

POLO

The Wraith Raider homeworld is an inhospitable world of ice and death, the inhabitants are survivors, one and all, and must fight constantly to keep themselves alive.

The Wraith raider lifecycle is a short one, and so they must learn at an early age the ways of the killer. The average number of young in a wraith litter is between five and eight, of these, at most, three will survive, the usual number is nearer to one or none. From the beginning of their life, the Wraith must learn survival skills at a far faster rate than any other race. It is a well known fact that the wraith are typically able to walk and run at the age of One, they are able to identify prey and predator by the age of Two, and are ready to begin training to hunt and kill by the age of Three.

Wraith training is at a pace unknown by any of the other races, their innate ability to absorb information stands them well in the environment that they were born to. If a wraith has not learned to Kill and stalk prey by the age of four, it is unlikely that they will continue to survive for very long. Wraith parents are ruthless to the point of brutality with their children, knowing that if they are not, the child may well not be able to survive when they themselves die. Seen by many other races as being uncaring, the wraith know that they are showing the greatest kindness to the child as they force it to learn

the harsh truth of the world.

There are several different factions within the Wraith as a whole, various continents of the world hold the many tribes of Wraith, in some places, life by the wraith is impossible, huge creatures of unimaginable power stalk the glaciers killing each other and anything else that gets in their way. Once, the wraith tried to make homes for themselves here in these places, but when faced with creatures that can take on entire tribes and consume them without true effort, they were forced to concede that certain places were still out of their reach.

These Glaciers are known as the Deadlands, and only those seeking the ultimate challenge will dare venture upon them. Many times, Shaktar who have been dishonoured will take the challenge to remain on the glacier for a month with only hand weapons and no food. If they survive, they are judged to be powerful enough warriors to be given a second chance, and may undertake the rite of honour to regain their standing within their race. This particular rite is covered in a different book.

LIFE ON POLO

The Iceworld is not renowned for its hospitality, the world orbits a single sun system, and has 16 hour days, eight light, eight dark. Life continues at an equal pace at all times, and no provision is made for night or day. The tribal nature of the wraith means that all wraith are born into a family. This may sound strange given the nature of wraiths in general, but it is true. The individual tribes all have their own particular ways of living and surviving, and the four main tribes will be detailed at a later point.

An Average wraith village has a population of three to four hundred, these wraith will typically belong to the same tribe, and they will work together as a unit. Typically, there are no wraiths in the village between the ages of ten and thirty, this is due to the nature of the wraith society. The children are cared for until the age of Seven, at which point they continue with their duties on Polo until they reach the age required to join SLA industries. By definition, this age is usually ten, although especially gifted youngsters will leave earlier. By the age of thirty, most wraith are reaching the ends of their operative career, for better or worse, and most of them take this point to return to Polo and make certain that their genes live on in the next generation. As a result of this, most of the older members of the tribe are accomplished warriors in their own right, and they are fully equipped to handle the tasks that will

be set for them. The Children can learn from the best warriors of the race, and the elders can rest easy knowing that their life is fulfilled.

An average wraith village will be walled off from the outside world, and will have well trained snipers around the edges of it. Roaming creatures will usually not approach the village, knowing the penalties of coming too close to the edge of the village. Hunting parties are sent out every day, to bring back at least three times the amount of food that is required. The reason this is done is simple, in places such as Polo, food can become scarce, and there is often no warning as to when the food supply may suddenly dry up in the area around the village. The wraith metabolism makes fasting an impossibility, and so food must be stored at all times for such emergencies. In the event that one of the larger creatures of Polo are sighted, a War party is raised, and all the warriors of the village will leave their assigned tasks to make certain that the creature is taken down.

The young are in the care of the women until the age of Three, and then they are almost exclusively taken by the males of the tribe to learn the arts of hunting and killing. This varies from tribe to tribe, but is a general rule for the wraith. The Females of the tribe are usually found in the positions to do with keeping the children safe and fed. There is some curiosity about this in other races, but the wraith understand that the privilege of keeping the children safe is one of the highest accorded to anyone.

The average wraith village has around twenty houses, one hall for the meetings of the tribe, and at least two places for the storing and preparation of food. Wraith houses are usually single levelled areas, usually keeping three rooms for the sleeping quarters, and one larger area linked to the other parts which is the only other private area in the household. The Houses are always weatherproof, as the weather on polo can be worse than any other world. The Storms that ravage the southern hemisphere of the world are able to strip unprotected flesh to the bone, and although the wraith have naturally adapted over the centuries to the biting cold, at night, the temperature drops below even their ability to survive.

NIGHT ON POLO

The night has always been a time of terror, where the proverbial boogeyman comes out to snatch away unsuspecting children. On Polo, this is actually true, at night, the temperature outside of the houses drops to -100 degrees, at this temperature, not even the wraith can survive without some form of assistance. The wraith on the walls of each settlement don their survival suits, and prepare for the darkness to

approach. The gates are sealed and barred against intruders, and the guardians settle in their posts to await the coming of the tide of darkness. Many of the most dangerous predators know of the wraith, and they know of their abilities at range, over the years, most of them have learned how to approach with stealth and under the cover of night. Most dangerous of all the creatures of the night are the wraithen, a terrible legacy from the dark pasts of the wraith raiders, returning to haunt them in this new age.

TRIBES ON POLO

KAROK TRIBE

The Karok wraith are the most intellectual of the tribes, their teachings are the same as the other wraith until the age of Three. At that time, they begin to undertake the other teachings, the Karok are the only tribe of Wraith that place a massive emphasis on family, passing down generations of history and knowledge from parent to child. The litters of these tribes tend to survive intact, and they band together to form complex bonds that last well after they leave their homeworld.

Looked upon by the other tribes as pampered weaklings, the Karok know more about the other ways of killing and the importance of information upon any battlefield. Several of the members of the tribe have an excellent understanding of poisons, toxins, and Virii in general. The preferred method of killing for the Karok is through Trap and guile rather than by direct confrontation, and their knowledge base reflects this.

Each Karok tribe member has a name that they are referred to in general public, and a name that is only used by other Karok tribe members. If calling in the assistance of a family member or help from the tribe itself, it is this name that will be used to validate the authority of those making the request. In this way, the tribe keeps its knowledge solely within its ranks.

The Karok are the most organised of all the tribes, their homes are usually on more than one level, and in addition to the main area of the home, there is usually a small area where the private teaching of the children by the parents may continue into the night. The Grand hall of each Karok tribe also has a record of all the knowledge of the tribe, this is maintained by the oldest of the tribe, and is usually maintained by the same family throughout the history of the tribe. The walls of the settlements are the most loosely defended of all the wraith tribes, but this is with good reason, for the karok are amongst the few wraith tribes to actively use technology on their home world that is not indigenous to the world. The walls are often covered with sophisticated motion and bio scanners, and these give warning to the tribes long before any attack should actually take place.

DE JI TRIBE

The Deji are the most spiritual of the wraith, as with all the other tribes, the teachings till the age of three are the same. At this point the young are tutored in the ways of the Great Hunter, a godlike being that they are taught looks over them at all times, guiding and protecting. The primary teachings of the Deji are designed to give the young wraith a calmer and more solid perspective on life, giving them clarity when seeing situations, and teaching them the virtue of keeping a calm and even temper when the situation seems to be falling apart.

Deji Wraith are an anomaly when dealing with the general public, neither swift tempered or short of attention span, they are the most collected of all the wraith, they are well suited to sniping roles, and have the greatest track record of producing long distance technicians.

These wraith learn the value of meditation and show a greater understanding of the shortness of life without having any of the other wraith shortcomings when it comes to coming to terms with it. They occasionally bear tribal markings as part of their initiation into the worship of the great hunter, those who learn the rituals well enough may go on to become a Keeper of the Faith. Any wraith who understands enough to hold the rank of Keeper is well respected in general wraith society, as the trials needed to gain that rank are many and almost impossible.

Deji tribes live in larger settlements than most of the other tribes, this is due in part to the structure of their villages. All the buildings in a Deji settlement are interlinked by a series of above and below tunnels. The settlements are circular in design, and the housing is curiously circular in design as well. Whether

this is due to the Deji belief of all life being a circle is unknown outside of the Deji tribe, but the houses are amongst the better designed in all of wraith society. The Deji tribe are amongst the most hospitable of all the tribes, and it is to them that the outsiders tend to go when they visit the world of Polo. Most Deji tribes keep a separate dwelling for guests to the settlement, this dwelling is easily distinguishable from the other housing as it is square in shape, the only building to be so.

RUNAN TRIBE

The Runan are the masters of hunting and tracking, unparalleled in their abilities, displaying an almost supernatural talent for locating and killing prey. At one with their surroundings, they have an innate understanding that everything, no matter its size and power, is prey. The Elders of this tribe form the elite amongst the wraith on Polo, lending out their understanding to the other tribes in return for food and equipment when they so see fit.

Runan Wraith are utterly fearless, they know the value of retreat and understand the nature of overwhelming odds, but they will never break and run from a fight if they have to hold the line. Their understanding of the relationship between predator and prey gives them an inner strength to use when times seem darkest. Many of them have been known to fight battles that were thought to be impossible and triumph, even though it cost them their own lives In the process.

Defying the odds to survive is the creed and code of the Runan, and they will take any challenge to prove that. Once a year, when the Elders are chosen to lead the tribe for the next year, the previous elders gather their equipment, arm their weapons, and journey to the Deadlands, there to keep the challenge until death.

Runan settlements have the smallest walls and most lax of all the defences of the wraith. It is believed that the tribe acquire their unshakeable resolve by living in the deepest wilds of polo and refusing to hide behind walls. This inevitably leads to several more deaths in the Runan community than have been reported in the other tribes due to the huge number of predators in the world. The Runan are not concerned by this, it is simply an extension of the survival of the fittest, those who can survive growing up in a runan settlement can survive anything.

NITAN TRIBE

The Nitan are the most vicious of all the tribes, of each litter, only one will survive, this is not an average, this is the law. Each litter is trained and pitted against one another from the time of birth, by the age of three, when their teaching begins proper, only one of the litter is alive. If somehow two have survived until this point, then they are placed in a pit with no weapons and made to fight till one can no longer continue. In the event of this happening, it is very likely that they will manage to kill each other in the frenzied battle that ensues at this point.

The Nitan tribe teach only close combat, and they are the undisputed masters of the close fight. Their training in the weapons that kill at range only begins in their sixth year of life. At this point, they have mastered one style of close combat weaponry, and are familiar with all basic forms of close combat weaponry. Unarmed combat is one of the most practised skills in the tribe, and any wraith that fails to make the grade will be exiled from the tribe by the age of five.

Nitan Tribe members are familiar with the killing points of every species within the world of progress, and use this knowledge both efficiently and ruthlessly, refusing to teach it to any other races.

Nitan Settlements are much the same as other wraith settlements, with the exception of several training rings dotted around the outskirts of the settlement. Given the Nitan predilection towards close combat, it is a wonder why these wraith have lasted as long as they actually have, but their method of survival is simple, they dictate the terms of warfare. In each village, there is one gate that always remains open, this leads to a huge cage, which holds several trainee Nitan. The rest of the wall is always intensely guarded at all times, the only way into one of these settlements is either by the challenge gate, or by invitation, nothing else gets in. Should anything actually get into the challenge gate, it will not actually get past the gate, even if it should slaughter all the trainees in the cage, there is no way past the gate. Snipers are always present around the cage in case something looks as if it might break through. Nitan houses are basic to say the least, beds and other furniture are usually not present, it teaches the children the benefit of correct positioning without furniture interfering with that, and is a part of the Nitan culture. If a nitan wraith sits upon your floor, it is a mark of the greatest respect that they feel welcome there.

TRIBAL DIFFERENCES

The various tribes teach the same basic skills up until the age of three, and then they begin to teach the special skills of the tribe. This circumvents a part of the basic character creation in that a wraith who is part of one of the tribes only starts with a lower number of basic character creation points. To offset this, they acquire a basic package of skills and a special tribe ability, this cannot be purchased with experience points, and is only taught to members of the tribe. The only other place in the entire world of progress that will teach the skill is the Testing Ground run by Renna Durell in central downtown.

Karok - Basic Character points - 250

The Karok tribe must take a second name, this is their tribal name that they may not reveal to any other member of the public. If they require the assistance of their tribe, they must send back a message to their elders (usually on mort), the elders evaluate this request and send back whatever they deem necessary.

Basic Skills package

Knowledge – Poisons/Toxins Level 8 – This skill is a knowledge of all non-engineered toxins that occur within the world of progress. There will be some of the more rare and strange toxins that may not be known by the young Karok, but certainly all mundane toxins and poisons are known of. A side effect of this is that the wraith will also be aware of how to mix the toxin, and also how to neutralise it. They will be able to manufacture antidotes to most types of poison if they have the basics to mix it. The wraith will also be aware of the correct application of the aforementioned toxin, and will be knowledgeable as to how suitable each poison is for the task at hand.

Knowledge – Traps Level 5 – This gives the wraith a knowledge of most types of trap, as well as a basic knowledge of how to disarm any basic trap. More complex traps or combined traps may cause the wraith added negatives to their roll. If the wraith has their tribal kit with them, this will give them bonuses to their roll.

Knowledge – Species knowledge (choose any three races) Level 3 – This is an in depth knowledge of a particular races particular weaknesses to certain poisons and drugs. It also give the wraith the knowledge of how that races particular nervous system works, and what things will be completely ineffective against them.

Clan Skill

Adaptability – This skill is the culmination of years of learning to survive through knowledge and preparation. The wraith will be able to live in almost any environment without specialised gear unless the conditions are completely impossible to live in (lava pits and so forth). They will also be aware of telltale signs as to how toxic certain flora/fauna are, and how best to prepare them.

Advantages/Disadvantages

Minor Friend – Karok Tribe – Level 8

Starting Equipment

Karok analysis kit – This kit is a specialised miniature laboratory which fits inside the average sized video case, with this, the wraith is able to analyse almost any form of toxin and begin to prepare an antidote to the aforementioned toxin. Using this kit, they are able to mix normal toxins and the tools contained within allow them to manufacture toxin shells if they have the casings for them.

Deji - Basic Character Points - 240

The Deji character is calm and collected at all times, their training involves a great degree of devotion to the Great hunter, and they must make a sacrifice of their earnings to the temples on polo every month in continued supplication to the lord of the hunt. In return for this, they are given the best training in concentrating and precision that any race has ever known.

Basic Skills package

Ranged Weapon (Choose Two) Rank 6 – As per the normal skill. The difference to this is that with the two weapons covered by this skill, the Deji may also apply their Focus skill to the strike

Meditation – this skill is the practise of remaining calm at all times. When faced with a situation that would normally require them to make a cool roll, they may instead opt to make an unmodified roll on their cool. This costs them the next action in that round, but if they succeed, they may ignore any psychological penalties for the situation that they are meditating upon.

One Strike – This skill allows the wraith to pool their concentration into a single strike with a melee weapon or basic unarmed combat maneouvere. The

wraith forfeits one or more of its phases in an attack round, and in return, receives a bonus to their dice roll for each round that they focus. This bonus is equivalent to +1 for each phase that they miss.

Shadowhands – This skill allows the wraith to move in synchronisation with their opponent. The wraith may not attack back, or use any of their other abilities, but they gain a bonus to their defence equal to the their skill in close combat. It does not have to be unarmed combat, but if using a weapon, the wraith may not attack with it.

Clan Skill

Focus – This ability is the culmination of the wraiths many years of devotion to the worship of the great hunter. The Wraith acquires the ability to tune out everything else in the vicinity. When using this skill, they may apply the level of this skill to any other physical skill that they are using at the time. This skill may not be used in combat except with the two ranged weapons that they have practised with. Sniping is not considered to be combat unless the position that the wraith is in is under fire at the time.

Advantages/Disadvantages

Cult of the Hunter, basic starting level of Follower of the Hunt with all priviledges therefore.

Tithe – The Wraith must pay 20c or 1% of their monthly earnings (whichever is highest) to the elders of their religion in deference to the Great hunter. Deji Characters who do not pay this tithe will lose their Focus skill until they are fully up to date with their tithe. This is not a mystical link, rather the fact that the Deji belief in the Great hunter is so ingrained that they will be unable to focus while showing disrespect to the great hunter.

Belief – The Great Hunter – The Deji believe that everything is linked to the great hunter in one way or another, they will react with implacable fury to anything that shows disrespect to the great hunter in any way. Should one of the hunters shrines be defiled, they will immediately inform their elders and make request to hunt down the perpetrators of the defiling, all other concerns will be secondary at this time. Should the Deji not hunt down the perpetrator, they lose their focus skill until such time as one of the keepers of the faith sets them a task to restore the great hunters approval of them. If they fail in this task, they may well become ostracised from their tribe for quite an extended period of time.

Starting Equipment

Talisman of the Hunter – This is a simple chain of forged Titanium in the shape of the Hunter symbol, it is the essence of the wraiths faith.

Runan - Basic character points - 250

Fearless to all things that cause lesser races to turn and flee, the Runan have evolved a very select genetic structure that is yet to be understood by the other races. They are fully capable of ignoring all types of psychological warfare without so much as a casual glance, it is an ability that is yet to be learned by the other races in the world of progress

Basic Skills Package

Knowledge – Prey Level 5 – This skill allows the wraith (on a successful skill roll) to know basic habits and traits of the prey that they are stalking. Rarer and more elusive prey may cause the Gm to modify the roll as they see fit.

Instinct Level 4 – Similar to the streetwise skill, the instinct skill give the runan an innate understanding of any target that he is studying at the time. A successful roll on this skill will allow the runan some rudimentary knowledge or insight into what the target will do next. This is not a psychic skill as such, but at least some insight into what the target will be doing next.

Clan Skill

Fearless – There are no levels to this skill, rather it is an ability that allows the wraith to ignore all psychological effects that may cause them to retreat or suffer other adverse psychological. This skill works automatically, and the wraith may act normally at all times. This skill is so ingrained into the psychology of the Runan tribe that even supernatural attacks and other non-natural things will have no effect on them, this goes all the way to the Gore cannon based abilities. It is not that the wraith is unaffected by the abilities or stimulus, it is simply that they have nothing on which to base what they are feeling, and are thus not affected by it.

Advantages/Disadvantages

Compulsion - Curiosity – Level 2 – This is a side effect of the clan skill. Not knowing fear makes the Runan very curious about anything new. This is limited to only those things which they have NEVER seen before, one way or the other. Variations of things that they have already seen will not arouse this

curiosity. The drawback to this is that anything that has not been seen before MUST be investigated, even if this causes danger to the wraith and their colleagues

Nitan - Basic Character points - 240

The nitan are ferocious fighters at all times, and have shorter tempers and attention spans than even their peers from the other tribes. They often have trouble restraining themselves and often are given space due to their distinct tribal markings.

Basic Skills

Martial arts – Rank 6 – as per the skill in the rule book.

Any One close combat weapon – Rank 8 – as per the skill in the rule book.

ALL other close combat skills – Rank 2 – This is all the other close combat skills in the basic rulebook with the exception of the one skill that they have chosen to master.

Clan Skill – Killing Blow Level 2 – This skill is the feared knowledge of all the races of the world of progress and their inherent weaknesses. Using this skill, the wraith can increase the damage they do to any target, or choose to pull their blow to cause unconsciousness. In game terms, this increases the Damage dealt by the wraith with any weapon by one point of damage per two points of skill. If they choose to strike to stun, the weapon (if any) that is used cannot be a vibro weapon, and cannot strike with an edge. The weapon deals an amount of damage equal to the basic damage of the weapon plus their skill in Killing blow. The damage dealt is noted on the side of the character sheet, as it does not actually cause real damage to the target. If the target suffers enough Stun damage that would normally kill them, then they are rendered unconscious by the strike. This skill in either mode cannot be used if the armour of the target is higher than PV15.

Advantages/Disadvantages

Rage – Level 5 – This is a representation of the sheer fury hiding under the skin of the Nitan, when they are forced to wait for anything, no matter how trivial, or if they are frustrated by a new turn of events, they may start to lash out at things. Modifiers are imposed as the Gm sees fit, but if the wraith passes the test, they may continue to act calmly, if they fail, they will begin to yell at the source of the irritation. If they fail the test again, they may actually lash out at the source of the irritation, but this is down to the GM.

Starting equipment

Close combat weapon of the type that they mastered. This weapon will be personalised to the wraith in question, and will be sacred to the wraith. If the weapon is lost or broken, then the wraith must make a pilgrimage back to the homeworld to replace this weapon. If they do not make this pilgrimage, then they will suffer a -2 on all their actions due to their guilt until they have replaced the weapon.

PLACES ON POLO

TIMN

Located in the Northern hemisphere, Timn is the capital city of Polo, and the largest concentration of life on the face of the planet, Timn is the shining jewel in the icy crown of Polo. The city itself is over fifty miles wide, and is fully the technical equivalent of Uptown Mort. The population breakdown is 92% Wraith, 2% human (no frothers), 3% Ebon, 1% Brain Waster, and 2% Shaktar. The Wraith population are scattered around the city, with only 1% of the city being reserved for the off world visitors. Visitors to the planet are not allowed into the other parts of the city without an escort, anyone found without their escort is quickly apprehended and taken back to the holding areas. The housing in non-visitor areas is spartan at best, in keeping with the traditions of the wraith settlements. There are two areas where the housing is more like those found off world, one of these is the Visitors area, the other is the Corporate building of SLA industries. Both of these areas have multiple storey buildings with all the home comforts of Uptown Mort.

BORRET

The primary space port on the world of Polo, and the only area of the planet with rudimentary climate control. The space port is fully capable of housing up

to two dreadnought class battle cruisers, and has a stable launch zone over 300 miles wide. This area is connected to the capital city by means of a reinforced underground bullet train, this train runs every three minutes, and is fully armoured and armed against any outside attacks. This service is not charged for, and never stops running. Should one of the trains be stopped, there are ten lines in both directions that run constantly, so travel will not be interfered with. The space port is fully armed, and is capable of hitting targets in orbit should it be required. This is not thought to ever be required, but as the space port is the only viable place to launch a planetary assault, SLA took steps to make certain that any attempted action would either be repelled, or would cost the invaders dearly.

GILSWERY

This is the name given to the equatorial boundary between the north and south of the world of polo. This area is a vast churning ocean of ice and slush over one hundred miles wide. Icebergs are many and numerous, and the water is actually below freezing point. It is thought that something in the atmosphere keeps the water from freezing, although it is not known quite what that thing may be. Huge creatures roam the area, eating the smaller lifeforms in the water and anything stupid enough to be found near the main perimeter of the shores. There are four waystations on either side of the equator, from these, huge armoured ships sail forth daily. The captains and crew of these ships are regarded as largely suicidal, but they are well aware of the creatures in the deep, and on average, only a hundred ships are lost yearly to attacks from the creatures. The more accepted way of travelling over Gilswery is to fly, but many of the more foolhardy (or insanely brave), prefer the old fashioned route. It is rumoured that somewhere deep within one of the trenches lies a creature the equal of Im'cha, the Giant creature worshipped by the Krach within Oceanus, but no living soul could corroborate this. The primary purpose for the shipping routes is for the transfer of food from the southern hemisphere to the north.

NELSDAK

This is the citadel built on the northern pole of Polo. It is over fifty miles wide and is one of the most spectacular pieces of engineering within the world of progress. Standing over a mile high, this citadel forms both a scanning station for the northern hemisphere of polo and, using the size of the citadel and the strong harmonic resonance of the planet, an interplanetary location beacon. This beacon is used by both ebon navigators and the more mundane forms of space travel such as ion and gravity drives.

The citadel is manned at all times by over a thousand Fourth circle warriors. At all times, at least one grand master and one keeper of the faith can be found in this place.

YAMURR

Located on the southern hemisphere, Yamurr is an exact replica of Nellsdak, and fulfills the same requirement on the southern continent.

The Northen hemisphere is the location for most of the organised wraith settlements, the capital city and the primary space port are located in this hemisphere, and it is here that the council of elders makes their base of operations. There are several thousand smaller settlements on this half of the world, and it represents the public face of Polo.

In Contrast, the Southern hemisphere is largely deserted, there are a few scattered settlements dotted all around the entire southern hemisphere. The reason for the lack of population in the southern half of the world is due to the massive concentration of hostile lifeforms in that half of the planet. Full 80% of all the hostile lifeforms on the planet reside here. The only reason that the wraith even bother to come down to the southern hemisphere is food. A single one of the creatures in the southern hemisphere can feed the average settlement for over a month. The Huge trawlers that travel the seas carry these huge creatures back to the north where a hungry population awaits. The other reason that wraith are ever found in the southern hemisphere is for the excellent hunting that can be done there. The greatest challenges to the true hunter can be found in this half of the planet. The Settlements that are found in the southern hemisphere are all hunter settlements, without exception. Many of those who follow the cult of the hunter are to be found here, showing their faith and devotion to the cult in ever more dangerous acts of hunting excellence.

CULT OF THE HUNTER

The cult of the hunter is thought to be the only organised religion on the face of Polo. The wraith are singularly pragmatic to the point of being Heretical. In most cases, this is more than acceptable for them, and they find no need to believe in anything. In some cases, the wraith find themselves wanting to believe in something more than what they are. When this happens, the wraith turn to the cult of the hunter. The Great Hunter is seen as the first wraith to turn hunting from a matter of survival into a skill to be mastered. The name of the Great Hunter passed from memory long ago, but others saw the need and formed a code of conduct, a set of rules, and a series of rites and rituals that reward those who show the ability. All Wraith are inducted into the cult of the hunter at birth, but most of them never take the responsibility any further than is absolutely necessary.

There are nine levels to the Cult of the hunter, each one requires progressively higher commitment to the cult and higher levels of martial prowess and ability. These levels are as follows

LEVEL	TITLE
1	Initiate of the Hunt
2	Follower of the Hunt
3	Brother of the Hunt
4	Mymidon of the Hunt

- 5 Leader of the Hunt
- 6 Master of the Hunt
- 7 Grand Master of the Hunt
- 8 Keeper of the Faith
- 9 Terminus

As an initiate of the hunt, the wraith is effectively a mere participant in the cult, they neither have any responsibilities or any influence within the cult as such.

Follower of the Hunt – The basic level of initiation into the cult, the followers have to pay a monthly tithe of 20c or 10% of their monthly earnings, whichever is highest. They must also have one weapon skill at level 5+ as a minimum requirement. At this level, they are also granted the talisman of the hunter. A simple piece of metal crafted in the shape of the hunters ritual knife, this talisman identifies the wraith to other hunters and may engender them to help one another in certain cases. This is by no means absolute, but as long as the request is reasonable, a lot of co-operation will be granted by simply displaying the talisman.

Brother of the Hunt – As a Brother of the Hunt, the wraith is beginning to take their first steps into the cult proper. They must pay an increased tithe of 30c or 10% of their monthly earnings, whichever is highest, but in addition to this, they must have at least two weapon skills at level 6+. They must also be familiar with the ritual of challenge, both in issuing and receiving it. If challenged by another member of the cult, within one level of them, they must accept the challenge. Failure to do so will sit badly with them with other members of the cult. As long as they are not in disgrace through refusing a challenge or some other such breach of protocol, they may call on the Hunters to assist them in certain matters (count as Major Friend Rank 1)

Mymidon of the Hunt – The Mymidons form the rank and file of the wraith cult. Mymidons are usually wraith who have no interest in pursuing their hunter status any further, or wraith who do not have the time to follow the cult in a serious fashion. Mymidons have to pay a tithe of 40c or 15% of their monthly earnings, whichever is highest. They must also possess any four weapon skills at a level of eight or higher. At this point, they are given Rank and privilege as befits them, they may command lower level hunters (within reason), these commands may not be suicidal, or obviously self-serving, but as long as the request does not severely impede the wraith taking the command, they are obliged to follow it. As a Myrmidon, they must be familiar with the rituals of Homecoming, Warning, and Scarring, and may call on other Hunters to assist them (Treat as major

friend rank 3)

Leader of the Hunt – Leaders of the hunt are proven warriors and leaders within the cult of hunters. They pay a tithe of 80c or 15% of their monthly earnings, whichever is highest, and have to have a variety of skills at their disposal. These include Four weapon skills at level 10 or above, Survival at 5+, Leadership at 5+, and Tracking at 5+. They must also be familiar with the rituals of Appeasement, Marking, and Wounding. Finally, they must have over fifty confirmed kills, all of these must be worthy kills (see later section on worthy prey). To offset all this responsibility, they are permitted to call on the cult of hunters with a greater level of power (treat as Major Friend rank 5).

Master of the hunt – At this stage, the wraith is now becoming recognised within the wraith community in their own right (treat as good reputation – Wraith raiders – Level 4). Their Tithe increases again at this point to 150c or 20% of their monthly earnings, whichever is highest. Their overall skill level will be superior to most wraiths, and the benefits that they now begin to enjoy will more than offset all the hard work and effort that they have had to put in to get to this level. As a master, the wraith will have Seven weapon skills, all at Level ten or higher, Survival 7+, Tracking 9+, Prey knowledge 8+, and leadership at 9+. They must also be familiar with the ritual of fertility, and must be capable of starting a Grand Recital. They will not need to be able to finish the Recital, but their delivery must be flawless. As part of the acceptance rites of being a master of the hunt, they must hunt (alone) one of the great beasts of Polo. The proof will be when their observer verifies their kill. They must also have over one hundred verified worthy kills to their credit. As a master, they are granted the right to raise and train children with the approval of the elders. Wraith may have children without the blessing of the elders, but those who wait until they have achieved that approval are accorded a greater measure of respect from their peers.

The Second part of their reward is in the form of a residence either on mort or polo (treat as good housing rank 10), this house is wholly granted to the master without any form of recompense necessary. The only limitation on the house is that it is treated as hallowed ground for purposes of Hunter hospitality, and one of the rooms of the house is always set aside for any hunter that requires sanctuary.

Finally, their ability to call on other hunters is increased (Treat as major friend rank 7)

Grand Master of the hunt – By now, the wraith is well known throughout the wraith community (good reputation level 8), and may well be known beyond the wraith community. In order to become a grand

master, the challenges they face are substantial. Firstly, they must know the Rituals of Life and Death, they must be able to begin and finish the Grand recital single-handedly, and they must know the ceremonies for the Walk of solitude and the walk of Scorn. They must have over two hundred confirmed worthy kills to their tally, and once they have managed all of this, they must then seek out one of the current Grandmasters and challenge them to a duel. The Grandmaster is permitted to choose the area in which the challenge will be defended, and is permitted to use any weapons they see fit. The Only restriction on the choosing of the area for the challenge is that there must be some cover in the area for the challenger to use. The challenger must take the grandmaster alive, and is not permitted to use any ranged soporifics of any sort. The knock out must be taken at close range and without serious harm to the Grandmaster. Conversely, the Grandmaster is quite at their liberty to shoot to kill without regard for the challenger. Due to the nature of this challenge, there are few who take their hunter career to this level, most are content to remain as masters. The select few who go to this level are almost always supremely confident in their own abilities, and are quite willing to take the risk for the rewards that the position carries.

As a Grand master, the wraith enjoys almost limitless command over other hunters (Treat as major friend rank 10), they are also given the right to start a new settlement of polo, instigating laws and rules as they so see fit. Upon their graduation as a Grand master, they are sent to attend the Grand council for a period not shorter than a month. While they are here, they are taught all the other tribal skills that they may not know at this point. All Tribal skills are taught to level 5 where appropriate.

Keeper of the Faith – this is the highest point that most wraith are able to ascend to, at this point, they are one step away from the pinnacle of wraith society. They must know all the tribal skills, rituals, and ceremonies at level ten or higher where applicable and be familiar with the ceremony of tribal destruction. They must also have over five hundred worthy kills to their name. As part of the keepers responsibility, the Keeper must have founded a settlement of at least one hundred wraith and kept the population safe and well fed for a period not shorter than two years. The final part of their trial to become a keeper is to travel the southern hemisphere and stalk and kill a Wraithen. With modern weaponry, this might be easier, however, the keeper is required to hunt the wraithen without benefit of powered weapons or armour, and without any form of ranged weapon or explosive. No observer is sent with them, instead, the proof of the kill is taken in the form of the wraithen skin. Wraithen skin is one of the more resilient forms

of armour in the known world, and demonstrates remarkable self healing skills even when not attached to the wraithen itself. The keepers robes of office are made from this skin, and they are the only ones permitted to wear such robes.

As a keeper, the wraith has supreme authority over any wraith of a lower level than them. The only people to whom they are liable are the wraith council and anything holding the rank of terminus. They are also the only members of the wraith race able to call a tribal destruction. They no longer pay any tithe, but are themselves given a tithe of 100c per month as a tribute to their prowess.

Terminus – The ultimate accolade that a wraith may win, at this level, they are acknowledged as the true masters of the hunt, with no equals in that field. The Rank of terminus is not challenged for, it is a test that is administered by the council. The Wraith taking the challenge must be a keeper of the faith already, and must give a gift of 1000c to each member of the council as compensation for their time and trouble. Those who cannot afford this are deemed to have not been successful enough to take the test. The wraith taking the test must have 2000 confirmed worthy kills, 500 of these must be hand to hand (without ranged weapons). They must be able to make a shot from Two hundred metres that hits two moving targets with one round, they are required to make this shot Twenty times, and will only pass if they make the shot more than ten times. The shot carries a basic difficulty of 30 or higher (base skill + 2d10). Finally, they must engage in a challenge of skill against the ten highest ranking grandmasters. The Grandmasters are permitted to choose their weapons and the testing area. This area may be absolutely anywhere, as the position of Terminus requires that the wraith taking the test be the ultimate in wraith hunting ability. The Terminus candidate is unarmed and unarmoured, and must render all the Grand masters unconscious without killing any of them.

If the Wraith succeeds in this test (and only four wraith ever have), then they are given a Terminus rifle. These weapons are the best rifles ever created in the world of progress for the purpose of sniping. The Weapon is a close focus portable rail cannon, weighing only four kilos, powered by an unknown source, and taking ammunition from the atmosphere around the main chamber. It can pierce any known armour and do catastrophic amounts of damage to any target that it strikes. It is not known who creates these weapons, or indeed, how they are created, all is known is that the weapons are only ever given to wraith who have achieved terminus status. Should the weapon be stolen from the wraith in question, the thief will find no profit from it. The weapon is keyed to the users specific genetic profile, should anyone

else try to fire it, it will immediately backfire and dump the energy from the firing chamber into the handle of the weapon, this is usually enough to discourage anyone from firing the weapon. In the event that some idiot tries to fire the weapon more than once, the rifle will take note of how many times it is fired without contact with its owner. Should it be fired more than four times, the weapons reactor will go super critical, the effect of this is akin to a close focus thermonuclear weapon.

The rifles basic statistics are as follows: Range – 2000m, Pen 30, Dmg 50, Ad 20 Ammunition unlimited.

The final part of the rank of Terminus is the right to countermand any decision made by any wraith who is lower than them in rank. SCL may prove to be a factor in wartime conditions, but SLA is aware of the mythos surrounding the cult of the hunter, and is often very, very tolerant of any decisions that the terminus may make. The only wraith who are higher in rank than a terminus status holder are the council of wraith on the homeworld of Polo.

The four holders of the rank of Terminus are Terminus, the wraith who created the test and proceeded to be the only wraith who passed the test with a perfect ratio. Amok, who currently operates as a lieutenant on the New Paris Habitat Ring, Korris, who was killed leading the wraithen culling of 897, and Renna Durell, who currently holds runs Testing Ground, the best wraith training centre on the face of mort.

BEASTS OF POLO

There are several creatures on the surface of polo, most of them are small enough to be no threat to the average wraith. What follows is a list of the creatures that are considered worthy prey for wraith on Polo.

Trige

(Wraith: Thundering Death) – The Trige is a huge mass of muscle and teeth, standing Ten feet at the shoulder, and over thirty feet long. The Trige has eight legs, each one of them over a metre in diameter, and can run at over forty miles an hour. They have the capability to bite and claw their prey, but their usual method of attack is to ram and trample their prey until death. Weighing in at over three tons, the Trige is not known for its intelligence, but once it has acquired the scent of prey, it will stop at nothing.

Natural Armour Toughened skin and Fur, PV 10

Hit Points 600-1000

Skills	Ram – 8 Trample – 13 Track – 9 Bite – 4 Stomp – 7
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Attack Damage 30	Ram – Dmg 40, Pen 20, Ad 15 Trample – Dmg 30, Pen 30, Ad Bite – Dmg 10, Pen 9, Ad 6 Stomp – Dmg 20, Pen 15, Ad 20
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Redloap

(Wraith: Stalking Slasher) – Redloap are pack animals, their name comes from their natural skin colour of deep crimson, and their odd style of motion, bounding across the ice fields in search of food. They are six feet high at the shoulder, with powerful hind legs, they are equally at home on two or four legs, but prefer to attack from a quadripedal stance. They hunt in groups of thirty or forty and are amongst the most dangerous of predators when on the hunt. They have near Human intelligence (treat as Int 4), and the ability to morph their skin to the colour of the environment that they are in at the time (white typically). Their vision is infra red, a creature that is wearing a heat insulated suit will be effectively invisible to them. The normal wraith coldsuit is not actually fully heat sealed, and specialised sealing equipment must be purchased to be truly effective.

Natural Armour Skin – PV 4

Hit points 20-40

Skills Claw – 9
Track – 15
Camoflage – 10
Instinct – 5

Attack Damage Claw – Dmg 7, Pen 9, Ad 5

If the Redloap attack in a pack, they gain a bonus to their combat skills equal to the total number of them attacking a single target divided by two (for example, if six redloap attacked a single target, they would all gain +3 to their combat rolls).

Yhena

(Wraith: Terrible Fang) – The Yhena is one of the lesser predators on the face of Polo, like the redloap, it is a pack animal, and is amongst the more effective of such beasts. The Yhena is Four feet long, standing two feet tall at the shoulder, four legged, with a mouth over a foot long. Their only effective form of attack is their bite, the yhena has a unique array of teeth that can bite a single target multiple times whilst not releasing the grip of the jaws. The Yhena attack larger targets by attaching themselves to the target and dragging it down, then using their bite attack to slowly dismember the prey.

Natural Armour	Skin and Fur – PV 5
Hit Points	10-15
Skills	Bite – 6 Track – 4 Scent Prey – 6

Attack Damage Bite – Dmg 6, Pen 8, Ad 4 (first round, second and subsequent round do not need a roll to hit, the damage is done automatically until the creature is dead, Second and subsequent rounds are Dmg 5, Pen 9, Ad 5)

Tharpen

(Wraith: Lurking doom) – One of the largest creatures on the face of Polo. The tharpen is not the most dangerous. Equally at home on land or in the water, the Tharpen is, on average, sixty feet long, and around ten feet in diameter. They are giant worms, black in colouration, with thick chitinous skin that is covered with millions upon millions of tiny legs. On land, these legs serve as assistance to the Tharpens movement, they also act as a deterrent to anything trying to climb on the beast as they quickly propell the attacker to the rear of the creature. In the water, they act as paddles for the beast to carve through the water. The largest recorded Tharpen is the one found on the southern coast of Gilswery, the actual size of this beast is only estimated, as it took down the ship that it attacked, but the survivors of the wreckage estimated the creature to be at least five hundred feet long, and as wide as the ship.

The actual statistics of the creature vary depending on the size of it.

Natural Armour Chitinous Armour – PV 10 per fifty feet or fraction of it that the creature has length.

Hit points 400-600 per Fifty feet

Skills Ram – 10
Crush – special
Bite – 6

Attack Damage Ram – Dmg 20 per fifty feet, Pen 10 per fifty feet, Ad 20 per fifty feet

If the ram attack is successful on land, the tharpen may continue moving to initiate a crush attack on any creature which is less than a quarter of its diameter in height. Crush attacks do damage equal to the length of the creature with no penetration value, but doing an equal amount of armour damage to the target being crushed.

Bite – Dmg 5 per fifty feet, Pen 8 per fifty feet, Ad 5 per fifty feet. If this attack connects

with a creature less than a quarter of the Tharpens diameter, then the tharpen will consume them. This is explained below.

A final point to note is that the tharpen only consumes organic matter, anything inorganic that is eated is swiftly sorted by the tharpens digestive system and expelled from the boy with all due haste. A target that is swallowed by the tharpen which is wearing fully sealed armour with an independent air supply will be ejected from the tharpen in around an hour. The armour will take around 150 points of damage in the process from stomach acids, but if the armour still holds at this point, the wearer will emerge alive (probably with a case of claustrophobia as well). If the consumed target is organic, then they will be sent to the other digestive chamber to be slowly dissolved. Targets without air supplies die in three rounds, targets with air supplies will take ten points of damage per round until they die or are cut out of the creature.

Theache

The Theache is a ten foot tall humanoid carnivore, heavily muscled and with above animal intelligence, they hunt in packs on the frozen tundra. They are white in colouration, and mostly humanoid with respect to their facial features, they have large claws and attack by crush attacks and clawing/biting. They will hunt in packs where they can, and have small settlements of their own on the southern continent. It is not known if they have a society or language of their own, all attempts to make meaningful contact so far have met with the explorers being eaten.

Str: 9-20 Dex: 6-12
 Dia: 5-9 Conc: 7-12
 Cha: 5-7 Cool: 7-10

Natural armour None, occasionally furs from other animals

Hit points As per statistics

Skills Tracking and hunting skills – 6
 Weapon skills at 5
 Other skills as necessary.

Attack Damage Claw – Dmg 6, Pen 4, Ad 3

The Teache will not attack a party that they feel they cannot defeat, and they will retreat from combat if they are losing.

Wraithen

The ultimate predator and the most dangerous creature on the face of polo, Wraithen vary tremendously in their appearance, the distinguishing features are the creatures skin, usually long matted fur, and the eyes, huge bloodshot orbs holding the edge of madness within them. The statistics below represent one of the smallest wraithen.

Str – 30	Dex – 16
Dia – 9	Conc 9
Cha – n/a	Cool – n/a

Natural armour Fur and hardened skin – Pv 8

Hit points 53

Skills	Tracking and Hunting skills at 10 Bite – 14 Claw – 12 Other skills as gm sees fit.
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Damage	Bite – Dmg 10, Pen 5, Ad 6 Claw – Dmg 12, Pen 8, Ad 8
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The wraithen are a dark chapter in the history of the wraith raider. It is well known that the wraith have a short lifespan, measured in less than six decades. What is not known is that around Five percent of the wraith population have a terrible secret. This secret was only found out a few years ago, and was as much a surprise to the wraith as anyone. When the wraith raider grows older, they often take their tribal weapons and leave the settlement, there to make certain that they do not prove to be a burden on their tribe. This is called the walk of solitude, it is considered the right thing to do, and only very rarely do any wraith actually die of old age.

It was assumed that these Wraith meet their death in the icy tundra far beyond the walls of their former homes.

Recently however, there was a more disturbing revelation was discovered. A niten village was attacked by a huge monstrosity that destroyed one wall and killed a hundred of the settlements best warriors before it was brought down. In the morning, the corpse of the beast was examined, and the true horror was revealed, the creature bore the markings of Viti, an elder who had taken the walk of solitude a year previous. It had all his tattoos, and a scar on the side of the creatures face was identical to the one that Viti had received many years previously.

What was found out was that around five percent of the wraith population have a genetic defect

that causes them to continue to grow and survive far beyond the years that the normal wraith can survive. It is not known what triggers the change, but certainly it seems to be linked to the older of the wraith. If the wraith survives beyond the age of sixty, certain changes begin in the metabolism of the wraith, it grows faster and stronger, taller and broader. The wraith grows more and more powerful, becoming more quadripedal than bipedal, the creature lopes across the icy fields, outgrowing its clothing but growing a thick pelt that protects it from all the weather on the ice fields of polo. All basic intelligence and pretence to sophistication flees the creature as it becomes the ultimate predator on the face of polo.....

A fully grown wraithen is approximately Twelve feet tall, and masses over a ton in pure hard muscle. They can move at over fifty miles per hour when sprinting, and can sense prey (anything living) within a three mile radius. They are fearless and lethal, fully willing to attack entire settlements by themselves in the quest for fresh prey. Once it has begun an attack, the wraithen will not break off the attack for anything, they will continue the onslaught till either they or their target is dead.

It is a legend amongst the wraith that the Wraithen are the remnants of the greatest warriors of the wraith race, who go on hunting after death, proving to their gods that they are still worthy. The greatest legend of the wraith is similar to the old legends of Ragnarok, when the end of days is upon them, the wraithen will descend upon them in a huge army to consume the weak and battle with the strong till only one remains. This one will be the genesis of the new wraith race, and will be worshipped as a god by all those who look upon them.

OLD BLOOD

A mans fate is what he makes of it.....

I don't return home very often, the world that spawned me has no emotional ties for me. I am here for a simple reason, the settlement of my father has been attacked by one of the wraithen, my father took the walk of solitude many years ago, and left the care of his settlement to me. I am indebted to him for what he did for me, and I will take this opportunity to pay him back a little of the debt that I owe him.

My name is Renna Durell, I am the greatest hunter in the history of the wraith, there is no one to dispute this, I have achieved the rank of terminus like my father before me. The only reason I am not seen as the greatest hunter of the wraith is that my father was Terminus, and no one will speak out against him. Still, it matters not, I know the state of things, sooner or later, they will understand.

The settlement is in ruins, the wraithen must have been huge to do the damage that I see here. A hole fully twenty metres across has been torn in the main foundations, no one was harmed though. It seems strange that the creature would come here to do this and then leave without taking it's prize. The stench of fear is thick here, it disgusts me, my tribe is Runan, as was my fathers, for them to sit here huddled in groups fearing the return of this creature dishonours the memory of my father. The warriors in the village are unwilling to sally forth to destroy this beast, and so it falls to me to redeem my fathers honour.

The tracks of the beast lay to the south, I gather my weapons and journey out, instructing the tribe to raise the wall behind me. I will return with the beasts head, or not at all.

The tracks are easy to follow, and I journey many miles to the south, to the Karan mountains, there I find shelter for the night. Night falls, inside the cave, I raise the heat shield, and settle down for the night. I have set traps at the entrance to the cave, and motion scanners at all points, if anything comes here, I will know about it. There are those who will say that this is cheating. I tell you that anyone who says that has never hunted Wraithen, they are death personified, and I feel justified within myself at using these precautions.

I am woken in the early hours of the morning by howling at the front of the cave, instantly I am awake, my rifle by my side and aimed towards the front of the cavern. Then I notice that my equipment is

stacked neatly in the corner, the motion scanners deactivated, the traps disarmed, my food is gone, and my pack ransacked.

A cold chill of fear runs through me, this wraithen knew where I was, it came here, through all my traps, ate my food, sat in the warmth of my camp, and only let me know it was here when it chose to leave. I have never known fear before today, it is not a pleasant sensation, I am suddenly regretful that I was so harsh on the warriors of the village, I had not imagined that such a creature existed.

I wait in the darkness as the sound of the creature fades, holding my rifle like a talisman. As the dawn breaks, I follow the tracks that it has left for me, I know what it is doing, my only hope is that its over confidence will be its undoing.

Its lair is not far from the cave, littered with the bones of several Trige, it would appear that the creature has eaten well so far, without needing to feast on the bones of wraith.

I lay traps over the entrance to the cave, all around the area, and wait at the back of its lair. I do not have long to wait, soon the noise of shuffling is heard at the front of the cave, a soft footfall followed by an outraged roar as the first trap goes off. I lope to the front of the cave, exhilarated at having been proved better than this creature. I round the corner, rifle raised, and take aim on the creature.....

It is long dead, whatever it was, torn to small bloody shreds by its killer, the remains of its bones are falling from its body as it dangles there in my trap. I hear the roar from behind me and spin to face what must be the wraithen. My rifle draws a line of fire on the dark shape falling from above, the blast dissects the creature cleanly, it lands in two halves on the floor. I rejoice as I move to the beast, secure in the knowledge of my kill. I look closely, the creature was also dead before I killed it, it is wraithen, but was killed by something else at close range before being dropped here.

“RRRRNNNNNNNNNNNAAAAAA”

The howl comes straight from hell, a deafening scream with a promise of death. I break, I don't mind admitting that, I run from the cave, desperately trying to escape this creature which knows my every move. I have never been hunted, it is not a pleasant experience.

“RRRRNNNNNNNNNNNAAAAAA”

My bowels turn to water, the adrenalin pumps

through me as I flee ever faster towards the sanctuary of the village, I can see the sun beginning to set in the distance. The village is on the horizon, I know I can make it.

The ground spins crazily and I find myself in the air, my rifle on the floor below me, my foot caught in a snare, but not a snare set by me, what else is out here that can set a snare?

My thoughts are interrupted suddenly

“RRRRNNNNNNNNNAAAAAA”

I spin helplessly in the trap, waiting for death. I hear a footfall behind me and struggle to turn. I spin slowly in the snare to face a scene from nightmare.

The creature is at least thirty feet tall, silver furred with eyes like darkest night, it appears to have some sort of scar over its head. The muscles on its body work like an organic machine, moving in perfect harmony with one another. The creature crouches down and looks at me, it reaches down to my rifle and picks it up. It raises the hand with the rifle in it to me.

“RRRRNNNNNNNNNAAAAAA”

The roar nearly deafens me, I look at the creature as it extends one huge arm towards me, offering me my rifle, I see its eyes, not hostile at all, there is some sort of resignation in them. I see the scar on its head, more resembling a tribal pattern than anything. The Wraithen looks down at me and speaks

“RRRRNNNNNNNNNAAAAAA”

And I understand

“Father?”

The huge head bows down once in acknowledgement. I take my rifle from him, knowing what I must do, the huge paw comes up to my face and strokes my shoulder, I see a tear glisten in his eye, and I think of all the things I want to tell him, but the words will not come. The rifle barks once and he falls.

I cut myself from the snare and move to the body, already it is shrinking and returning to the brave warrior I once knew. I bury the body in the cave, laying my terminus chain upon the grave. Now I know what my fate must be, like father, like son, he was the best, now I am, and just as he fell from the light, so I must. He knew that the change would continue, and sooner or later, he would be unable to stop himself, he knew that I would come to make

things right, and he had to warn me of what I will one day become.

A mans fate is what he makes of it.....