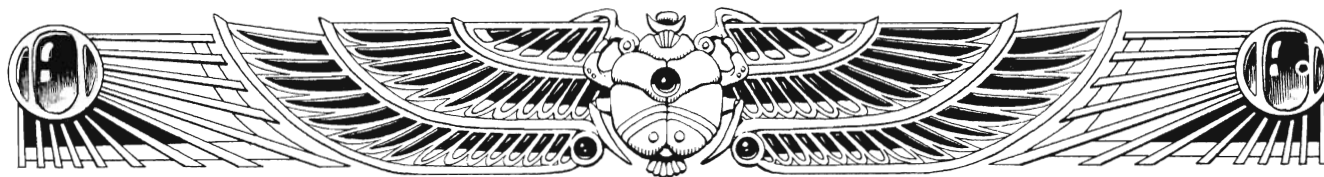


THE ORK NATION OF
CARA FAHD TM



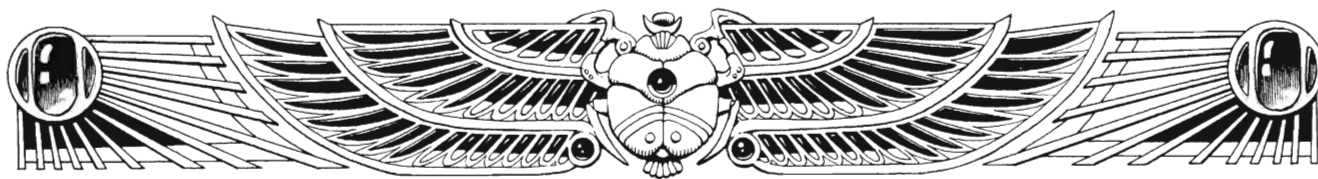
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THE BEAUTIFUL FIRE & MERA-A-ARG

o the Orks of Barsaive:

As I am a troubadour, I shall tell you a tale. Although you have heard it since your birth, you may not know this version, so have patience if it seems strange or is over-familiar.

Long ago, in a time not yet lost to history, two lovers lived at the center of the world. Although others looked at their home and saw rocky soil, barren fields and ferocious beasts, the lovers recognized their land's beauty. They looked upon the craggy ground where mountain met earth and beheld the face of Astendar, known in our old tongue as Mera-a-a-arg. When wild thundras fell beneath their spears, the couple remembered the animals' beauty and thanked them for giving their lives to grace their table. When they reclined on a sandy riverbank and let the water's melody play counterpoint to their leather drums, Mera-a-a-arg touched their hearts.

And though others rejected their ways as coarse and rough, they were content.

Even alone, the lovers felt surrounded by friends, for they needed no one else. Their own company seemed as a party of thousands and joy filled the hours, for their love held them deeper than any before or since.

And though others rejected their ways, the Passions blessed the couple, for they planned their lives with love and their customs pleased Mera-a-a-arg.

And in time, the others grew jealous. They gathered around the edge of the lovers' home, and peered through their windows, wondering what hid inside that kept them so young and beautiful, what treasure they owned that gave them such delight.

And when the man demanded they leave, told them to be gone from his house, for he needed space for his wife and children, the spying neighbors fled. And as they ran, they cried crocodile tears and howled to their families that the lovers attacked them. So the throng gathered arms and descended on the couple, declaring that for punishment, they would rip the man from the warm arms of his lover and throw him into the world alone.

And though he slew a hundred men, his enemies still came from all sides. They boiled under the walls of his house and tore into his wife even as she clung to him and they rent her flesh and lit her on fire. As the flames licked at his arms and around her dead eyes, the man fled, never to return in eleven centuries of mourning.

But he does not know that his lover lives still, deep in slumber, awaiting his kiss, for Mera-a-a-arg does not let so powerful a love die.

An ugly story, you say? You have never heard a tale of such tragedy, such brutality?

Then it is only one of many as lost to you as the lovers to each other, for we orks remember few of our own tales. The verses of the troll-written Battle of Sky Point come easily to our lips, and our bodies move to the rhythms of elven dance, or tremble at the majesty of the sculpted gates of Throal, but we have forgotten our own arts, lost our own loves.

And we have lost Mera-a-a-arg.

True, She may stir your blood for a night of passion, move your hands as you beat drums to a furious tempo or echo your footsteps as you dance the *lukro* under the new moon's sky.

She may even smile in approval when you look up from a tattoo to find that a day and a night have gone by, but your vision now lives on the skin of your subject.

Mera-a-a-arg rejoices at such times, when we remember our own beauty and do not drown it with the empty patter of elves, the rigid pontificating of dwarves.

But She smiles little of late.

For She remembers (and how many of you do?) the days of Cara Fahd, when orks worshipped Her in their minds and words and actions, their arts unsullied by others who lack the passion to understand Her needs.

In Cara Fahd, orks lived by their passions. When love took us, we gave in to love and our days and nights were warmed by it. But when the ardor dissolved, we let it go, not soiling beautiful memories by continuing a relationship which had run its course. How many of you in Throal have the courage to do so now? Where, if a dwarven guildmaster knows that you are living out of wedlock, he will find a way to give your employment to someone else, someone who follows Throalic law?

In Cara Fahd, our children knew that anywhere they went they would be cared for, for all orks lived as a single family and their hearts held love for every member. How many of you in Kratas would let your neighbors alone with your daughters, allow your sons to play untended on the streets?

In Cara Fahd, orks understood that the only true judgments are made in love. When gahad gripped someone and he turned on his tormentor, he was judged not by unfeeling law books, but by his wives, his sisters, his neighbors, and they decided what made an act a crime, not a magistrate who cared more for parchment than people. How many in Bartertown would bring gahad as an explanation before the Magistrates?

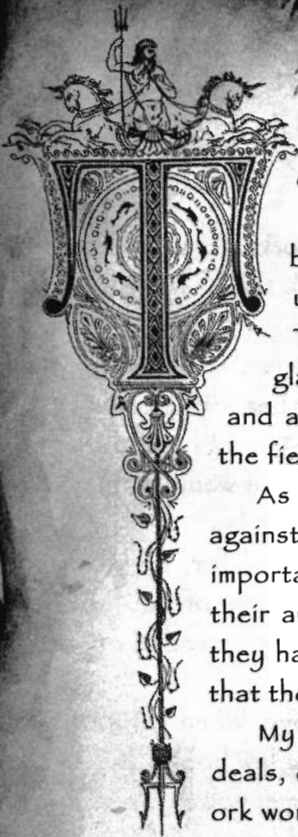
In Cara Fahd, we created art as we lived. Funding iron statues which clawed for the sky, complex whorls of tattoos that recorded the artist's gahad in bright ink, songs that shook the walls of Veren Canyon when sung in unison by ten thousand throats. Orks wove living crystal into the orichalcum threads of the Crown of Cara Fahd until even Queen Fallia of Wyrn Wood admitted its beauty. An ork captured a mountain in a fragile glass jar to create a weapon that made crystal raiders tremble. An ork composed the Hero's Sacrifice on Grallen's Field nine days after Hrak Gron breathed her last, and sang it with enough vigor to make the Moorsarantyoikan Liferock cry.

We understood that art was more than a pretty story to hide in a dusty library, more than a mural on the wall of an unlit home. Art filled our lives and our souls, and if you wanted to fall to your knees in a city street to draw King Wudra and the Obsidiman in the dust, we stepped around you until your work was done.

It is time to return. To rekindle ork traditions, to remind ourselves of Mera-a-a-arg, to feel Her fiery touch blaze through our veins once more. It is time to come together and awaken the land with our kiss.

It is time to return to our lost lover, for her Name is Cara Fahd, and without her we have been mourning for eleven hundred years.

KRATAS GRON



WHAT TRANKO WAS AND WILL BE

to the Orks of Barsaive:

I once rode astride a bull thundra alongside a mercenary company, because I had heard that by doing so, I would learn courage. And we came upon a legion of proud scorchers attacking the town we had sworn to protect. The scorchers drove through the dwarves' defenses like a hammer through glass, filling their arms with riches. Then we arrived, clad in gleaming chain mail, and accepted pouches of gold to protect the inhabitants. Our battle lasted until the field was swampy with blood.

As we withdrew, both sides let loose joyful shouts. They had wielded steel against one another and galloped off rich. They had survived another day. But most importantly, as the chieftains of both sides retreated, the scorchers rejoiced that their army fought with such skill that the deaths would please Tranko himself, for they had shown true courage. And our mercenaries screamed as eagles do, and said that their side, too, had pleased Thystonius, the Passion of conflict.

My companion told me, "That is not true courage. Those deaths were merchant's deals, orks killing orks in return for coins stamped with the faces of dwarf kings. No ork won that battle."

So we rode through western Barsaive searching for courage, and I saw a second battle. Ork slew ork over a year-long blood feud. By the end of the day, horse and rider alike were strewn like a child's toys, gasping and dying on the ground. As the two tribes withdrew, they swore their war would last forever, for nothing could repair their stained honor, and their willingness to fight in the face of so many deaths showed their courage.

My companion told me, "That is not true courage. Such wars exhaust the orks, and that is what the Therans love best. They will come soon and enslave the wounded."

So we rode through eastern Barsaive, and I saw a battle to end all battles. Two large groups of thundra riders charged each other, crushing small trees beneath their feet. Poisoned arrows fell upon elementalists and their fires turned night to day. The chieftains were the last to fall, and as they lunged at one another with dripping axes, they screamed that they killed for no reason but battle itself, because courage lies in the desire to please Tranko.

My companion told me, "That is not true courage. Those deaths were pain for the sake of pain, and that way pleases only the Horrors."

And I knew, as you do, that he spoke the truth, for my companion is the Passion Tranko, not dwarf, nor Theran, nor Horror. He is a Passion, and blesses only those who feel His touch in their fights.

Alas, we have left a scar on Tranko's heart. He waits for us silently, for Tranko does not ask for help, though His gahad rages still. Is this not the same Passion we know when racing our swiftest horses among rocky cliffs that would make an air sailor shake with terror? The Passion we know when we are pinned in a grumog choke and our breath and vision fades, yet we hurl our