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OVERLIGHT



Birthright of Khar-Ulan

The Role-Playing Game of Kaleidoscopic Journeys



RENEGADE
GAME STUDIOS



OVERLIGHT

SNEAK PREVIEW

Happy Free RPG Day!

With the release of Overlight on the very near horizon, we thought we'd take this opportunity to give you an exclusive preview of the Overlight setting and provide you with an adventure that can act as a prelude to the introductory adventure in the Overlight Rulebook.

Welcome, blessed Skyborn, to the world of Overlight!

This is *Overlight*, a role-playing game of kaleidoscopic fantasy set among the shards of a broken world. It's a world in which seven great continents hang in the sky, stacked almost vertically, far above an unending sparkling sea. And shining down upon it all is a limitless light, emanating not from a great sun or moon, but from the sky itself: the hallowed Overlight.

The heroes of this world are called the Skyborn. These individuals are born to disparate Folk and cultures the world over, and on some deep genetic or spiritual level are driven to make the world a better place, knowing in their hearts that things are not as they should be. The Skyborn are able to consciously manipulate the Overlight, fracturing it into seven distinct colors and using it to power remarkable abilities called Chroma.

WHAT IS KALEIDOSCOPIC FANTASY?

When we think of fantasy, most of us conjure up images of elves, wizards, and dragons. We think of tales strongly rooted in western folklore and history, or at least in the stories of J.R.R. Tolkien — dark lords, abandoned underground holds, and bands of heroes questing to foil the schemes of some world-ending evil. Or maybe we think of the gritty dirt-beneath-your-fingernails fantasy of seminal sword-and-sorcery author Robert E. Howard and the new “grimdark” standard bearers like Joe Abercrombie. A lot of our fantasy role-playing tropes come from these and similar sources.

Kaleidoscopic fantasy (a term that we have ourselves created) draws its DNA from some very





different places. Most importantly, the aesthetic tone is quite distinctive. Kaleidoscopic fantasy springs from the artwork of such luminaries as Roger Dean, Julie Bell, Moebius, and the early fantasy-themed work of Olivia de Berardinis. Bright colors, a riotous explosion of life, and fantastic beasts rooted more in the natural world than in nightmarish visions.

Roger Dean is especially important. The sweeping, otherworldly landscapes that populated his album covers for the progressive rock groups of the '60s and '70s inform the backbone of it all. Fabulous creatures often overlook dreamy vistas of floating islands dotted with structures that hint at a wondrous civilization just beyond the next stone, or just beneath the jungle's canopy. There's an almost hyper-real quality to these images, and they're utterly vast in scale, with a sense of boundlessness like anything is possible if only one can remember how to get to these places. They exist almost in memory, like a half-forgotten dream.

In this way, kaleidoscopic fantasy actually shares some tonal space with the fiction of authors like Tolkien or Peter S. Beagle. The most beloved writings of these authors are laced with a deep melancholy, a knowledge that, somewhere along the way, humanity lost something and, despite barely being cognizant of that loss, we still desire with an aching heart to find it again.

Yet kaleidoscopic fantasy is also very much about the present. It is profoundly universalist, and it contains a reckless blend of varied cultural

elements. The world can be a better place, we've just got to take decisive action for it to be so. The conceit of the Skyborn of Overlight is that they're subconsciously driven to do this, but have to decide for themselves exactly how.

Jon Anderson, member of the prog rock group Yes, once said that their music was about "discovery of the self and connection with the divine." And so it is with kaleidoscopic fantasy. The path that our characters must take to "fix" the world is about the human condition as much as anything. And here we look to Clive Barker's *Imajica*, or the *Earthsea* novels of Ursula K. Le Guin, or indeed some of the more subtle themes in Jim Henson's *The Dark Crystal*. The decision to act is the important one, while the world swirls around you, with all of life's experiences and distractions and moral quandaries.

Yes, we're still talking about a fantasy role-playing game here, one in which the characters may operate on a mythic scale, and can make large changes to the setting through their actions. Yet Overlight is also an environment that simply allows for adventures — slaying huge beasts, or ferreting out corrupt cultists, or hijacking gleaming golden airships. It's the game that allows your neon tiger-striped warrior woman to ride into battle upon a screaming blue pterodactyl. Because that game needed to exist.

The purpose of all this? The purpose, the "why" to all of this action is important, perhaps the most important thing. You are of the world, not simply in it.





SHARD	VIRTUE	COLOR	FOLK
Nova	 Spirit	White	Novapendra
Zenith	 Wisdom	Purple	Zenith Order Monks & Hamanu
Quill	 Logic	Blue	Teryxians
Banyan	 Compassion	Green	Banyari
Haark	 Will	Yellow	Haarkeen
Veile	 Vigor	Orange	Aurumel
Pyre	 Might	Red	Pyroi

THE WORLD OF OVERLIGHT

The setting for Overlight is an unusual one. There are seven continents, called shards, which float in the sky above an infinite sparkling sea. These seven shards maintain their vertical positions, relative to one another, while they slowly float about in patterns that have been largely indecipherable to the people of this world.

Far above them all is an unending sky, bright and radiant. There is no sun, and no moon, only the perpetual shining of the Overlight. So while some shards may pass through periods of darkness when drifting beneath other shards, there is no true day or night. Seasons, such as they are, can seem unpredictable, being defined by the cycle of shard movements, and can only be truly understood by those who make a lifelong study of them.

All of the seven shards have distinct climates and cultures. The level of technology is roughly equivalent to late Middle Ages or early Renaissance at best. No steam power and no gunpowder, although the use of Chroma and the manipulation of the Overlight can sometimes result in some surprising technologies. A brief description of the shards and their Folk, top to bottom, are as follows:

Nova: Rocky towers and crumbling mesas dot a horizon of sandblasted expanses, shimmering and brilliant white in the neverending light. Huge sentient centipedes, called Novapendra, contemplate their existence through meditation and quiet reflection, while shepherding their herds of giant dust crickets.

Zenith: Towering mountain ranges are home to the snow-covered temples of the Monks of the



Zenith Orders. The Monks are humans, having long ago emigrated from Haark to find meaning among the ice and wind. The men and women of the Orders live alongside the Hamanu, a massive-bodied ape-like people capable of scaling sheer mountain cliffs with their grasping hands and feet. The Hamanu and the Monks have developed a peculiar spirit bond and, once paired, individuals are rarely separated.

Quill: The jungles and torrential rivers of the floating islands of Quill are home to the Teryxians, a small, feathered reptilian Folk. Once they were emperors of their domain, with sprawling cities of spires populated by academics and philosophers, and many are still employed as tutors across the Seven. But much of that was lost when Quill was broken, and now the Teryxians cling to the remnants of a ruined civilization while they try to avoid becoming prey to the appetites of the jungle.

Banyan: The mysterious Banyari tribes are almost as distinct from one another as they are from the other Folk. Each tribe upon this forested shard is inextricably linked to their unique Hearthwood Tree, a spiritual relationship that is poorly understood. These monumental wooden behemoths serve both as spiritual centers and, somehow, as physical progenitors of the appearance and biology of the symbiotic Banyari, some of which seem to be part plant, while others take different forms. As a whole, the Banyari are generally quiet and kind, and keep to themselves.

Haark: A single magnificent city, covering almost the entirety of the largest of the shards. It is home

to humanity, called the Haarkeen. It is also the center of commerce and trade, and the meeting place for the Council of Seven — the parliament of representatives from all of the Folk, convened to adjudicate trade relations and settle disputes. Being the most centrally located of the shards, Haark is also the most cosmopolitan, and it is not uncommon to interact with people from many Folk, especially in the Great Market, a bazaar filled with many wonders.

Veile: The idyllic hills and estates of Veile overlook placid lagoons and inland seas. With Veile's pleasant weather and easy growing seasons, one would think the tall and almost eerily thin Aurumel would live a languid lifestyle. Yet behind the masks that they wear every day, the Aurumel also hide a passion and fervor for life that is most often represented by the great works that they aspire to build. Great bronze monuments, shining gold and silver armor, and fabulous airships — these testaments to toil and honest labor can sometimes take many lifetimes to complete, and those families with the greatest achievements often grow into dynasties with immense social and political power. Only the machinations of the Penumbra Court can begin to test their generational reach.

Pyre: Often bathed in darkness, the tundras and steppes of Pyre are lit by the glow of the shard's volcanic mountain ranges, which frequently result in rivers of magma coursing through the landscape. It is not a hospitable place. The Pyroi themselves are a sight to behold: eight feet tall, ruddy skinned and broad shouldered, they make fearsome



warriors and charismatic negotiators and ambassadors. Much of Pyroi culture is centered around temple structures built at the base of the volcanoes, while other communities live a nomadic lifestyle hunting enormous beasts out on the open savanna.



WHAT IS THE OVERLIGHT?

The Overlight is the first emanation of the Absolute. Sun-like, its rays are boundless infinity or divine grace contrived into visible white light. Through mysticism, rituals, or other methods of insight, sentient beings are capable of the realization that its pure, undifferentiated quality may be parsed into its constituent Virtues. And so they may comprehend it on a practical and intimate level, rather than losing the mselves in the unmitigated grandeur and fire of a god-like sun. Although some mystics among the Folk can manage an anomalous miracle, only the

Skyborn instinctively understand and become proficient in this practice, through the conscious use of Chroma.

There are some advanced teachings that seek to comprehend the source of the Overlight, rather than the Overlight itself. The practitioners of such methods often go entirely mad or, on rare occasions, integrate with the Overlight and abandon physical form forever.

The Overlight works in strange ways. A common merchant or farmer might feel fulfilled and renewed simply by standing in the light. Some animals certainly seem to benefit from it, and there are many examples of “Overlight bonds” between individuals or even across species — the link between a Banyari and her Hearthwood Tree, or the connection between a Hamanu and his bonded Monk of the Zenith Orders. These links, while commonly accepted, are poorly understood.

VIRTUES AND THE COLORS OF LIGHT

The peoples of the Seven recognize seven Virtues that drive the spiritual lives of the people: Spirit, Wisdom, Logic, Compassion, Will, Vigor, and Might. Each of these Virtues is associated with a particular color in the spectrum of light, except in the case of Spirit, which is the unbroken light in its full white splendor.

While almost everyone aspires to use all of the Virtues as guides for living a fulfilling life, the Folk of each shard revere one of the Virtues



above all others. In this way, the Virtues can define entire cultures.

WHO ARE THE SKYBORN?

Every once in a while, a child is born among the Folk who is immediately recognized as something different. A Skyborn. Born with an otherworldly iridescent shine to their irises, Skyborn children may be revered, reviled, or even feared. No matter the local culture's response, the child is immediately and irrevocably marked as somehow other.

While not a universal experience, by the time most Skyborn reach adolescence or young adulthood, they find themselves being called off shard. The desire to see more of the world and the peoples and traditions that populate it rises alongside a growing feeling of being out of sync with their homeland. Even those Skyborn who have been raised by loving parents or venerated as practically holy by

their local communities will almost always, sooner or later, feel the call to leave the place of their birth and seek out new experiences. And along with these desires the young Skyborn soon discovers that they can interact with the Overlight and the Chroma in a way that others can only dream about.

For some Skyborn, leaving may be a matter of survival, while others still may find themselves actively recruited by representatives of the Skyborn Order.

WHAT ARE THE CHROMA?

For every living thing in the world, the Overlight is a constant. It flows into and through every person, plant, and animal — from the slaves of Veile, to the Banyari Hearthwood Trees, to the rats that scuttle along the prison chains beneath Haark. For most, the Overlight is a barely detectable sensation, a warm feeling on a bright day, a comforting presence during a moment of grief.





The strange powers that the Skyborn are able to manipulate are called the Chroma. The Chroma, however, are not exclusively the domain of the Skyborn. Most common Folk have the instinctive ability to perform one or two small wonders. Animals too, are often capable of basic tricks. Few of these behaviors are thought of as special or wondrous. They simply are. On our Earth, does a spitting cobra know that it's doing something unusual with its venom? Does an Arctic fox make the deliberate decision to change the color of its fur

in the winter? No, of course not. Among the seven floating continents, these abilities might actually be functions of the Overlight.

The difference for the Skyborn lies in their *conscious* awareness of the Overlight and their ability to channel the different colors of light through their own bodies, almost like a prism. They can literally see the potential for breaking the light at all times, and are able to learn new Chroma through a combination of instinct and training.

BIRTHRIGHT OF

KHAR-ULAN

This is an introductory adventure designed for 3-4 starting characters.

*The following adventure can be played as a beginner adventure for new players and is also designed so that it can serve as a lead-in to **The Sage of the Hanging Prison** adventure in the Overlight Rulebook.*

Birthright of Khar-Ulan takes place entirely upon the shard of Pyre and will have the characters dealing with a variety of challenges, both social and martial. Pyre is a harsh environment: a cold and dark land situated at the bottom of the world, with sharp mountains and rivers of magma. Pyre is home to the Pyroi, a huge-bodied and intimidating Folk, tempered by their brutal surroundings and the unforgiving rituals of their kind.

It may be helpful for you, the GM, to re-read the Pyre section of Chapter 2 in the Overlight Rulebook before running this adventure.



ADVENTURE

SUMMARY

PART ONE: THE ENVOY'S PLEA

The characters meet Darvanthos in the Traveler's Camp outside of Sukhaba Gol, "the Warm City." Darvanthos is an Aurumel guide, trader, and envoy-for-hire, living and working among the Pyroi Warbands and hunting parties. Darvanthos pleads with the Skyborn to assist in a current predicament. Having vouched for the wrong pair of Haarkeen merchants (named Javed and Dilsash), Darvanthos has offended Nema Padro, the leader of the Leatherwing Cult, a powerful Pyroi Warband known for flying the dreaded Fire-Bats of Pyre into battle. The Haarkeen have stolen a pair of Fire-Bat pups and intend to sell them to a rival Warband. Believing themselves betrayed, the Leatherwing Cult has offered a rich reward for the head of Darvanthos. Darvanthos asks the party to recover the bat pups and help restore the relationship with Nema Padro.

PART TWO: IN THE LANDS OF THE LEATHERWING

The characters travel to the lands claimed by the Leatherwing Cult to seek information and find clues about Javed and Dilsash. They are apprehended by the cult and made to answer for their trespassing.

PART THREE: FATE OF THE EXILED

Back on the trail of Javed and Dilsash (and perhaps armed with some new information), the characters find the Haarkeen just in time to interrupt a meeting with Sogyül the Scarred, a Pyroi with a complicated past, who is a representative from the rival Smoking Stone Warband. The characters must recover the bat pups (and maybe Sogyül) and return to the Leatherwing Cult to negotiate the forgiveness of Darvanthos.

PART ONE

THE ENVOY'S PLEA

The characters are on the shard called Pyre. Perhaps they have found themselves here after many journeys, or perhaps their wandering lives as Skyborn have only just begun. (The backstories for the pre-generated characters

supplied in the Overlight Rulebook provide plenty of opportunities for a narrative that begins on Pyre.) No matter how they got here, the Skyborn PCs now find themselves in a place known as the Traveler's Camp.



A confederation of tents, wagons, yurts, and stables, the Traveler's Camp is a semi-permanent village just outside the city of Sukhaba Gol. The camp is a somewhat dubious settlement where visitors to Pyre can take refuge without having to integrate into the rather more dangerous game of Pyroi social custom. Instead, the Traveler's Camp is a temporary home-away-from-home for many Folk who have come to the lowest shard from afar — either for the first time or as transient residents.

Situated upon the flat expanses of one of the vast stretches of tundra known as a Thundering Ground, the Traveler's Camp is divided by an ever-changing number of avenues radiating out from a central hub — a cluster of long tables and water basins that functions as a sort of commons for the residents. Nobody stays in the camp for long, but the difficulties of journeying to and from Pyre often mean that visitors arrive or leave much later than originally planned. And while Pyre can be described in many ways, hospitable is not one of them. Deprived of a proper place to stay and without a patron, many visitors find themselves in one of the tattered tents of the Traveler's Camp.

The camp has served as an unofficial neutral zone and meeting place for politicians, pilgrims, migrants, travelers, tourists, and poachers since before anyone can remember. It is a place to stop for a moment while trying to orchestrate getting to the next place. It has also become a rendezvous point for those groups and individuals who are unwilling to satisfy Pyroi eccentricities.

It is here that we begin our tale. While taking rest or refuge in the Traveler's Camp, the characters are

approached by an oddly dressed Aurumel named Darvanthos. Tall even by Aurumel standards, Darvanthos is not dressed in the fashionable attire of Veile, but instead outfitted with form-fitting braided leather wraps upon their arms and legs, while their upper torso and neck is swathed in a tangle of sand-colored gauzy scarves. With a full-face mask of burnished brass that reveals only friendly copper eyes and a few wisps of thin golden hair, Darvanthos' gender is impossible to tell.

Darvanthos begins by politely requesting to share the party's fire, or perhaps offers a bit of food to add to the pot. After some companionable silence, Darvanthos speaks:

"My friends — I may call you friends, yes? For you are Skyborn, unless I am mistaken. My name is Darvanthos, and I would call upon your aid, and hope to receive it as is custom among your kind. I know not what brings you here, or what errand you may be upon, but I have found myself in an unenviable position: that of an accused betrayer. I ask not for your help to clear my good name, although that would be an ideal consequence, but to instead right the wrong that I have so foolishly allowed to happen on my watch."

As long as the party seems willing to help, Darvanthos will go on to explain that, until very recently, they had been a well-respected and much-liked member of the community here. Moreso, they had developed strong ties with several Pyroi Warbands from the surrounding tundra. Unfortunately, the good name of Darvanthos has now been sullied due to the actions of a pair of Haarkeen thieves named Javed and Dilsash.



The two men posed as leaders of a small Haarkeen merchant group and hired Darvanthos to guide them into the lands of the Leatherwing Cult, a powerful Pyroi Warband feared across the Seven for their mastery of the Fire-Bats of Pyre. Javed and Dilsash were introduced as esteemed Haarkeen merchants, there to trade with the Pyroi and open discussions about armed escorts for merchant airships traveling between Haark and Pyre. Once within the domain of the cult, Javed and Dilsash instead stole a pair of twin bat pups, birthed from Redcloud, the prized steed of Nema Padro — the Master of the Leatherwing Cult herself. Pups in hand, these “merchants” departed for an unknown destination, and Nema Padro immediately issued a death warrant for Darvanthos.

The characters will likely have many questions. Use the information above as a guide to have Darvanthos respond as necessary. Ultimately, Darvanthos wishes to hire the party to recover the bat pups, thereby undoing the crime that was committed. Darvanthos will express sincerely that their motivating desire is the return of the pups — and this is the truth. They are not so concerned with their own good name as they are with correcting the grievous violation that was done because they misjudged the character of the Haarkeen.

Darvanthos has returned to the Traveler’s Camp to watch for signs of the Haarkeen, in case they are trying to sell the pups or take them off shard. Skulking at the edges of the village, Darvanthos has been here for some time, and indeed has fought off at least one attempt on their life. But with no sign of the Haarkeen, Darvanthos

believes that they have traveled farther into the tundra, either to meet their employer (if they have one), or to attempt to sell the bat pups to a rival Warband. A dangerous game indeed.

If the characters are reluctant to help, Darvanthos has plenty to offer. Having earned a comfortable living working as a guide, Darvanthos can offer coin (in the form of Wealth Points) or favors. A well-connected guide on Pyre would be a valuable friend to have, especially if the Leatherwing Cult removes the mark on Darvanthos’ head.

As mad as it sounds, Darvanthos suggests journeying to the domain of the Leatherwing, to find clues about the bat pups’ disappearance and attempt to pick up the trail of the duplicitous Haarkeen. Darvanthos can recommend a merchant well known for good prices on Yekeboko, the lanky, long-necked herd animals that have been domesticated as beasts of burden and mounts for tundra travel.

The Yekeboko — also called Lichen-Eaters by the Haarkeen merchants of Sukhaba Gol — are massive ungulates, big enough for a Pyroi to ride. They are dim-witted but move quickly. To purchase one or two of these animals should require a Wealth Test. (A single Yekeboko can carry one Pyroi character or two characters of any other Folk.) To traverse the tundra without them will be considerably more difficult.

Darvanthos will not accompany the PCs to the lands of the Leatherwing Cult. Nema Padro’s temper is legendary, and to return there would be a certain death sentence for the Aurumel.



WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON?

Javed and Dilsash are petty criminals with aspirations to become something more. They are currently in the employ of Sogyül the Scarred, the exiled son of Nema Padro. The thieves are on their way to meet with Sogyül on the perimeter of the lands belonging to the Smoking Stone Warband, where Sogyül will take possession of the bat pups

and return to the Smoking Stone as a hero, the pups to be used in some gruesome ritual. Darvanthos is not privy to any of this information, and the characters will have to suss it out over the course of their adventure.

Barring an expedition to Sukhaba Gol or other extravagant preparations, the entirety of PART ONE: The Envoy's Plea can be considered a single Scene.

DARVANTHOS

Aurumel Consul, Envoy, and Adventurer for-Hire

Darvanthos is an Aurumel from a noble family who can no longer appreciate the boons of their home culture. It was not the intrigue and degradation that scared them off, but rather the very notion of immortality as an inviolable ideal. This, combined with the concept of subverting one's own dreams and designs in service to antiquated custom, left Darvanthos feeling cold and alienated by their own culture. Driven less by a desire to experience the world as an inward journey, flirting with the boundaries of fleshly sensation, and more by a craving for social novelty and the delights of travel, Darvanthos gathered up their belongings and set off for Pyre.

Upon arrival, Darvanthos felt a new sort of peace looking out over the magma rivers and frozen tundra, and quickly found kinship among the Pyroi that call the shard home. Yet as much as the structure and ritual of the Pyroi resonated with Darvanthos, the innate violence and reverence for the Virtue of Might did not, so

they found meaning living as they do in a place between many cultures.

If Darvanthos has a home, it is the Traveler's Camp. As with so many mercenaries, porters, and journeying entertainers, Darvanthos makes their living doing work-for-hire for the various caravans and expeditions that pass through. A visitor to Pyre could hardly do better than to hire Darvanthos as a guide, or even as a sort of cultural attaché, if they're headed out into the wilds. Acting as a buffer between the rigors of Pyroi society and what amounts to needful tourists, the Traveler's Camp is never lacking in new customers.

Tips for the GM

Well-liked around the Traveler's Camp, Darvanthos is unlikely to turn away a paying customer, even if that customer can only afford to pay a fraction of the going rate. Barring evidence of willful cruelty, Darvanthos will find a way to help those in need. Soft-spoken and articulate, Darvanthos has an iron core beneath their gentle exterior — something that would shock their relatives back on Veile, as it took the rigors of Pyre to bring it out. Like many Aurumel, Darvanthos

is, for all practical purposes, genderless. Their voice should not suggest either male or female.

Until recently, Darvanthos was among the most respected of non-Pyroi Folk known in these parts, which makes the current events that much more troubling to them.

If a character thinks to ask about Darvanthos' mask, require a Folklore Test and then reveal information based on the success of the Test:

- *Luminous success:* The style of the mask suggests that its origin is in one of the many varieties of Aurumel crafting Guilds.
- *Radiant success:* The mask was originally made for a woman to wear.
- *Brilliant success:* The mask is of at least third generation, probably older.

SUKHABA GOL

The Warm City

Although not the focus of this particular adventure, Sukhaba Gol is nevertheless very close by. The party may wish to travel outside the relative safety of the Traveler's Camp and make a foray into the Warm City — so called for the creature comforts it provides, in stark contrast to a native Pyroi settlement. But visitors should not be fooled by the welcoming nickname. Sukhaba Gol may be home to Haarkeen, Aurumel, and Pyroi alike, but Pyroi social custom reigns supreme, and quite a few Folk have been struck dead in the streets by Pyroi traders who believed they were not given due deference.

For many visitors to Pyre, Sukhaba Gol may be the only large city that they see on the shard. The Warm City is, like all Pyroi settlements, primarily composed of tents and longhouses, often without walls. The permanent structures are massive, trapezoidal vaults built of volcanic stone, making very little use of wood or metal. The largest of these structures is the massive Hall of Barter, which is filled with barking traders seeking the best possible deal on the goods exchanged there. And though many Pyroi can be found within, there are equal numbers of both Haarkeen and Aurumel, here to trade for goods found only on this most remote of shards. Indeed, the city is much newer than other Pyroi cities, having only sprung up within the last few generations as a hub of trade.

The wall surrounding Sukhaba Gol is an unusual feature for a Pyroi settlement. Here, near the Traveler's Camp, one can never be too certain of the intentions of passing transients, so precautions must be taken. As tall as a dozen Haarkeen men, the steeply graded stone barrier is topped with a crenelated parapet that is patrolled by armed guards.

Perhaps the most popular destinations for visitors are the many statues that are generously peppered throughout Sukhaba Gol. These statues depict either great teachers or great heroes of the Pyroi. Those sculptures dedicated to the memory of scholars are usually affixed with a plaque espousing the greatest deeds of the person depicted, while the sculptures dedicated to heroes are likewise decorated with strategic maxims and accounts of their greatest heroic feats. In either case, the craftsmanship indicates artisans who resonated deeply with the elemental essences of their chosen medium.



PART TWO

IN THE LANDS OF THE LEATHERWING



Darvanthos can provide the party with a map (their pack is overflowing with maps and scrolls) showing the best route across the Thundering Ground to the lands claimed by the Leatherwing Cult. Even still, it will

be a hard journey, requiring the equivalent of two days' travel. The characters should be required to perform a Hazard Test. If the characters successfully purchased Yekeboko to ride, the Hazard Test is D8 vs. Survival or





Beastways. Otherwise, it's D10 vs. Survival. If the characters made other preparations, such as purchasing supplies or hiring a guide from the Traveler's Camp or Sukhaba Gol, then you as the GM may decide to further lower the Hazard Rating.

As for the journey itself, it is a desolately beautiful expedition that takes the Skyborn through cold and windswept tundra, the gray and black rock punctuated by the ruddy reds of the strain of lichen known as "the Crawling Tears." The sky during this part of the cycle is dark, but with just enough light to see, like a night with a full moon or a clear-skied dawn. Characters sustaining wounds from the Hazard Test will suffer from dry and cracked windburned skin, or a turned ankle among the rocks. A Dramatic Wound could be in the form of a nasty burn received after a wayward foot cracks the thin crust to release volcanic gases or even magma. Especially vicious GMs may even waylay the expedition with a combat encounter, as the long legs of Yekeboko make tempting targets for the claws of Cemetery Crabs

Near the end of the journey, any character who thinks to look to the sky may perform a Perception Test. Any success will reveal a pair of Leatherwings pacing the party from the sky — Pyroi Warband members mounted upon gigantic Fire-Bats. Unless the Skyborn do something foolish (like, say, having a Teryxian character fly up to meet them), the Leatherwings will merely follow the group

for a while before landing in front of them in dramatic fashion.

With a whoosh of great wings and a cloud of dust, the Fire-Bats land and Pyroi Firethanes dismount, demanding to know the party's reason for traveling these lands. They are brandishing broad-headed spears and are clearly ready for a fight. If the characters respond with threats of violence, or indeed even a bit too much bravado, the Pyroi will attack. (If necessary, use the stats for Pyroi Firethanes from the Overlight Rulebook.) The Fire-Bats, for their part, are well trained and intelligent enough to stay out of the conflict, only fighting in self-defense, and flying back to the main Leatherwing caves if their riders are defeated. And the party will have a considerably larger problem on their hands: the Leatherwing Cult does not take kindly to trespassers in their lands

If the characters seem irrational enough to engage in this way, you as the GM may allow an Intuition Test for any character with Wisdom or Logic as a Core Virtue, or any Pyroi character. If the test is successful, inform them that common sense is kicking in, and that the Pyroi would relish the opportunity to teach these interlopers a lesson. Provided that an unnecessary fight is avoided, and the characters are appropriately respectful and truthful about their business in these parts, the Pyroi will demand that the characters travel to see Nema Padro, the leader of the Leatherwing Cult, in her fortress.



THE LEATHERWING CULT

Pyroi Warband

Beneath the great volcano at the center of the shard — which is called Khar-Ulan, the Mouth of Pyre — there is an immeasurable labyrinth of lava tubes, carved out over thousands of cycles by the unending fiery belches of the great mountain. It is within these pitch-black caves that the largest colony of Fire-Bats can be found. These monstrous creatures are ubiquitous in the skies over the center of the shard and will sometimes roost beneath the shard itself, only to burst forth in mindblowing numbers.

The patterns of their flights have long been seen both as holy omens and as practical oracles to foretell the crackling explosions of Khar-Ulan's eruptions. But for most across the Seven, the Fire-Bats are known for something else. Their use as flying steeds of the Leatherwing Cult has resulted in one of the greatest aerial navies the world has ever known: The War-Bats of Pyre.

The Leatherwing Cult is one of the most powerful Pyroi Warbands. They believe that the Fire-Bats of Khar-Ulan are their birthright, and that the temple at the base of that mountain is not following the ideals laid down by its founding Volcano-Priest, Jezbar the Garnet-Eyed Bat That Is Son of Khar-Ulan. Originating as a splinter group of that largest of temples, the Leatherwing Cult has long since grown into a totemic Warband that believes the true Might of the Pyroi people is to be found in the skies. The cult even continues to maintain its own Volcano-Priests of a sort, the shamanic Pyroi women called Blood Clerics. (And the Blood Clerics



are always women, for the Leatherwing Cult believes Khar-Ulan to be a woman, unlike the rest of Pyroi custom.) The cult members, and their Blood Clerics, can be easily identified by the Leatherwing sigil that is branded upon their flesh after they have been initiated as a Firethane.

The fleet of War-Bats and their riders has grown to such strength that the Leatherwing Cult now has quite a bit of political clout, and their leader Nema Padro has a seat kept open for her at the Circle of Embers, an honor usually only given to the most esteemed and respected of Embertongues. But the cult is not above the petty squabbles of typical Warband life, and conflicts with their neighbors, especially the Smoking Stone Warband, are not uncommon.

War-Bats of the Leatherwing Cult

Physical Dice	4d10
Mental Dice	4d8 (4d10)
Health	22
Zeal	1

Surge: *Just an animal after all* (1).

Surge: *A Dark Banquet* (4). In their natural environment, Fire-Bats are blood-drinkers and have been known to drain a Shovel-tusk dry. And though War-Bats are fed a special gruel as part of their training process, they still possess a vicious anti-coagulant in their saliva. When this Surge is triggered, the target perform an Open Test (Resistance vs. Physical). If the target fails this Test, 1 of the wounds received becomes a



Dramatic Wound, and they must lower their Vigor Rating by 1 level until the end of the Scene. If the same character is targeted by this Surge again, they receive another Dramatic Wound, and the lowered Vigor Rating persists for the entire Story or until their Dramatic Wounds are healed (whichever is first).

Special: *Bred for Obedience.* The War-Bats of Pyre are trained as pups, Overlight-bonded to their riders, and incredibly loyal. They may roll 4d10 Mental Dice when performing an Open Test to resist any sort of mind-control or beast-communication Chroma, unless coming from a Pyroi character. If the War-Bat's rider is present, they may instead roll 5d10. This even applies to standard Beastways Tests, if a character is trying to reason with, calm, or otherwise communicate with a War-Bat.

NEMA PADRO

Master of the Leatherwing Cult

Nema Padro is the daughter of a priestly line. Ordained by her mother to be Master of the Leatherwing Cult at a very young age, the Pyroi girl was fed a steady diet of philosophy, history, and war, and so never experienced the follies of youth. When she wasn't studying, Nema was trained relentlessly in arms, survival, and the battle-ways of the bat-borne Leatherwing warriors. Her steed Redcloud is her protector and friend, and comes from an ancient line of War-Bats.

Once Nema Padro began to lead her own flight of riders, she won many victories for the

Leatherwing and completed countless successful hunts. When she reached the age to assume command of the Warband, there was no Pyroi among them who would speak a word against her, so unquestionable were her honor and accomplishments.

Nema Padro stands nearly nine feet tall and is clad in leather. A pair of obsidian-edged fang-picks hang from the hips of her battle harness, and a massive garnet rests on a thick gold chain around her neck. About her shoulders is the true mark of her station: a massive cloak fashioned of Fire-Bat wing, which encircles her form. When she rides against her foes, the cloak hangs from the wall of her council room, so that it may be passed on if she were to fall in battle.

Such a fate befell Nema Padro's only known mate, a warrior called Otgon. The pair had a son that they named Sogyül. On the day that Nema was giving birth to the boy, Otgon fell in battle against enemy warriors. Her son would grow to be a small and craven thing, not fit for Pyroi life, let alone the life of a Warband leader. Despite her blamelessness in these events, Nema believes that these two occurrences — the death of her mate and the weakness of her son — are a curse of her making, and she sees the death of her traitorous offspring to be the one thing she must see come to pass before her own death.

Redcloud has recently given birth to twin pups, a rare and auspicious occurrence among the War-Bats, and though she dares not voice her suspicions aloud, Nema Padro can see her son's hand in the disappearance of the pups.



Nema Padro

Physical Dice	5d10
Mental Dice	5d10
Health	20
Zeal	5

Surge: *Unrelenting Fury* (3). Add 1 Zeal to Nema Padro's current pool.

Surge: *The Might of Ages* (4). If this attack is successful, the attack deals +2 damage.

Special: *The Fire of Ages*. After being targeted by a successful attack, Nema Padro may spend Zeal to reduce the damage dealt to her. For each Zeal spent this way, reduce the damage by 1 point.

Special: *Jezbar's Garnet*. Nema Padro is immune to all Pyroi Chroma that would affect her mind, mood, or general disposition. Additionally, when Nema Padro performs any Open Test using Mental Dice, add the value of the Spirit Die to the final result.





The fortress of Nema Padro is a building of stone and mortar, perched at the end of a series of rocky foothills that mark the beginning of a stretch of volcanic mountains called the Crimson Spine, which extends into the interior of Pyre. Beneath these foothills are the near limitless lava tubes where the Fire-Bats of the Leatherwing Cult are raised and trained to become War-Bats.

Nema Padro's fortress is a small (by Pyroi standards) castle of high walls surrounded by elevated aqueducts that once served a mining project but have now largely been taken over as roosts for the hundreds of Fire-Bats. The two Leatherwings that have been trailing the party have landed ahead of their arrival, and a half dozen powerful Pyroi Firethanes come out to meet the characters and escort them beyond the wall to see Nema Padro.

The Master of the Leatherwing Cult does not sit upon a throne or other ornate chair. Her only throne is the saddle upon Redcloud, her terrifying War-Bat. When the characters are brought within the fortress, Nema Padro walks out to receive them, and Redcloud comes to land behind her with a furious flapping of wings.

Nema Padro is not happy to see the characters. Once they announce their purpose and their connection to Darvanthos, Nema Padro seems almost ready to punish them for Darvanthos' perceived crime. They cannot convince her of Darvanthos' innocence — in the end, she doesn't care. She only wishes the

crime committed against her made right. The Aurumel's only path to redemption is for the party to retrieve the bat pups.

Using a combination of Skill Test results (Folklore, Intuition, and especially Persuasion) and clever role-playing, you as the GM should determine the relative success of their efforts in speaking with Nema Padro. The results of this conversation may ultimately be reflected in the rewards that the characters receive at the completion of this Story.

- A group that generally fails in their efforts at diplomacy (through poor rolls and uninspired play) will be roughly cast out of the fortress. Nema Padro will not provide any support or even any helpful words:

"Go back the way you came. I am feeling generous, if only because Redcloud has already been fed. If you are found in my lands again without having returned the pups, I will assume you are in league with Darvanthos and those thieving Haarkeen, and I will have you thrown into the deepest pits beneath Khar-Ulan herself."

Forgiving GMs can stage a Scene in which Babaya seeks out the party as they leave. (Details on Babaya can be found below in "How to Find the Bat Pups?")

- A group that is moderately successful (rolling plenty of Luminous successes and a few Radiant successes) in their conversation



with the Master of the Leatherwing Cult will be given her blessing to investigate across these lands. The expectation is that they will find and return the bat pups, or the consequences of Darvanthos' "betrayal" will be felt by them as well. Nema Padro will loudly exclaim for all to hear:

"This doom is upon your heads as well! You would stand here in my lands and claim to speak for the honor of Darvanthos? So be it. You will share the Aurumel's fate should you fail!"

The characters are given the freedom to question other members of the Leatherwing Cult, and generally allowed to follow up as they see fit.

- A group that manages to win over Nema Padro (with lots of Radiant or Brilliant successes, or some exceedingly clever offer or bargain) will be granted a private audience with Nema Padro. She will direct her Firethanes to return to their posts, and will beckon for the characters to walk with her as she follows a trail that overlooks the unending expanse of Thundering Ground. As she walks, she stares into the distance, an almost sad expression crossing her face as Redcloud wheels above them in the sky.

Then she will explain the sad tale of her son Sogyül and his voluntary exile from his people. Nema Padro has no sympathy for her son, small and cowardly as he is. She fully expects to find his meek

hands at work behind the disappearance of her beloved bat pups, although she underestimated how resourceful he had become. She tells the characters that Sogyül has taken up with the Smoking Stone Warband, long-time enemies of the Leatherwing Cult, and she suspects, if the characters are quick, they can find him on the road back toward their lands. He deserves whatever fate may await him.

Astute characters (succeeding at an Intuition Test) may deduce that they are not getting any more direct assistance from Nema Padro because she feels humiliated by her son, and to reveal Sogyül's involvement in this treachery to her people would only bring shame upon her name.

HOW TO FIND THE BAT PUPS?

The challenge now ahead of the characters is how to track down Javed and Dilsash to retrieve the bat pups before they are sold or killed. Provided that the meeting with Nema Padro went well, the best option is to begin questioning some of the Pyroi of the Leatherwing Cult. (If the meeting with Padro went exceedingly well, the party will know they should head for the lands of the Smoking Stone Warband.) If the characters stick around to ask questions before heading out, there are two notable Pyroi they might encounter:

- **Babaya**, a Firethane who was present when Javed and Dilsash passed through. Babaya was on watch when the Haarkeen left the compound, and she thought she



overheard the men speaking about traveling into the lands of the Smoking Stone. She thought to mention it to her superiors, but didn't bring it up as the Haarkeen were, after all, on their way out. She now regrets this decision and fears a fierce reprimand from her captain. For this reason, a delicate touch is required to get Babaya to reveal this information, although successful Persuasion Tests might work, as will bribes.

Babaya is a powerful Pyroi woman, with thick armor plates along her arms and many tattoos on her mighty calves. She fights with a spear, its head broader and shorter than those used by War-Bat riders.

- **Gansukh**, the Pyroi charged with caring for the bat pups when they are first removed from their mother's care. Gansukh is older, and only has one eye, the empty socket covered with a brass plate that has been riveted to his skull. He moves with a horrible limp, the result of a fall from his War-Bat's saddle when the beast was killed in a battle with the Smoking Stone many cycles ago. Gansukh speaks like a person angry at the world, and he will initially rebuff any attempt at small talk. But the angry old man bit is all an act.

Perceptive characters (succeeding at a Perception or Intuition Test) may notice that, even in the darkness of the caves where he lives, there is a slight shine to Gansukh's one good eye. For he is Skyborn, and his heart is resplendent with the Compassion that he feels for his tiny wards. If the

characters can succeed at winning his trust (maybe a successful Beastways Test as one of them gently grooms a bat pup?), then Gansukh will reveal that he allowed himself to be cajoled into a betting game with Javed just before laying the bat pups to rest.

He thought it odd at first that Javed was wagering with amulet coins that members of the Smoking Stone are known to wear about their necks. It was only after the Haarkeen were long gone that Gansukh realized that the betting game was all a distracting ruse to allow Dilsash to sneak into the caves and steal the bat pups. If the party ultimately succeeds in recovering both of the bat pups, they will have made a strong friend in Gansukh.

If the characters generally failed during their diplomatic efforts with Nema Padro, they have fewer options. They can try to track the Haarkeen across the tundra, though the trails are cold and some time has passed. This would require a Brilliant success on a Survival Test or an extended reconnaissance by a Teryxian character. (Although who can say what the War-Bat riders might think of a Teryxian flying through their domain?) The characters might use Chroma such as *Seeker's Sense* or *Figment of Self* to find the Haarkeen. Generally speaking, you should reward creative use of Chroma in this regard. The Chroma are what make the Skyborn so powerful! Lastly, it is possible that the characters have other contacts on Pyre, or among the Warbands, who they could call upon for assistance.



PART THREE

FATE OF THE EXILED

This part of the Story finds the characters catching up to Javed and Dilsash. However they discovered the information, the party will eventually have headed toward the lands of the Smoking Stone Warband and should catch up to Javed and Dilsash just as they are making their connection with Sogyül the Scarred. Depending on the circumstances of their journey, you as GM may wish to have the characters perform another Hazard Test as they continue across the tundra.

The rendezvous point is a tumble of broken boulders out upon a desolate part of the tundra, well beyond the Thundering Ground. Here are Javed and Dilsash, their six lackeys, and finally Sogyül himself. The Haarkeen brothers are desperate men, and the trials of the Pyroi wilderness have left them weathered and beaten. They are not in the mood for talk and will fight to the death to protect the deal that they made.

For his part, Sogyül will try arguing with the characters, depending on how they approach, attempting to persuade them that he has been wronged his entire life and is only claiming his birthright as heir to the Leatherwing Cult. He will spool out his entire sordid past in an attempt to gain sympathy. It may be that the characters are only now hearing

the truth of his for the first time.

What he will not do, until the last possible moment, is give up the bat pups. We leave it up to you, the GM, to determine if the pups have changed hands by the time the characters arrive. When it becomes clear to him that he will lose the battle, Sogyül will make one final attempt, literally whimpering and begging for his life. Given the chance, he will flee the scene, throwing the bat pups among the gravel.

The party may decide to execute Sogyül on the spot. It is nothing less than what his own mother would give him. They may also decide to let him go or to shackle him to face judgement among the Leatherwings. Each of these will have their own consequences when they return to Nema Padro.

The bat pups, when they are found — either thrown among the gravel or wrapped in soiled leathers in Javed's packs — are discovered to have been poorly cared for and are dying. One of the characters must succeed at a Beastways Test to save them. A Luminous success keeps one of the pups alive, while only a Radiant success or better will save both pups. Use of a Chroma such as *Beast Mend* will also suffice.



JAVED & DILSASH

Haarkeen Poachers

Brothers born on the edge of Haark, Javed and Dilsash have lived hand-to-mouth since birth. Their parents were killed in a messy gang dispute, and the boys were absorbed into the offending gang's ranks. Raised in an environment of brutality and greed, even then the brothers knew that such a life was not one lived long. So it was that the brothers pooled their ill-gotten coin and departed Haark on an airship, swearing they would not return until they were as rich as council members.

Since that time, the brothers have been hunkered down in the Traveler's Camp near Sukhaba Gol on Pyre. For some time, the brothers have sustained themselves on small schemes and petty crimes. Recently, however, they have gathered half a dozen lackeys who lionize the duo and facilitate their wicked machinations.

Javed is six feet tall and covered in tattoos. Always the heavier of the two, Javed brandishes an Aurumel cutlass, though sadly the weapon is built for a grace and finesse that he lacks. Nonetheless, with enough brutality and intent, Javed can make quite a mess of a smaller or less-skilled opponent.

Dilsash is the brains of the operation, with a charismatic and persistent personality that is just rough enough to be taken seriously. A former mouthpiece for their gang back

on Haark, Dilsash is quite competent when it comes to back-alley negotiations and the sorts of veiled threats that accompany them. He throws knives to harass his brother's opponents or to cover their escape when things turn against them.

Javed

Physical Dice	5d6
Mental Dice	4d6
Health	9
Zeal	1

Surge: *Dirty Fighter* (4). If this attack is successful, the attack deals +1 damage.

Dilsash

Physical Dice	3d6
Mental Dice	6d6
Health	6
Zeal	4

Surge: *Skulker* (3). Dilsash is quick and alert, and unlikely to put himself in harm's way. The next attack that successfully targets Dilsash instead strikes one of his lackeys instead, as he pitilessly ducks behind them.

Dirty Fighter (4). If this attack is successful, the attack deals +1 damage.

Lackeys of Javed and Dilsash

Rough Haarkeen men and women, selected for their unrepentant nature and lust for coin, they are escaped convicts and slaves or Haarkeen airship deserters.

Physical Dice	3d6
Mental Dice	3d6
Health	4
Zeal	1

Surge: *Dirty Fighter* (4). If this attack is successful, the attack deals +1 damage.

Special: *Cowards*. If both Javed and Dilsash are captured or slain, any remaining lackeys will flee into the tundra.

SOGYÜL THE SCARRED

Smoking Stone Warband Member and Defiant Son

Few Pyroi have lived an existence so full of humiliation and pain as Sogyül the Scarred. Sogyül's mother is the matriarch of the powerful Leatherwing Cult, and her disappointment has defined his existence. Failing to embody even the most basic tenets of the Virtue of Might which are expected of all Leatherwings, Sogyül was ridiculed and despised by other Pyroi his age. When the time had come for him to meet his future mount, the juvenile Fire-Bat attacked him, clawing the right side of his face to ribbons and leaving him a shamble of a being, shamed for all time in the eyes of his people.

It was an easy decision when news came to him of raids against his people by the rival Pyroi of the Smoking Stone Warband. As Veile passed and Pyre went into shadow, the disgraced Sogyül crept off to the camps of the Smoking Stone to swear his allegiance and bend the knee to their warlords. Among his insane and cruel new kin,

he felt powerful and supported in a way that was utterly novel to him. And so it was that Sogyül prepared to take revenge on his mother and the hated Leatherwings. Alas, it was not to be. With bottomless despair Sogyül watched his mother's Firethanes purge the countryside of his newfound family of marauders.

It has been many cycles since that loss, and ever has Sogyül been searching for a way to paint over his disgrace with Leatherwing blood. He believes he has found it in the twin pups of Redcloud. Sogyül hired Javed and Dilsash to steal the bat pups, and he intends to bring them back to the warlords of the Smoking Stone, their frail bodies to be sacrificed in a brutal ritual of smoke and fire.

Sogyül is small and weak for a Pyroi. His body is lanky, and his gait is unsure and cautious. His skin is a lusterless orange, with rash-like patches of pale red-yellow. Always armed and watchful, the traitorous brigand is never without his circle of henchmen, all of whom are blunt of mind and cruel of spear.

Sogyül the Scarred

Physical Dice	3d10
Mental Dice	5d8
Health	13
Zeal	2

Surge: *Simpering Whimper* (4). One of Sogyül's opponents must lose 1 Fury Point. If that character does not have any to lose, they receive 1 wound instead. This Surge is triggered even if the attack was unsuccessful.



EPILOGUE



The characters return to the fortress of Nema Padro, hopefully with living bat pups (and perhaps a captive Sogyül) in tow. Upon their arrival, they discover that Darvanthos has been captured and is currently hanging upside down from one of the old aqueducts, feet bound. The Pyroi, in their infinite restraint, have not yet killed the Aurumel, allowing the characters an opportunity to make things right. From there, the resolution with Nema Padro will largely depend on the results of the party's journey.

- If both bat pups are returned alive, Nema Padro will reward the Skyborn as if she had never spoken harshly to them at all. Darvanthos will be released and restored to a position of honor as a respected guest. The characters will be greeted as returning heroes.
- If only one bat pup is returned alive, Darvanthos will still be released, but it will be some time before relations between the Leatherwing Cult and the Aurumel trader even come close to returning to normal. The characters will be treated with respect, but there will be no celebration.
- If the party has failed to recover the bat pups, or if both pups have died, the only way for the characters to salvage the situation is if they return with Sogyül as a captive, or with Sogyül's head. Failing that,

it is probably best if the characters do not return to the Leatherwing Cult at all. Nema Padro will not accept failure.

Speaking of Sogyül... if he is returned to Nema Padro, he will ultimately be executed in a private ritual well after the characters have left. However, if Sogyül is returned alive, that may be the only opportunity to get him to confess his crimes (which he will gleefully do) and decisively prove Darvanthos' innocence.

We recommend the following rewards for each character:

- 1 XP per play session (awarded at the end of each session) plus 1 bonus XP at the completion of this Story.
- 1 Spirit Point if Darvanthos is released. Add 1 bonus Spirit Point for each bat pup that was returned alive.
- Darvanthos rewards each character with 3 Wealth Points.
- If the party's interactions with Nema Padro were generally positive, she will offer the group transportation to Haark. A small fleet of War-Bats is headed to the city-shard to serve as ceremonial guard for some sort of procession, and it would be a great honor for the characters to ride to Haark upon such



unusual steeds. (Traveling to Haark in this manner is worth 1 bonus Spirit Point when it occurs.) Nema Padro will also reward the party with a single Valuable in the form of a Pyroi firebag: a leather pouch (in this case made of Fire-Bat leather) emblazoned with the sigil of the Leatherwing Cult. These bags are traditionally given to friends of Pyroi Warbands who have distinguished themselves in some way.

- If the life of Sogyül was spared, any character who has Compassion as a Core Virtue receives either 1 bonus XP or 2 bonus Spirit Points (their choice). If Sogyül was killed during the battle, Nema Padro will reward any character who has Might as a Core Virtue with an obsidian-edged fang-pick, an immensely large weapon in the hands of a non-Pyroi. It may also be considered a Valuable.

THE SMOKING STONE WARBAND

Enemies of the Leatherwing Cult

A space of earth from which smoke rises is where no foot should be set. The territory of the Smoking Stone Warband is the same. "Might makes right" is the only ethos of these brigands, and their culture is based entirely on raiding villages and trading posts and robbing caravans carrying precious supplies.

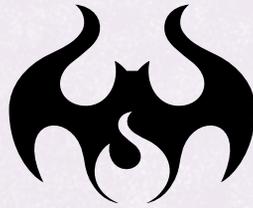
It was a full fifty cycles ago that the Smoking Stone Warband made their most successful campaign to gain new territory. Disaffected young Pyroi of more honorable clans left their homes to embrace savagery and brutality as part of the Smoking Stone way of life. Their numbers swelled in a very short time, and the war gongs sounded as the horde, stirred by rage and bloodlust, devoured the landscape and destroyed dozens of settlements.

High on the mountain ridge overlooking the devastation and fire wrought by the Smoking

Stone, the Leatherwing Cult knew that it would only be a matter of time before the eyes of the marauders would turn to the homes and families of the Fire-Bat riders. They needed to act.

The action was swift and terrible. Armed with obsidian-tipped lances upon their monstrous flying War-Bats, the Leatherwings savaged Smoking Stone camps and the great and terrible raiders of the basin retreated to the hovels from whence they came, licking their wounds upon the parched and barren badlands. Long have the Smoking Stone stewed over this defeat. Their hatred of the Leatherwings is unequalled by anything save their fear of them. But to walk the path of Might is to embrace fear and make it your slave.

The Smoking Stone raiders wear ashy mail and fight with fang-hatchets, spear-casters, and other weapons that allow them to remain quick and mobile. Their battle standard is a black iron ingot the size of a Haarkeen skull from which hang braided leather streamers of copper, red, and black, worked with bronze rings and pieces of bone.



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