bring trouble, misery, and woe to all living things. Bad Man broke contact between Rathor and the First People, and ever since he has striven to keep people from re forging their holy connections with the Invisible World. He is the enemy of Rathor and of all Life.

Chief Star, King of Above

This being is sometimes called Pole Star, for he is the only star who does not move. He rules the Sky World, where live creatures that are sometimes like, sometimes unlike those of Earth World. Chief Star is unreachable to us, but many of his subjects are well known. They can send spirits of wind, rain, sunshine, and starlight to shamans.

Earthmaker

The all-knowing maker of the world is sometimes called the Great Spirit. Omnipotent and all-encompassing, this entity is so immense that normal mortals find it hard to reach him. One time everyone knew Earthmaker intimately, but they forgot, and a great fear and horror took them. Since that time, all mortals strive to again reach Earthmaker, guided by their shamans.

The False God

This spirit appears and disappears often. It is a false trickster, capable of cruelty and stupidity, but not able to teach. It always appears in disguise or behind a mask, sometimes seemly, sometimes hideous enough to kill. It promises much, but delivers no magic.

First Four Companions

When Earthmaker created the world these creatures aided him. In reward, they are the overseers of the four directions, the elements, and many spirits.

Grandmother Earth

Ancient and immense, the mother of the Life Force touches and nourishes all her children. The rocks are her bones, and the dirt is her flesh, while plants and animals are her children, our brothers and sisters. She is so great that many people think she is a goddess, and they submit to her command. They would do as well with a shaman; better, because then their spirits would be their own, not hers.

Grasper, King of Below

This great power of darkness is sometimes called Deep Gulper or Eater, because weak and unwary spirits are taken by him and devoured after death. He lives beneath the floating earth, and from him comes the things that frighten mortals and make them forget their place in the world. He is unreachable, but his servants can be reached to send out darkness spirits, some spirits of the dead, and monsters. Anyone who submits to his command will lie in the realm of nightmares, and after death will be reborn as a troll.

Rathor

When everyone in the world was confused and afraid they could not tell themselves from their neighbors. No one knew how to speak to the Powers. Everyone forgot how to drum, dance, and sing in harmony with the world. Among these confused people came Rathor, who taught them what was necessary to live. He is the greatest spirit, for he teaches us all to bring our own powers alive. Without him we could never reach the Great Spirit. Without his children, we would not be here nor know our bear brothers: Irdag the Black Bear, Orenra the Blue Bear, and our own ancestor, Irgar the Grizzly.

Silent Stalker

This spirit teaches people the way to hunt, kill, and then return animals to the womb of Enimipol. He has many children, and everyone claims their hunter is the First Hunter. But like all the great powers, he cannot easily be reached except through his assistants, who are suitable for our needs.

Spider Woman

When the world was made, Spider Woman was one of the First People, meek and almost invisible. One time the world broke because no one danced, but Spider Woman cast her webs about the pieces and held them together. As a reward, she was given command of Nature, and now everyone now dances parts of her Spider Dance to keep the world alive.

Trickster

Trickster is troublesome even to friends, but you can find power in his devious ways. When Trickster shakes things and breaks things and changes his form, the world must respond somehow, and if you can understand the significance of his raucous noises you can learn from him. Just be careful.

