



Hero Wars

+

ORLANTH IS DEAD!

Sartar Rising, volume 2

By Greg Stafford and Friends.

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*The Gods of War bless the Heortlings.
Barntar is Strength, we stand against our foes;
Vingkot is Leadership, we overcome our foes;
Humakt is Death, we destroy our foes.
Orlanth is Victory, we are the Storm Tribe.*



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Sample file

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WELCOME TO THE HERO WARS

O*rlanth is Dead!* is the second book in the *Sartar Rising* campaign series. It is an aid for the narrator that provides the first great *Hero Wars* event in the land of Sartar, the Battle of Iceland. It makes many assumptions about the type of game being played. It also assumes access to *Barbarian Adventures* (ISS 1401), *Thunder Rebels* (ISS 1301) and *Storm Tribe* (ISS 1310). Narrators may find it useful to read *King of Sartar* (ISS 4500), a collection of myths and legends about Dragon Pass and the Hero Wars, many of which relate to the era covered in this series.

Winds stop. Air thins. Magic fails.
Winter begins, out of season. You expect to hear the news any time now, but you already know the truth:
Whitewall has fallen, and the old world is over.
Where will you be when the Hero Wars begin?

Orlanth is Dead!

Whereas *Barbarian Adventures* concentrated on the day-to-day life of the Heortling barbarians of Sartar, *Orlanth is Dead!* brings them into the struggle to save their god and free their land from the oppressive Lunar occupation. As such, it introduces powerful characters and larger-scale problems. It is more directed—there is a story being told, and the players at this stage will be in a position to affect but not rewrite it. Make the players feel like they are part of something great, and be careful not to make them feel powerless. Try to generate a sense of collective storytelling and discovery. Help the players become excited by the bigger story. Players should not read much of this book.

While certain events must happen to drive the story forward, in many other places we provide ideas rather than fully detailed episodes, so that the actual flow of events can be made unique and adapted to the needs of the players and their game.

The *Sartar Campaign* describes the plight of the kingdom under Imperial occupation and the main heroes and groups dedicated to freeing it. In addition to details of what has happened in the past, it also offers a quick preview of what is yet to come, a description of the rebel leader Kallyr Starbrow, and a first suggestion of how one of the player heroes might become Argrath, the ultimate liberator of Sartar.

Your Clan is unique and special, the best in all Sartar. This chapter provides a detailed mechanic to personalize and individualize the player heroes' clan(s). This questionnaire addresses everything from who they followed in the mythic era before Time to who their present enemies are. The players will participate in the creation of their clan, helping to define the clan's wealth, relationships, and secrets, as well as the powers of its

guardian being, called a wyter.

Warfare and Battle explains the Heortling way of war, from Vingkot's Muster to typical battle formations. It provides the narrator with a quick way of resolving battles of every size and gives ideas on how to make the experience of battle exciting and realistic. Players may want to read this section.

Narrator Resources addresses the foes and leaders of the campaign, from epic figures like Kallyr, to the senior 'Army Villain' that will be the heroes' Lunar nemesis throughout the series, to groups and individuals they may fight. These latter include a dogged bounty hunter, a Lunar zealot with a private army, and the mercenary pikemen of the Sun Dome Temple.

Orlanth is Dead is a climactic tale of how the wind stops, Orlanthe magic dies, and savage, unnatural winter comes to Dragon Pass. While the Lunars advance their plans to pacify the Sartarites, the heroes must survive, protect their clan and kin, and then play their parts in the magical and military response, which will culminate in a mighty battle.

This clash, **The Battle of Iceland**, is a major turning point in the rebellion. If the heroes survive attacks by dour imperial hoplites, unearthly Lunar magic, and savage Chaos monstrosities, they will have an opportunity to free Orlanthe, save Kallyr's life, and be forever respected by their peers. Heroes who can say, "I was at Iceland" will be recognized as among those who changed the history of Sartar.

The **Epilogue** outlines what happens after the battle; after all, this was just a battle, not the war. Orlanthe is free, but the Lunar hold on Dragon Pass is not broken, and the Empire is still powerful. There are even greater events ahead, as Sartar awaits its Argrath!

Your Campaign

The *Sartar Campaign* presumes that time passes in the adventure world, and that player heroes will grow more powerful and important. Early scenarios give ordinary problems that warriors in a Heortling clan need to deal with. These include the everyday actions of cattle raiding and feuding. Occasionally, great events occur that offer the player heroes a chance to participate. Eventually, the players will be powerful and important enough to become close to the leaders of the rebellion.

The Big Story

We assume that every narrator's campaign will include both "free choice" and designed scenarios.

Free choice scenarios allow the players to do whatever they want. The campaign is set up to allow a lot of that kind of choice. We hope that such stories are enticing enough to interest the players, but they can be ignored if the heroes have more important business. They are not obliged to pursue a clan feud, go cattle raiding, or help the rebels. However, certain events will happen whether or not the heroes participate. The story goes on regardless, and the players will be swept into it.

The designed scenarios that we will present are of two main types, Campaign-motivated and Player-motivated. You, the narrator, will have to find a balance between these events that will satisfy you and your players.

Campaign-motivated scenarios include events like the Battle of Iceland. These are "The Big Story" that will affect even individuals who try to stay uninvolved.

Player-motivated scenarios include the everyday events of a Heortling warrior's life. In the early days they include the popular pastimes of cattle raiding, fighting Chaos, and other activities described in *Barbarian Adventures*. Future supplements will include such scenarios as well.

Both types of scenarios are needed for maximum challenge and fun. The year after year of dealing with raiders, local threats, and monster incursions is exciting, but it takes on new meaning when players also become engaged in epic events.

Before the Tempest: the Learning Sessions

Start easy. Narrators have to take the lead in telling the story. Familiarize your players with the rules and lead their heroes through the world gradually. It is not good to throw unknown players and heroes directly into the epic events described in this book. Mention a few seasonal events (see *Thunder Peaks*,

pp. 104-117, and *Barbarian Adventures*, pp. 34), then have the heroes participate in a couple of holy days. Run them through the scenarios in *Hero Wars*, *Barbarian Adventures*, and online at www.HeroWars.com/hw/scenarios.html. Get them used to their homeland, the weather, and the way Heortlings do things. It does not matter if no one knows what year it is—the passage of time in the earlier adventures can be vague and indefinite.

Narrator Tips

Your job is not just to provide entertainment to the players, but to provide it in such a way that they will entertain you in turn. You need to talk a lot, providing both important and irrelevant descriptions and information. However, you do not have to give out everything at once, and you should never be afraid to ask what the motivation for a question is.

In providing answers and information, always give the players options. Let the players choose between good, bad, and risky things to do. Some options may seem silly or even stupid, but just shrug and offer them anyway. "Or you can jump over the cliff." By offering these obvious possibilities all the time, it will not seem strange the one time the "silly" option is important. Do discourage players from being stupid, however.

You should give the appearance of free choice to the players, but present information in a manner that tempts them to participate in your story. If necessary, remind them of the likely consequences of their actions. Players usually consider potential physical consequences as a matter of course, but social consequences are often the unspoken pressure for behavior. Thus, if a player wants his hero to do something rash or with potentially serious consequences, you may need to remind him of what the mob will do, how long the weaponthanes take to get there, what the gods do to people who perform such activities, and so on. But be conservative—coercion is uncomfortable enough when necessary for the plot; it is intolerable when used frequently or in trivial situations.

"The Cry from the Mishap House"

"Mishap House" refers to clan dependants, particularly those who were permanently disabled or made mentally incompetent while performing a special task for the clan. Since such tasks often entail a dangerous trip to the Otherworld, the Mishap House commonly includes survivors of heroquests who have paid the price but not collected any reward.

Clans rarely have an actual house for these pitiful folks, for who but Chalana Arroy could bear to be among so much misery concentrated into a single place? The term "house" is used in the meaning of "a group of people." People usually tend their own kin in these circumstances.

Nonetheless, in some places groups have assembled actual Mishap Houses for their former friends and companions. Their visible presence, in a relatively comfortable setting, is intended to encourage people to undertake, or at least support, new heroquesting to prepare for the Hero Wars they say are coming.

What is Rebellion but "A Cry from the Mishap House?"

Many people fear both the rebellion and talk of the Hero Wars. When they say, "the cry to war comes from the Mishap House," they mean this as a term of scorn, pointing to such places as statements of the costs of supporting the notion of a Hero War.

Narrators should occasionally bring forth authority figures to question the heroes on their actions and motivations. Like most people in entrenched positions of power, they seek calm and the status quo. Indeed, their leadership roles require this—

part of their job is to quell anything that could threaten their communities (or status).

Past rebellions, after all, have simply led to brutal reprisals and, if anything, a strengthening of the Lunar yoke. Although it is possible to oppose the rebellion out of the best motives, most authority figures believe that even successful actions pose too great a risk of consequences. Many remember the crucifixes that lined the roads, each bearing its grisly remnant of a guerrilla or rebel sympathizer. No one has forgotten the Sambari and Dundelos, the first tribe humbled, the second shattered.

The Hero Wars pose an even greater threat to the status quo. Every rumor or threat of it contains tales of destruction and the seeds for social and cosmic upheaval. Many leaders regularly and publicly disavow belief that the Hero Wars are coming, reminding everyone that the prophecies are so vague and general that they are inherently untrue. The Lunar Occupation and incipient rebellion are cause enough for concern and are right here, right now. Diverting attention to the Hero Wars—especially using it as a justification for outrageous actions—is an anti-social action that must be curbed.

Such censure from most authority figures makes leaders who *do* believe in the coming Hero Wars much more significant. Of course, over time more and more of them will recognize the reality of what is going on. The player heroes, in fact, have an opportunity to spread that word and help sensible people to survive the struggle.

Benchmarks

The scenarios of the *Sartar Campaign* are designed for a group of 4-6 players, each with a single hero of common origin. They often assume that the heroes work in a cooperative hero band. One or two characters may be of leader quality—up to two abilities at 12 \mathbb{L} 2 or three at 5 \mathbb{L} 2, several more at 15 \mathbb{L} -18 \mathbb{L} , and with appropriate companions. The other heroes should be beginning characters generated using the rules in *Hero Wars*.

Organizations naturally have leaders and followers. The heroes are welcome to act differently if they wish, working out some special arrangement with their society and/or the narrator. However, they should realize that this is not how the rest of the world works, and there are always costs associated with going against the cultural grain. Chieftains will expect to deal with a leader and will become uncomfortable or suspicious of the group if there does not appear to be one. The Lunars will put out a reward for “so-and-so’s gang,” making their own assumptions as to who is in charge.

We encourage you to have a leader-type character on hand to help the beginning group. If an individual in the group is mature enough to play such a character, you will not need to create this patron. Just have that player use the Advanced Experience options in *Hero Wars* when creating his character.

What Leaders Do

Leaders command and followers do the job. Even a front-line swordthane or “squad leader” must give orders to his followers and observe what occurs before committing himself to action. He is expected to save himself for the most powerful enemy. If there is no enemy leader, he supports his followers with some healing here, a well placed arrow or augment there, and personal intervention whenever anyone needs rescuing. That is his job, and only in set or desperate situations will he leap into the melee hacking left and right with his sword.

People without this capacity, even extremely powerful and efficient individuals, are not selected as leaders among the Heortlings. They are valued for what they are (perhaps a champion or powerful magician), but they are not leaders. Someone else will give them orders.

Easy Reasons to Start Together

The game runs more smoothly if you can justify why a group of player heroes are together. This is especially important if they do not seem to have much in common with each other.

One Clan, One Home: This one is easy. The player heroes are relatives, living close together. They have known each other for their entire lives, and share communal goals.

One Clan, Many Homes: Clans recognize kinship even when members have never seen each other. The players may be related but come from different tribes, perhaps even different kingdoms. If strangers can prove their kinship they are respected and accepted, whether they come from Sartar, Heortland, Esrolia, or even Tarsh.

One Home, Many Clans: Despite appearances in previous publications, different kin groups often inhabit a single village. Multiple clans often reside in a single town, and a clan may have members in several villages, perhaps even a group in a nearby city. Even if they do not share kinship, players may very well share some communal goals.

One Cult: Many deities are minor or obscure, with only a few hundred worshippers scattered across the land. Members of such cults who discover each other have good reason to remain together to work their god’s magic.

One Band: Players might share interests, goals, or ideals even if they have no kinship, communal, or religious ties. Such individuals can join an existing organization, but many form a new group (often called a hero band) that will help them to accomplish tasks more easily. We recommend that the meeting of the players and the formation of the hero band be played out, since that will give players a greater sense of belonging.

The social milieu is critical to the campaign, which presumes that people live in an organized society. Player heroes will be followers until they can prove themselves qualified as leaders. The hero band to which they belong is the organization that they follow. Forming this hero band is a part of the campaign. As the band succeeds, other followers will become attached to it, lending it greater strength and influence.

Rivals and Enemies

Choose a rivalry early. Use rivals during peaceful lulls in adventure. They can color home life by rubbing shoulders at moots, on market days, and in column marching to battle. Have a race between the player heroes and another band with similar goals, with friendly taunting afterwards by the winners. No weapon-worthy insults, just rivalry (and good-natured brawling if your campaign is so inclined). Is a player courting some woman? Give him an opponent from the rival group. After you figure out which Argrath the players are least likely to follow (see pg. 11), you can have the rivals follow him.

Enemies are more serious. A good narrator will have personal villains as a focus for the players’ (and heroes’) emotions. The game has a different feeling when the fight is not against the vague Lunar Empire, but a personal foe who has spat in your eye, foiled your successes, and otherwise opposed you every step of the way.

The *Sartar Campaign* presents many enemies, but the story should focus on one or two as the player heroes’ personal foes. They will appear repeatedly in the campaign to combat and thwart the player band. Even if the heroes kill most of the band the officers should remain, escape, and reappear later. And not just because the story says so—final defeat of a long-time foe should be a scenario of its own. Later scenarios will use the shorthand “Villain Attacks Here” on the assumption that your campaign will have established these by then.



The Calm Before The Storm

"Moon, broo, and the ambitions of chieftains are the three great evils."

—Common Sartarite saying

A foul generation has passed since the soldiers of the Red Moon invaded and occupied Sartar, enslaving its inhabitants under the yoke of the Lunar Empire. Although many clans struggle to maintain their worship of Orlanth and the traditions of their ancestors, many Sartarites have betrayed their gods and embraced the Lunar way.

The Lunars are a people of the town and city, and it is in the cities and towns that they have made their nests. They are clever and subtle, and can defeat a clan with gifts as often as with spears. Through the selective seduction and bribery of tribal kings, clan chieftains, city rings, and influential godar, entire tribes have 'turned towards the red' and now join in public sacrifice to the Chaos Moon. And when soft words fail, the Empire is deadly to those who oppose them.

In the four hands of years since the invasion, many things have changed. Sartar is a backward frontier posting far from the rich glow of the *real* Empire (the Lunar Heartlands), and the actions of military officers, tax collectors, sheriffs, and other Lunar functionaries often escape close scrutiny. Many opportunities exist for cruel or unscrupulous officials to do as they choose, with little chance of discovery or rebuke.

Strangers have come into the area, crowding against the fringes of the sacred tulas. Settlements of Lunar veterans, come as conquerors and colonists, push out the clans and take over their lands.

Many traders and opportunists have come as well, and everywhere is seen the magic of counting and coin. The tribes have always known and made use of money, but it was a servant, not a master. Now, the widespread use of coinage weakens the bonds of gift giving and patronage. The sanctity and independence of the clans and the sacred bonds of kinship are spoiled, as folk demand shelter, food, or goods simply by showing silver in their palm. The Empire pays for thralls with silver, sentences "rebels" to slavery, and encourages thrall-taking among all the clans. The freedom wind is threatened.

A generation of noble hostages taken as children has returned from the Heartlands to resume their lives among the clans. They bring with them foreign gods and ways, and a heart-felt devotion to the Lunar Way. They are called *dirt-shines* by those who dislike them. Generous trade concessions and new lands have been granted to compliant clans, while the rebellious face heavy taxes and the loss of territory. The old bonds and loyalties between allies have been weakened, and it is sometimes difficult to tell friend from foe.

In the cities and towns, Lunar courts enforce a new kind of law, with no concern for justice. They deny the sacred right to wergild, and no one has a free voice or the consolation of kin! Inter-marriage between troops, colonizers, and Sartarites, especially in the clans of the city rings, has brought new concepts of kinship, ownership, and loyalty, diluting the Custom of Vingkot and the Laws of Heort. New Pelorian has become the language of city and confederacy court. Lunar shrines and altars have been erected in every city's market square, while the temples and holy places of Orlanth are defiled and laid waste.

Lunar missionaries have recruited many clansmen, assisted by Tarshites who claim to follow the Old Ways, but who have turned their backs on Orlanth. Spies, informers, and collaborators are everywhere, and the clans who seek to maintain the

ways of the Storm are wracked by the horror of kinstrife. Sartarites act as intermediaries or guides in the collection of taxes, in hunting and punishing rebels, and in destroying the holy places of Orlanth, Urox, and Babeester Gor. They call themselves the Moon Winds, but we call them *ruptureds*. These traitors use their newfound power to prosecute tribal rivalries and inter-clan feuds with murderous efficiency. So deep is the treachery that Sartar is now the battleground of tribe against tribe, clan against clan, and even sister against brother.

Even those who take the outlaw path bring hardship and danger to all. They neither plow nor herd, but instead must demand food and shelter from kin or from the steeds of strangers. In a time of poor harvests and high taxes, they must live off the labor of others. How strange to see women and men from different clans and even different tribes living and fighting together! Some are truly heroes, but others are little better than bandits.

The armed uprisings against the Lunars include Starbrow's Rebellion, the Righteous Wind, The Season of Five Storms, the Firebull Moot, and the Black Arrow Callings. All have been quickly contained with a mixture of bribery, treachery, threats, and military action. With the exception of Prince Temertain, those of King Sartar's blood are no more, and the heroes who openly opposed the Lunar army are all dead or exiled.

Despite the cowardice and excuses of many leaders, the true sons of Sartar know that they are locked in a bitter struggle for the very survival of their land and people. It is no longer merely a conflict of battles and blades, raids and rebellion, but of ideas and customs, subtle seductions and great magic.

Large-scale military actions are now rare. The army prefers selective use of terror to demonstrate their mastery, and the rebels wait until the time is right to strike. The decimation of the Sambari Tribe following the Firebull Moot was carefully calculated by the Lunar Command, and Kallyr and the rebel leaders have learned from this and other failed rebellions.

On the Other Side, Lunar heroes and priestesses block and divert the sacred paths of the Heortlings, using foul sorcery to interfere with the Sacred Order. They subvert the true myths, spreading false stories and prohibiting the holy binding ceremonies of Sacred Time. They have even intruded on the Hero Planes, so that questers on the Sacred Way are deceived and misled! No longer do Heortling questers encounter Burning Tongue Beast on the Herd-Making Quest, but rather Red Feather Tongue, who offers a boon of a different kind. There have been many such changes.

The sacred order of the world is threatened. As more Heortling ceremonies fail, as more transformers are killed or lost forever on the Sacred Paths, so the ritual and magical power of the clans falters and dies. Harvests fail, herds sicken and waste, and the great cleansing of Storm Season weakens and is no more. Now the Lunars openly proclaim that the Wind is bound, and that Orlanth will be imprisoned forever.

It can not be.

It must not be.

Come the Hurricane.