

**NATIVE
AMERICAN
NATIONS
VOLUME ONE**

Sample file





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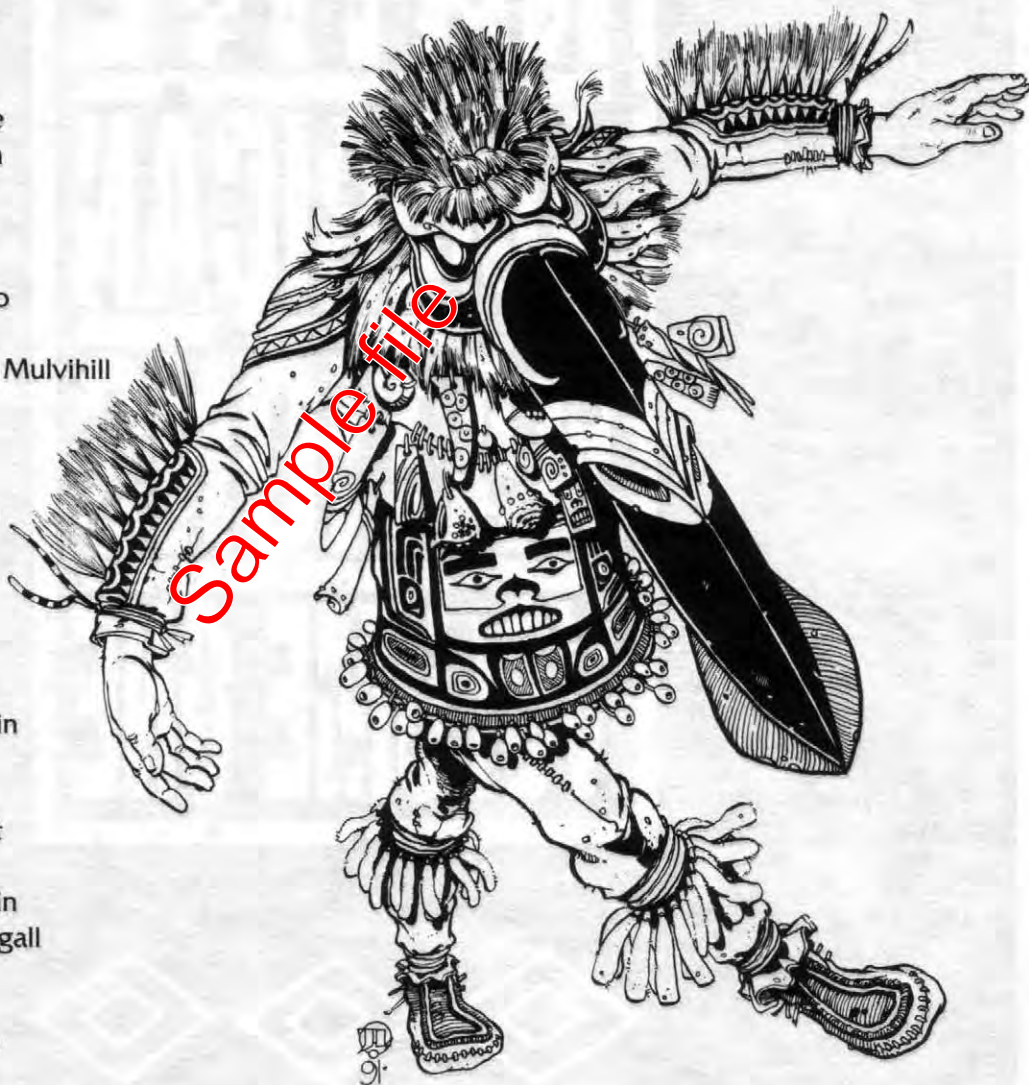
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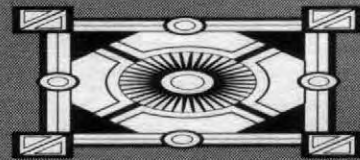


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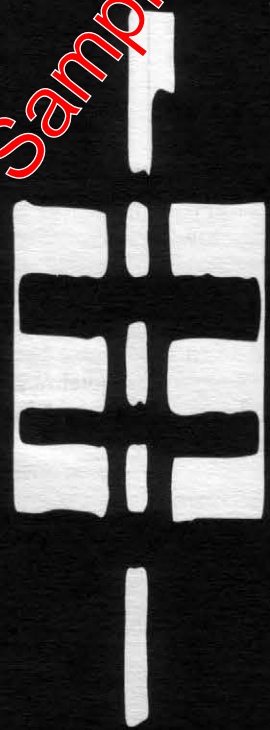


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PEACE-
KEEPER

Sample file





PEACEKEEPER: A Prologue

As our traditions tell us, we have come together to speak and to listen, to share and to receive wisdom, to give what we can to our brother nations, and draw from them the support we need. The voice was full, rich with power that rang through even the poor quality of the recording. The words had a singsong cadence that made the listeners think of a ritual invoked many times, or a ceremony losing its deeper meaning with the passing years. Let us speak and listen, and open our hearts one to another.

Two figures sat in the dark room and listened to the recorded voice. Their body language spoke of a common purpose and mutual respect, but not of friendship.

The older of the two—a rail-thin man with eyes of cold steel and sleek black hair pulled back severely into a ponytail—reached out and stabbed PAUSE with a long finger. “That is...?”

The woman, as smoothly muscular as he was whipcord slender, answered him in a flat voice. “Wilson Gold Eagle, First Speaker of the Sovereign Tribal Council. Head honcho of the Native American Nations.”

The man nodded and struck PLAY. The recorded voice continued in the same singsong style, meaningless ritual or something that might be a meaningless meeting.

From the corner of her eye, the woman watched the man. The light was low in the room, but her Zeiss optical picked out the details. He wore a black leather vest, dusty with age, over an open-necked gray shirt. Tight black jeans were tucked into rattlesnake-skin boots. (Real skin? The woman wondered. Funding might not be a problem after all...) He glinted with silver: toe caps on his boots, his belt buckle, a plain band around his right wrist, and a finely linked chain that tied back his ponytail. No weapons visible, but the feather, leather, and wood fetishes adorning his belt and peeking from the pockets of his vest told her that he might not need the mundane implements on which she depended. Her eyes were drawn to his right hand as it rested on the arm of the chair. The first two fingers were moving rhythmically. She noticed, slightly shocked, that his long, razor-sharp fingernails—natural, not cyber chrome—were tearing gouges in the synthleather of the upholstery.

“Who is that?”

The man’s question forced her attention back to the recording.

A second man was speaking. His voice contrasted sharply with the first voice: still powerful, it was the power of a heavy club rather than that of a smooth-flowing river.

“That’s Paul Shaggy Mountain,” she replied after a moment. “Chief of the Cascade Ork. He’s troll.”

“I know what he is,” the man said impatiently. He hit PAUSE again. “Aurora. Is there anything of interest in the recording? Is it worth my time to listen to it?”

The woman hesitated. “I listened to the whole thing,” she answered slowly, “and I think it’s just drek—useless mander-

ing, petty political maneuvering, those fragging tribals talking about their traditions.” Her voice dripped with contempt.

“Wipe it, then.”

“What?” Aurora sat forward. “You wanted the slotting recording. You said it was important.” Her voice became more accusatory. “You don’t have any idea how tricky it was getting a recorder into that session, particularly since you said it couldn’t be implanted, it had to be carried.”

The man laughed, an ironic, chilling sound. His laugh made the woman shiver involuntarily. “Everything I said was true,” the man said. “It was important. It is just that the recording itself is of no value.”

Aurora inhaled sharply. “You wanted to see if it was possible to smuggle something into the Council meeting.”

“And your man proved it was.”

“What are you planning, Jesse?”

Jesse laughed again. “You know what I am planning. Shatter the Council and bring down the so-called tribal nations. You have no need to know the details...yet.”

“The policlub committee won’t back you.”

Jesse spat on the carpeted floor. Once again the woman was shocked and disturbed. “Puling weaklings,” he snapped. “All talk, no vision.”

“I think they may try to block you.”

“Let them.” Jesse leaned back and locked his slender fingers behind his head. “The blind leaders and their blind rank and file. Let them try. I spit on the Humanis Policlub.” He turned a winning, warm smile on the tense woman. “Except, of course, for you and your people. The true heart; the ones with vision, the ones who are willing to act. Let the others fall into line when the deed is done, when they see what we have accomplished.” His voice became softer, almost musical, but the hard edge of determination, or fanaticism, perhaps, still shone in his cold eyes. “You will be the leaders, I the guide. Together we will complete what others have dreamed of and lack the guts to even attempt. The destruction of the tribal nations.”

Aurora was silent, tense, as she considered the question she had to ask. “Your background,” she said slowly, “is tribal.”

She’d expected a burst of anger, even violence; she was surprised by his laughter. “Yes, my background is tribal. But I renounce it, I repudiate it. I am not tribal. I revile my parents, my upbringing, the traditions with which they tried to bind me.” He toyed with a bone-and-feather fetish on his belt. “I use some of their skills, but only the more easily to destroy them.”

“What are you going to smuggle into the Council chamber?”

“Something special,” he answered. “Something I...acquired...from the good people at Renraku. Oh, the corporators are useful from time to time.”

“A bomb?”

A grim, secretive smile twisted Jesse’s face. “In a way.