LANDS OF RUNEQUEST

Sartar

Greg Stafford, Jeff Richard,
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Those who would steal the secrets of this book:
You shall be cut into parts, the way the trolls do.
Each part shall be taken to a corner of the world and burnt.
For this is how we deal with assassins without respect for life.

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Introduction

Welcome to Sartar

On the world of Glorantha, on the continent of Genertela, there is a place known as Dragon Pass. This 225-kilometer gap in the Rockwood Mountains is an extremely strategic location, sitting at the crossroads of the continent. It is the prehistoric mating and nesting ground for dragons and the homeland of the dragonewts. History has left it populated with numerous distinctive groups, many of them remnants of bygone times. Recent history has brought in new invaders, and the near future will doubtlessly provide more.

Most important is the fact that the Dragon Pass area is an extremely magical region. It is the center of the world for many myths and is the sacred home of the Storm god Orlanth. Many acts of the gods occurred here, making this region extraordinarily powerful and special. Great events, magical and religious, are still occurring there, several demigods live there, and many prophets and scholars predict that the fuse of Dragon Pass will ignite the disruption keg of the Hero Wars.

In the southeastern corner of Dragon Pass—roughly the area between Kero Fin Mountain and the barbaric Plains of Prax—lies the Kingdom of Sartar. It consists of many Orlanthi tribes united in 1492 by the great Hero Sartar. Before his arrival, the tribes lived as lawless bandits, plundering the ever-increasing number of caravans that passed through the area. Sartar, it is said, was born "from the dew of dusk and the thew of an angel." His magic turned smart men into chieftains, good men into loyal thanes, and enemies into pack beasts.

It is said that Sartar took over the valley without a fight, though that is an exaggeration since others did his fighting for him. But overall, the transition was an easy one, and he soon organized the robbers into a unified principality. After marrying the Feathered Horse Queen, he was named King of Dragon Pass, and the entire region began a rapid growth to power and prestige.

Under Sartar's rule, the tribes turned from pillage to mercantile advantage. Sartar and the Queen both set up cities, tax posts, guides, and treasuries. Sartar also built roads and forts to protect the traders from possible nomad raids. He fostered literacy, experimentation, and luxuriousness upon his subjects. His short-lived dynasty grew from that base and would soon have rivalled any empire for sheer splendor—had it survived.

However, the Lunar Empire viewed the domination of Dragon Pass by the Sartar Dynasty as unacceptable. Commercial jealously, religious rivalry, political distrust, and ancient hatreds all erupted into a fury that involved even the gods. The royal house of Sartar coordinated the tribes for a century, resisting Lunar expansion the entire time. After generations of conflict, the Lunar Empire seized



King Sartar

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an opportunity to invade the kingdom, and in 1602 the capital Boldhome fell to assault. The royal house vigorously resisted and received posthumous Hero status as a result. Any survivors were hunted across the world by agents and assassins.

The next generation was a period ranging between Lunar dominance and pre-Sartar anarchy, which was halted only when a True Dragon was awakened and enraged by the construction of a new Lunar temple atop it. In the destruction that followed, more than half of the Empire's military might was destroyed. Kallyr Starbrow, a tribal queen and rebel leader of the Sartarites, and one of the few surviving descendants of Sartar, was acclaimed Prince of Sartar. In the Sartarite colony of New Pavis, Argrath White Bull, another surviving member of the Sartar Dynasty, welded together a confederation comprised of members of Praxian tribes and Sartarite adventurers working together under his leadership.

The bravery and glory of Sartar's fight for independence attracted thousands of volunteers. The period is known as the Hero Wars, and the fighting around Dragon Pass drew the greatest collection of heroes the world has ever seen in one place.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Sartar is a rugged and seismically active region filled with rounded hills and deep, twisting valleys. At its center rise the Quivin Mountains, an upthrust of steep peaks along the same watershed as the Storm Mountains in the south and the Indigo Mountains in the north. The elevations range from around 700 meters above sea level at Duck Point to 3,120 meters at the summit of Quivin Peak.

Much of this area is a karst landscape covered by a dissected plateau of limestone and sandstone, created when the oceans covered the land in the Lesser Darkness. During the Gods War, the original limestone and sandstone rocks were folded into troughs by igneous intrusions of granite and quartz. Rampaging Storm gods wore this down to rolling hills, buttes, and mesas, exposed the granite cores, and left a rugged and strikingly beautiful landscape. Creeks and rivers have carved out twisting but fertile valleys.

The Starfire Ridges in western Sartar are the first in a series of ridges between the Upland Marsh and Prax. A seismically active area, the Starfire Ridges are a mass of tuff and sandstone cleaved by geothermal rifts called the Cinder Pits, with their steaming sulfur vents.

West of the Starfire Ridges are the grasslands that surround the Upland Marsh, a vast bog of murky islands, rocky outcroppings, and groves of cypress and blackthorn trees standing out of the dead plant material and black water. The bog is ringed with a narrow fence of hardwood trees.

The Quivin Mountains are plutonic masses of granite that thrust through the surrounding limestone during the Gods War. They are sons and daughters of Lodril, the great Fire God beneath the earth, and of Kero Fin, the Mother of Mountains. The permanent snow line is at approximately 3,000 meters, and thus Quivin Peak is capped with snow year-round. There are several small glaciers in the Quivin Mountains; most are on Quivin Peak itself.

North of Sartar is a rugged and dissected limestone plateau called the Far Point. Most of the plateau is between 1,050 and 1,150 meters high, although there are several volcanic intrusions, most notably Firetop and Jerra Hill that are 1,300 meters and above. The area is closely linked with the volcanic fields of the Indigo Mountains, itself an active volcanic mountain range where Lodril's children still hurl fire into the air. Several plains atop the Far Point are noted for their fertility, particularly the Sharl Plains and Engoli's Fold.

The Creek-Stream River drains most of Sartar and the Far Point. From its source at Skyfall Lake to the Choralinthor Bay at Nochet, the river is 700 kilometers long. For much of its length, the river is usually between three and four meters deep and from 100–200 meters wide, sometimes growing much larger during the spring floods. It has two major tributaries, the Creek and the Stream, and many smaller rivers, including some seasonal tributaries that largely disappear in late Fire Season and early Earth Season.

A long range of limestone hills marks the eastern reaches of Sartar. Typically called the Guardian Hills, they include sub-ranges such as the Yellow Hills, Quail Hills, Forloss Hills, and Division Hills. This is another dissected plateau, cut by rivers whose sources are the winter snows of the Quivin and Storm Mountains. The Quivin River has carved a deep canyon called Enothea's Cut through the hills.

Rivers and creeks have carved numerous twisting valleys in the hills. These valleys are well-watered and fertile with deep, rich soil. Melt-off from the mountains flood the valleys each spring, and the valley floors are runnelled with irrigation ditches to control the waters. Some of these ditches date back to the Second Age or before.

To the east of the Guardian Hills are the Plains of Prax, a relatively flat region that lies between the River of Cradles in the east, the hills and mountains that separate it from Dragon Pass and the Holy Country in the west, the mountains of Shadows Dance in the north, and the coastal zone and the sea in the south. Prax was beloved of Eiritha and was fertile and pleasant, but she sacrificed its essence to aid the Storm Bull against the Devil. The surface of the land is now hard clay and sand, underlaid by limestone.

All of Dragon Pass is seismically active, and earthquakes are common. The areas around the Starfire Ridges, the Far Point, and Dinosaur Hill are the most seismically active in Sartar. The Earthquake Goddess is offered propitiatory worship throughout Sartar, even if her number of initiates is small.

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Dragon Pass is littered with fantastic landmarks from the Gods War, and Sartar is no exception. The Skull Ruins and Bone Hills are the remnants of a True Dragon, and the outline of sleeping giants can be seen in the mountains. North of the Far Point, the cursed depression known as Snakepipe Hollow was formed when the Chaos Army invaded, and an ancient Earth temple collapsed to trap the corruption. A much more recent formation is Dragon's Rest, formed in 1625 when the Brown Dragon awakened and devoured a Lunar temple and much of the Lunar Army.

Climate

Sartar has many microclimates due to its hills, valleys, snow-capped mountains, and the presence of Prax to its east. In general, Sartar has warm summers, with Fire Season averaging around 28° C, and colder winters because of its elevation. However, the presence of the storm gods has a strong and irregular mythic influence on the weather.

Sartar is known for its powerful and changing winds. In the first part of the year, winds typically blow from the southwest, bringing Orlanth Thunderous' fertilizing rain and thunderstorms. In Earth season, Orlanth is calm, but the violent and powerful Desert Winds often blow from the Genert Wastes. This magical wind is the Storm Bull's fury; it is warm and highly charged with raw powers, and Gagarth the Wild Hunter often rides it. In the last part of the year, Orlanth and his kin return from the north with a cold vengeance, bringing gales and winter storms—even the occasional tornado. The Storm gods often quarrel, bringing unusual weather, strange winds, and either too much or too little precipitation. About one year in five, Orlanth Thunderous withholds his fertilizing rains until the Storm Voices hold special sacrifices to appease him; about one in year in seven, Orlanth Thunderous brings wetter-than-average conditions that can last several seasons.

The Quivin Mountains act as a rain shadow; as a result, the western hills are wetter than eastern Sartar. Clearwine, in western Sartar, gets an average of 87 centimeters of rain and 120 centimeters of snow annually. Swenstown, on the eastern march with Prax, gets only 49 centimeters of rain and 95 centimeters of snow. Boldhome, because of its position and high elevation (1,520 meters), gets 65 centimeters of rain and 205 centimeters of snow.

Because of the unnatural permanent rainstorm above Skyfall Lake, the Far Point receives far more precipitation than the rest of Sartar, much of it in the form of snow. Alone gets the most precipitation in Sartar, with 72 centimeters of rain and 310 centimeters of snow.

The "early" portion of a season is the first four weeks: Disorder, Harmony, Death, and Fertility. The "late" portion of a season is the last four weeks: Stasis, Movement, Illusion, and Truth.

Flora

During the Inhuman Occupation, much of Sartar was dotted with clumps of elf woods. These were mainly yellow pine forests with stands of beech, cedar, fir, oak, and white spruce, and even a few carefully guarded redwood groves. Remnants of these pine forests still survive around the base of the Quivin and Storm Mountains, near the Indigo Mountains, and in the Lost Man Thickets. Tarndisi's Grove is an isolated stand of this older forest.

Before human settlement, the valley floors were mostly grassland with scattered copses of oak. Much of this land is now heavily cultivated with wheat, barley, grapes, and orchards. Tall, leafed trees like aspens, cottonwoods, and sycamores line the riparian zones, and on the stream banks, bayberries (used for both healing purposes and candlemaking) grow profusely. North of the Creek in the Donalf Flats there are still broad expanses of grasslands with scattered stands of oaks and pines.

The hills of Sartar have mixed oak and pine woodland, and open grassland, filled with wildflowers in late Sea Season. Jang is a common flower, used also as a healing plant. Brushfires are common during late Fire Season and early Earth Season, marking the presence of Oakfed. Above 900 meters, the woodlands give way to stands of yellow pine, white firs, spruce, and incense cedars.

In the eastern Guardian Hills, the oak and pine barrens give way to low-stunted conifers and thickets of dark-leafed shrubs, sagebrush, and bunchgrass of Prax.

Fauna

Dragon Pass is famed for its draconic inhabitants. Dream dragons, wyrms, and wyverns are rare but hardly unknown. More commonly seen are the herds of dinosaurs that can be found around the Moaning Valley or along the outskirts of the Upland Marsh, including ankylosaurs, brontosaurs, hadrosaurs, and triceratops. Less common are carnivorous dinosaurs such as allosaurs, deinonychuses, pteranodons, and the occasional spinosaur or tyrannosaur. Dinosaurs are sacred to the earth goddesses, particularly Maran Gor.

Of the larger mammals, bighorn sheep, bison, boar, deer, elk, impala, and sable are common. The occasional sky bull or mammoth herd can be found in the high elevations, and a few mastodon herds dwell in the wooded areas. Pig dogs are also occasionally seen. Carnivorous mammals include grizzlies, the more commonly seen black bears, and the rare white bear. Sightings of badgers, coyote, foxes, otters, rubble runners, shadowcats, and wolves are common; cougars and saber-toothed cats are present but less frequently seen. Jaguars are occasionally seen in the lower elevation areas of southern Sartar. Smaller mammals include chipmunks, jackrabbits, martens, porcupines, red squirrels, ringtail cats, and skunks.

The area is rich in reptiles, including corn snakes, kingsnakes, and rattlesnakes. The diamondback rattlesnake

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