

Lore24 Month 6 – Wild West Month I

Wild West Month Entries

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By: Urban Sniper

6 - Western Month I – Wild West Month Topics

The world of Incarcerus IV, stuck in an age comparable to the American Old West, following a great upheaval in the planet's very makeup due to a malfunctioning terraformer, left abandoned by the Dark Elves who once used it as a prison and laboratory for their questionable experiments, now a burgeoning, if isolated, world filled with people and dangers all its own.

#Lore24 – Entry #153 – Wild West Month #1 – Prisoners from the Many Worlds Beyond the Sky

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

We Kerra-Kerra are born into this world, and yet none of our people who walk upon it now or who have ever walked upon it are of this world, for all were brought here from stars far beyond. Each star in the sky is perhaps a world unto itself, perhaps multiple worlds, and it is from these Many Worlds Beyond the Sky that our people come. Even those not born of the Kerra-Kerra tribes are from these Many Worlds Beyond the Sky, for they were brought to this world with us, not willingly, but as prisoners.

Many, many moons ago, this was the Time of Chains, when all peoples who were not allied with the Wardens of the Night-Skinned Peoples were subject to their rule, were forced onto Ships that Sail the Stars and brought here, to our world we call the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons. Upon the land that was once barren, made livable by the great magic of the Night-Skinned Peoples, our ancestors and the ancestors of those not of the tribes, were held in great Fortresses of Stone and Metal, not permitted to leave, forced to follow the will of the Devil-Wardens lest they be punished.

It is told by our ancestors that the Devil-Wardens would perform foul sorcery and strange rituals upon the many peoples they held within their evil fortresses, warping the very flesh upon their bones, turning them into the many abominations that roam the Bitter Frontier to this day. None remember why they would do such things to those they brought here, only that the Night-Skinned People were as devils and demons, using their magic and machines upon those they had deemed to be less than they.

Who were the Night-Skinned People and these Devil-Wardens, you ask, and what do we know of them? Well...

#Lore24 – Entry #154 – Wild West Month #2 – The Devil-Wardens

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

The Night-Skinned People and their Devil Wardens...our ancestors know that they came from the Many Worlds Beyond the Sky just as they once did, but for whatever reasons, they hated those not of their own kind, and sought to terrible things to them. We know that they held great power, could change the very nature of the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons, could change the very essence of what makes one's flesh.

They are called the Night-Skinned People because their own flesh was the color of night, black as the obsidian stone, or perhaps slightly lighter, with a bluish hue, like that of the night skies. They were known to have unearthly white hair, though some of the ancestors say that a few of their Devil-Wardens had other shades, like that of blood or the sun itself, though this had little bearing on how they would treat those they brought to the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons. Their ears were as knives or spear-tips, long and narrow, not unlike the Elf-people who prefer the forests and rivers of the lands far beyond the Bitter Frontier, and it is said that their eyes shone like flame, their gazes cowing any who would dare oppose them. It is told that they possessed strange magical weapons and mechanics that would render even the massive Horse People or the mighty orc warriors helpless before them.

Those we call the Devil-Wardens were rulers of the Night-Skinned People, directing how their lesser followers would treat those they held within their Fortresses of Stone and Metal from their High Towers, their eyes all-seeing within their walls. They always knew what their prisoners were doing and would bring swift and harsh punishments upon them. The Devil-Wardens had the power of life and the power of death, and wielded it upon their whims, which could change as does the wind. Their command of great sorceries and foul rituals meant that even the sacred flesh of those they held within their Fortresses were not safe, for our ancestors tell of many horrible abominations born from the whims of the Devil-Wardens, that entire peoples were changed into monstrous things that now roam the Bitter Frontier.

Their reign over the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons would come to end in time, however, for their sorcery, while strong, was not all-powerful, and the very spirits of our world would rise up against them.

#Lore24 – Entry #155 – Wild West Month #3 – Spirits of Nature Arise

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

So, it came to be that the Devil-Wardens' power would come to wane, and ruin would follow soon after. Our ancestors say that the Devil-Wardens had imprisoned the very spirits of land and sea and air, had used foul sorcery to shape the land itself to their dark desires. However, the spirits of nature would not take well to such treatment, and soon enough would prove that they were more powerful than even these sorcerers and their Ships that Sail the Stars.

It would come to be that one day, the bound spirits of nature would tear free of the great devilish device that the Wardens had created to contain them, had used them to reshape the world as they saw fit. Then, without the dark sorcerers knowing, for the Many Spirits are more cunning than we can fathom, they gathered their power and begin to dismantle the evil spells which bound them.

In a Great Uprouar, the spirits of nature would break the sorcerous chains that bound them and bring terrible destruction upon the Devil Wardens and their Fortresses of Stone and Metal. In great torrents of wind and water, of eruptions of earth and fire, with fury that rent the very earth beneath us, they would tear down the walls of the fortresses that once imprisoned our ancestors and drive the Devil-Wardens from the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons. They would flee in their Ships that Sail the Stars, and, for a time, even the future of the Many Peoples would be in doubt, for the Great Spirits were angry, and their fury would not end for many moons.

Though the Fortresses of Stone and Metal once imprisoned the Many Peoples, some would find safe shelter within them during the Fury of the Spirits, while others, our ancestors, would follow the guidance of our Great Mother goddess, Sarresh, and embrace the will of the spirits who had freed them, to learn to worship and appease their volatile moods, to find harmony amongst them, and so we would prosper in the wilds beyond the Fortresses. And this is how the many tribes of the Kerra-Kerra came to be, of how each tribe learned of its sacred totem spirit, and how the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons came to be as it is now.

But do not think that the Great Spirits are tamed. Never assume such! For the Great Spirits still hold memory of their own imprisonment, and they will lash out with their rage and fury, just to remind our people, and the Many Peoples who are not of the Kerra-Kerra, that the spirits are to be respected and feared, for it is they who hold the true power of life and death upon the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons.

#Lore24 – Entry #156 – Wild West Month #4 – The Ways of the Spirit World

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

Though we will always owe much to our Great Mother, the goddess Sarresh, it is in the home of the Great Spirits that we dwell, and to them we must always show much respect and deference, for it is ultimately they who will allow the Kerra-Kerra to continue to live upon the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons. This is why we must learn of the many spirits that live within this world, for we must know and respect and fear them, lest we suffer another Great Uproar and be scourged from the very face of this world.

Greatest of the spirits are the primal sprits, those of the most basic and elemental forces that have the power to shape the land itself, those which determine where we may live, where we may hunt, and whether our people may live or die. Spirits of Earth, Fire, Water, and Wind are the four most primal elements which make up all the others, and it is these spirits we must always strive to revere and offer our thanks, for it was they who caused the Great Uproar when they freed themselves from the Devil-Wardens.

Next are our most sacred spirits, the totem animals which our tribes revere and have taken as our guardians and guides. For our people, it is the midnight panther, a powerful and cunning hunter which stalks its prey by night. It is the great spirit of the midnight panther, Munkuro Tsume, which we revere most, and who grants us our spiritual magics and, for the shaman of our tribe, our ability to take on their forms so that we may travel amongst them. This is like the other tribes of Kerra-Kerra, and those who are not of our people who still hold to the ways of revering the spirits.

Then there are the many spirits of nature that dwell within all aspects of the world. They are made up of pieces of the great primal spirits and are found within everything upon the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons. These spirits are of the plants and trees, of the rain and snow and drought, of the earth which grows our food, of the animals who are not our totem spirits, of the mechanics used by those who are not of our people...everything. It is not important for those who are not shaman to know all their names, but it is vital that they continue to acknowledge their presence within and without, for we must always strive to live in harmony with them.

#Lore24 – Entry #157 – Wild West Month #5 – Life and Death Upon the Bitter Frontier

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

The Bitter Frontier is our life. The Bitter Frontier is our death. To live as a free people, we Kerra-Kerra must accept that freedom is first dangerous, but preferable to the life inside the Cities Beyond the Great Walls that lie in the direction of the sun's rise. Though filled with many dangers, the Bitter Frontier is where we live our lives, thriving in ways those not born of the wilds can never understand.

The Bitter Frontier's bounty is plentiful until it is not. If the spirits are not respected, then they will see to it that we suffer for our disrespect; when we revere them as they should be, our lives are simpler and filled with good hunting and good growth. Some spirits may see to it that we suffer for our lack of action in defending them as well, for there are many of the peoples from the Cities Beyond the Great Walls who venture into the Bitter Frontier and now have many settlements in lands they have claimed from the Many Peoples who are both Kerra-Kerra and those who are not. They do not understand our ways, and this leads to conflict, which upsets the natural order.

They seek what we do not, ripping stones they desire from the bowels of the earth itself, sucking the very lifeblood of the land to burn and turn the skies black with smoke, to expand their claims upon the land, attempting to bind it with their Bands of Wood and Steel so that their Howling Steel Chariots may travel swiftly across the Bitter Frontier. They bring their Thundering Weapons to bear against us, killing us from afar, so it is with great reluctance that we have been forced to adopt their ways of killing, lest we ourselves be killed.

But hope still springs for the Kerra-Kerra, for the spirits hear our cries, and make cries of their own. Those from the Cities Beyond the Great Walls are not welcome within the Bitter Frontier, and venture here at their own risk. Many have been the Lesser Uproars of the spirits, sundering settlements that grow too large, scattering its peoples to the wind and ripping free their binding bands upon the earth, removing the precious things they seek to claim from within the shifting rock. Entire landscapes have been changed by the fury of the spirits.

I fear that this will be an eternal struggle, for that is the nature of the Bitter Frontier.

#Lore24 – Entry #158 – Wild West Month #6 – The Golden Star Serpent Which Breaks the World

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

Our Great Mother Saressh, in her divine wisdom, gifts her most faithful children with the gift of the Sight, of visions of futures that may or may not come to pass. It is with her guidance that we have found our way, alongside the many spirits of the land and seas and air that dwell upon the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons.

Yet, all that he has shown us does not bode well for our people or for those who are not of the Kerra-Kerra or the Other Peoples who Roam the Bitter Frontier, or even the places within the world we do not travel. For there exists a prophecy that has not come to pass, but has been shared by the shaman of all tribes, that I have experienced myself.

One day, there shall be a great Golden Serpent from the Stars beyond the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons who shall fall upon our world. This Golden Star Serpent shall seek truths that we ourselves do not know, buried in the deepest and darkest of secret places within our world. We know that what this Golden Star Serpent seeks lies within our sacred lands, within the Bitter Frontier. This much Saressh has shown us to be true, though when it shall happen, we cannot know for certain.

She has also shown us that should this Golden Sky Serpent find what she seeks, the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons shall be changed forever, the very nature of our world torn asunder. This will scatter our peoples amongst the stars themselves, not only the Kerra-Kerra, but those dwellers in the Cities from Beyond the Great Walls and even in lands far beyond our own Bitter Frontier. The very nature of life upon our world will be changed forever. Our world will be broken; this we cannot prevent.

And yet there is hope, for the Great Mother has told us that not all is lost, for even in the darkest of times, the spirit of our people shall continue to thrive through and beyond this Breaking of the World. Though we of the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons may be changed forever, we will not allow our spirits to die, cannot allow our ways to be forgotten. We must adapt to whatever changes may come, for that is the life we have always lived upon our Bitter Frontier.

#Lore24 – Entry #159 – Wild West Month #7 – Places Forbidden by the Devil Wardens

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

The Kerra-Kerra tribes have places we consider sacred. The Tribes Who are Not Kerra-Kerra have places they consider sacred. Perhaps even the People from the Cities Beyond the Great Walls have sacred places. However, there are places which we do not go, places our people rarely speak of. Places which hold great evil spirits, places which are still possessed by the power once controlled by the Devil-Wardens.

The Valley of Mists that Never Fade is one such place. No matter what the sky, water, and wind spirits may decide in the lands surrounding this valley, the mists always remain. From the distant mountains looking down upon this valley, you can see the mists swirl and writhe as if some great beast lies hidden below them. We do not go there. Those of the Bitter Frontier who are not of the Kerra-Kerra do not go there, for none who do ever returns. It is a place of great evil and suffering, for it was once of the Devil-Wardens and their foul sorcery. Those who dare to venture close tell of strange sounds, like those made by the Howling Steel Chariots, of metal and steam, but coming from deep within the very earth. Many have there been of the People from the Cities Beyond the Great Walls who have sought treasures from the valley, and none of them have returned either.

It is said by our ancestors that this place is still haunted by the spirits of the Devil Wardens, that they seek new souls to imprison and use their foul magics upon. It is said that should the Mists that Never Fade ever clear, a great calamity will befall our people and all peoples of the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons; even those beyond the Great Walls will not be safe from the spirits of the Devil Wardens should they be released from this place.

Yet, it must come to pass, for that which is sought by the Golden Star Serpent may indeed lie within the Valley of Mists that Never Fade, and it is fated that the Golden Serpent will break the world. The Kerra-Kerra and other tribes of the Bitter Frontier must remain resolute and prepare for this.

There are other places that are forbidden, still held by the angry, vengeful spirits of the Devil-Wardens, but we shall not speak of these now.

#Lore24 – Entry #160 – Wild West Month #8 – The Dangers of the Bitter Frontier

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

The dangers of the Bitter Frontier are all around us. It is a place of great bounty for the land is full of plants and animals which sustain us. It is a place of great hardship, for it too is a land which is barren and filled with vast stretches which animals will not go, or which are filled with nothing but poisonous plants and beasts and abominations alike which seek the blood of any who are unprepared to face them.

It is only by respecting the spirits of the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons that we can understand these dangers and where they are, for the very landscape of the Bitter Frontier can change within the span of a moon, perhaps less, if the Great Spirits are angered.

While many of the animals which roam the Bitter Frontier can be dangerous, they can at least be reasoned with if one is keen to observe and respect them. There are many abominations which roam the Bitter Frontier, however, that cannot be dealt with the same. These must be avoided, or, if one encounters them, they must be fought or driven away through might and magic, for they seek only blood and destruction; a sacrifice may be accepted, but these foul things warped by the dark sorcery of the Devil-Wardens are greedy and will most likely seek additional blood if it is there. The packs of Wolf-Bears are such an abomination, for these are possessed of the foul nature of a normal grizzly but travel in packs as large as a dozen, seeking to fill their ever-empty bellies.

Only the Red Fang tribe seems to have some affinity with these creatures, but we do not follow their ways, for their ways are brutal and foul; we will speak of them at another time.

But do not think that the only abominations are animals, or like animals. The very plants of the Bitter Frontier can be filled with the dark sorcery, and even the spirits which we revere can be corrupted by these foul magics and may seek to do us harm. Many are the tales of the unwary who are drawn in by Plants That Are Not as They Seem, seeking nourishment only to have their very lifeblood drained from them, or of the corrupt Wind Spirits which roam the expanse of the Desert that was Once a Sea which use the very sand as their weapons, tearing flesh from bone.

As the People from Beyond the Great Walls continue to try to tame the Bitter Frontier, they are discovering why it is we of the Kerra-Kerra do not go into certain regions at certain times, but they seem not to learn these lessons, and continue to venture where they should not seeking their treasures from within the earth. Their actions have drawn the abominations from their usual places, and perhaps caused them to breed faster; this is a problem we must deal with, though we of the Kerra-Kerra do not have a good answer; we must simply adapt and survive.

#Lore24 – Entry #161 – Wild West Month #9 – The Horse People of the Plains Which Stretch Forever

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

Though they are called the Plains Which Stretch Forever, these lands are bordered in the east by the mighty River Before the Great Walls, and in the west by the Peaks Reaching to the Sky, and only take many weeks of travel to cross. These lands are pleasant, yet as part of the Bitter Frontier, they hold their own dangers. Powerful winds and storms frequently rage across them, and the Expanse of Calm Grasses that Kill have claimed many of the unwary.

Upon the Plains Which Stretch Forever roam the mighty Horse People, Equinari as they call themselves, for they of such size need the vastness of such a place to flourish. It is here that their tribes roam free and trade with the Kerra-Kerra of the Sprinting Horse and Sly Fox tribes, working with our cousins to hunt the mighty herds of antelope and bison that travel the plains. Their tribes rarely travel beyond the plains, though the borders of these lands, as with most of the Bitter Frontier, can change at the whim of the Great Spirits.

The Horse People are usually peaceful with our kind, though they often must fight with the Northern Orcs and the Travelers from the Cities Beyond the Great Walls who try to steal their ancestral lands or threaten their hunting. One would be wise to reconsider any anger towards one of the Horse People, for they stand half again as tall as most others, and are built powerfully, like the plains bison. Tales are many of those who have angered one of the Horse People who have been crushed beneath their mighty hooves or thrown as easily as if they were one of our spears. Their shamans are powerful and friendly with the many spirits of the Plains Which Stretch Forever and can call upon them to drive off those who would dare cross them if the offense is great enough.

For now, the Horse People tolerate the People from Beyond the Great Walls and their Bands of Wood and Steel that carry their Howling Steel Chariots to the far west, and have granted them passage through certain areas of the Plains, but I fear that soon there could be conflict, for they seek ever to expand and stretch the range that their Bands of Wood and Steel cover, and the Northern Orc tribes have taken to attacking these Chariots, for those aboard often carry much of great value.

The spirits and the visions of the Great Mother tell us to be wary, for such troubles will fall upon us sooner rather than later.

#Lore24 – Entry #162 – Wild West Month #10 – The Orc People of the Great Frigid North

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

To the north of the Plains Which Stretch Forever, where trees grow taller and taller, and the winters are harsher than even the worst we have experienced here, where some places are covered in snow and ice throughout the year, this is the region which the tribes of the Orc People have claimed as their domain. There is much bounty to be had amongst the Frigid Tall Trees, but the dangers there are even greater than the middle regions of the Bitter Frontier that we inhabit.

The Orc People are a strong and powerful people, building strong homes of wood and stone found amongst the rugged and cold forests, and have opened some small parts of their lands to outsiders, in the form of walled cities used for trade and for expeditions into the wilderness, for the outsiders to look for the stones and Black Blood of the Land that they deem so valuable. However, many of the Orc People have grown mistrustful of outsiders, keeping them out of their sacred territory with axe and bow and Thundering Weapons, leaving behind the mangled corpses of the foolish as warnings to others. There is said to be a great Orc chief who gathers their tribes together, seeking to drive the outsiders from their lands, perhaps even to take over new lands.

In recent times, the Orc Peoples have begun to travel further south, into the Plains Which Stretch Forever and beyond, for trade and for hunting, but some have taken to attacking the Howling Steel Chariots used by the peoples from the Cities Beyond the Great Walls, for there is much wealth to be taken. It is these bands of the Orc People that have joined with bands of the Red Fang tribe that have caused much strife for the tribes of the Kerra-Kerra, the Horse Peoples, and for those from Beyond the Great Walls who live within the Bitter Frontier.

#Lore24 – Entry #163 – Wild West Month #11 – The Goblin People of the Far Southern Lands Beyond the Peaks that Never Rest

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

While the Orc Peoples of the north are strong and mighty warriors, there is perhaps a greater danger which lies to the far south, beyond the Peaks that Never Rest. Long have our people told of the Night Goblin People of the Lands Beyond the Peaks that Never Rest, for it is said they are born of the Devil-Wardens' foul sorcery. The lost Mountain Bear tribe of Kerra-Kerra, who once roamed the lands around the Peaks that Never Rest, are said to have been taken by these goblins, though we know not what came of them, for any who venture beyond the Peaks never return.

Though none living amongst our people has seen these goblins, it is said by our ancestors that they are possessed by the spirits of the Devil-Wardens, skin the color of night and with eyes that blaze with terrible fire that can see better at night than even those of our tribe. Using the secret ways of the Devil-Wardens, they travel unseen, unheard in the dead of night, leaving nothing behind in their wake save what they cannot carry, like some terrible dark spirit collecting souls, not a body left behind, and no blood to be found. If they take them alive, what do they do with them? Perhaps foul sorcery of their own, perhaps as food or slaves?

For many moons, the Goblins of the Dark have been kept away by the Peaks that Never Rest, for travel through them is dangerous because of the constant unease of the powerful earth spirits that dwell within them. In recent times, those from Beyond the Great Walls have placed settlements nearby, and have pushed further and further to the south, going deep into the Peaks that Never Rest in spite of the dangers. I cannot know for certain if they even are aware of the goblins that lie beyond, but I fear it is only a matter of time before they learn of them; those from Beyond the Great Walls rarely seek wisdom from our people.

#Lore24 – Entry #164 – Wild West Month #12 – Followers of the Sister Goddess Lashana

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

It is told that during the Great Uproar, when the spirits of the world were still angry after they freed themselves and us from the Devil-Wardens, that chaos was everywhere. Our ancestors who survived this chaos say that during the early days, when the land was still not settled, there were those who sought ways to bring order to the chaos who were not of the Kerra-Kerra. These were the followers of the Sister Goddess Lashana, so called because she is as a sister to the Great Mother Saressh.

Great Sister Lashana called her people to the far eastern shores, beyond the Great Walls that would stand through the Uproar, and it is there they would gather the survivors who were agreeable to their faith to work together to survive. To Great Sister Lashana, there must be order, and to have order, there must be laws, and so it is that those who are most faithful to her, the Justicars, try to spread law to the lawless and hunt down those who would break it.

We rarely see the Justicars in our lands, though as more moons pass, their numbers have grown more common. With the coming of the Howling Steel Chariots, those who the Justicars seek have spread to our lands, and so too have the Justicars who hunt them. The Kerra-Kerra people handle those who wrong us in our own ways, though some tribes have taken to capturing the chaos-bringers and turning them over to the Justicars.

For now, we see the Justicars and those who follow the Great Sister Lashana as allies, though in recent times, some have disagreed with the ways of our people, and some no longer recognize that our goddesses are as sisters. Siblings do squabble at times, so perhaps it is to be that our peoples too will squabble, though we hold no special hatred for them. In the Lands Beyond the Great Walls, their laws are supreme, and here, we live free. Freedom is as chaos to some, and so there will always be disagreement.

#Lore24 – Entry #165 – Wild West Month #13 – The Red Fang Tribe

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

Shameful are the Red Fang tribe, for they bring disgrace to all Kerra-Kerra and disappointment to the Great Mother Saressh. I do not like to speak of them, for the very words taste foul upon my lips. Though they are the youngest of the many tribes of Kerra-Kerra, with the spread of the Peoples from Beyond the Great Walls to our lands in recent times, many younger Kerra-Kerra who know not what they do have flocked to their tribe, for they battle those who would seek to take over our lands with their Howling Steel Chariots and Laws.

The Red Fangs are violent and brutal warriors who strike without fear, but also without honor or mercy. They raid the places claimed by those who come from beyond the Great Walls and steal their cattle and horses and food and weapons. If the gods and spirits are merciful, they will simply slay those who oppose them. More often than not, the Red Fangs will butcher the settlers, leaving a clear message to those who would follow, often taking trophies and eating the hearts and organs of those they slay to take their power.

Their ways are a corruption of the True Way, and they revere the most powerful and dangerous of the Spirits. They do not follow the beliefs of the Great Mother Saressh, and so are lost to her embrace. They believe in the cruel, unforgiving nature of the Bitter Frontier itself, that the strong will prosper while the weak shall perish to sustain the strong. Their totem spirit is that of the great crimson wolf, and it is like a swarm of starving wolves that they sweep in against their enemies. They often ally with the Orc Peoples of the Frigid North and have taken to raiding the Howling Steel Chariots alongside them.

This has caused much trouble for the Kerra-Kerra, for those from Beyond the Great Walls do not take time to learn of our ways and the markings of our tribes. Many who come to the Bitter Frontier see one Kerra-Kerra just the same as any other, and the stories of the terrors of the Red Fangs spread much further and much more clearly than those of us who seek to live peacefully as we always have. And so it has become dangerous for us to come too close to those who come from Beyond the Great Walls without making clear our peaceful intentions, and even then, some may not recognize the Sign of Peace. More and more of our people are slain out of fear thanks to the Red Fangs, while others are taken captive and held within prisons of stone and steel or forced to labor against their will under the Peoples from Beyond the Great Walls.

Many troubling times lie ahead for our people, and the many peoples of the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons.

#Lore24 – Entry #166 – Wild West Month #14 – The Elves who Dwell Amongst the Clouds and Seas

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

Rare are the elves who venture beyond the safety of their chosen domains, among the Trees that Reach the Clouds or the Far Islands in the Forever Seas; it is more likely you will encounter one of their half-breed offspring than a true elf. Though they may live longer than even we Kerra-Kerra, they do not venture out to be amongst the Many Peoples of the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons. Some believe it is the shame they feel for their relation to the Devil-Wardens, but others believe that elves are not capable of feeling shame and see themselves as superior to all others.

What is it that I think? Our ancestors have said that the elves have long been the enemies of many peoples in the times before the Devil-Wardens brought us here, that they scheme and manipulate to control all that goes on around them. Perhaps it was once true, but upon the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons, this is not so. The Elves who Dwell Amongst the Clouds and Seas do so because they are too few to control events as they once used to, for they are a frail people who have lost their way, a broken people who no longer understand how to commune with the Many Spirits though they live within nature. Some dare to join with those who are not elves for a time, but inevitably they are called to return to their homes hidden amongst the clouds and far islands, for their spirits continue to fade and they are no longer able to live in harmony with the Many Spirits of the World as in times more ancient than our time upon this world.

One should feel pity for the Elves who Dwell Amongst the Clouds and Seas, for ultimately it is they who must find their path to reclaim a purpose upon the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons. It is unlikely you will ever encounter a true elf, let alone more than one at a time, but if you do encounter several at once, it should be seen as an ill-fated sign from the Many Spirits and the Gods that dark times are coming.

Do not think these elves a completely defenseless people. Though they no longer commune with the Many Spirits, they know of magics that we do not, and of the dark sorcery once used by the Devil-Wardens. The toll such sorcery takes upon their forms is great, but so to is the danger for those the elves target with those magics. Such sorcery can enslave the very mind and soul, can turn even a Howling Steel Chariot to ashes on the wind, or call fiery stones from the very stars.

Pity the elves, for they are a broken people, but fear them for they command the darkest of sorcery.

#Lore24 – Entry #167 – Wild West Month #15 – The Dwarves who Dwell Deep

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

When the Great Uproar came, most of the Many Peoples of the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons spread across the face of the ever-changing landscapes to flee the anger of the spirits. The Dwarves who Dwell Deep took another route, digging into the very earth that had revolted against the Devil-Wardens. The dwarves have always been closest to the spirits of the earth, so they had little to fear from them during their passage. For many years they remained hidden as the Great Uproar faded and the lands settled, only returning after many, many moons, and even then, only some of the dwarves remain upon the surface.

Though the Dwarves who Dwell Deep prefer the underground, they face dangers those who live under the sun cannot know, for many of the abominations created by the Devil-Wardens too ventured beneath the earth during the Great Uproar and have thrived in the darkness they found there. Some say it is the Dwarves who Dwell Deep that have kept these horrors from the surface world all these many moons, and it is why they had to create the first of the Thundering Weapons that have become so plentiful in this time.

Few are the Dwarves who Dwell Deep who venture into the Bitter Frontier beyond the places where the Bands of Wood and Steel reach, but those who do seek more of the precious stones and gems born of the earth, though some too seek to pull the life blood of the earth from deep within. It is at once wrong of them to do so as we understand it, and yet, they are of the earth, raised within it, so are they not too allowed to claim such things? I have pondered this question from time to time but cannot come to an answer which is satisfying.

Some say that the Dwarves who Dwell Deep have found a great power that once belonged to the Devil-Wardens, and that this is why they remain below the ground, to protect the secrets of this power. You will not be able to get one of the dwarves to speak of such a thing, other than to say it is a fanciful tale, for they are as unyielding as the earth they dwell within.

#Lore24 – Entry #168 – Wild West Month #16 – New Fortresses of Stone and Metal

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

The People from Beyond the Great Walls are quick to forget where it is they come from, where it is they still live to this very day, and perhaps, have forgotten the lessons that were learned from the Devil-Wardens...or perhaps have learned the wrong lessons. As they spread further and further into the Bitter Frontier and claim more and more of the land as their own territories, so too do they begin to build new Fortresses of Stone and Metal to use as places to keep those who would break their laws.

Those who commit wrongs should be dwelt with swiftly and justly, punishments to fit the crime as our ways dictate, but it has come into the minds of those from Beyond the Great Walls that it is more just to keep these wrongdoers in cages, to have them seek to repent for their crimes through heavy labor and being trapped within these many walls they build. This is the way of the Justicars of Lashana, at least. There are others not of the Sister Goddess's faith who build these new Fortresses of Stone and Metal who seek not to make those held within repent for their crimes, but to suffer tortures of mind and body, to toil until death takes them at long last. It is these who have learned the worst of the lessons of the Devil-Wardens, and who gather more and more power around them to enforce their will upon others at the end of many Thundering Weapons.

It is within the Bitter Frontier that these evil Fortresses of Stone and Metal are built, for there is no law but what those who control their claimed territory create. These lands we must now avoid, lest our people suffer at the hands of those who would be new Devil-Wardens, though the Red Fangs do not see it as such. They say that we, all Kerra-Kerra, should go to war with those who would create these places and claim our lands. In this I am conflicted, for I do not wish war, and I do not wish to follow the lead of the Red Fang tribe...and yet I cannot deny that war between our people and those who have begun taking our sacred lands may be unavoidable.

I must continue to commune with the Many Spirits and seek their wisdom, and the wisdom of our Great Mother Saressh, for I fear that our mostly peaceful times are running out.

#Lore24 – Entry #169 – Wild West Month #17 – The Wrathful Spirits

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

The Many Spirits are as they are. They are the world around us: wild, free, sometimes violent, sometimes deadly, sometimes kind, sometimes helpful. Some spirits are more often some ways than others. We learn to listen to these spirits, to honor them as we live our lives. However, there are some of the Many Spirits who are different. These are the Wrathful Spirits, and though we honor them, we also do not seek their aid, for to do so brings much pain and suffering, and usually, death.

Hungry is the Spirit of Rage, its fury hot and angry, and it is always seeking a willing vessel to imbue with its dark gifts. There are tales amongst our people and the others of the Bitter Frontier of those warriors who have become possessed by the Spirit of Rage, and they are to serve as warnings. The Spirit of Rage consumes all reason in return for the strength, stamina, and resilience it offers in return, making even your closest allies as enemies. It is a spirit of chaos, seeking only to spill blood and consume flesh. Never assume you are capable of withstanding its influence should you ever willingly accept it into you, for it cannot be reasoned with, for it consumes such thoughts as fire consumes dry wood. If your enemies do not slay you, your closest allies surely will, for you will be long gone from the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons when the Spirit of Rage takes you.

Perhaps the youngest of the Wrathful Spirits, the Deadeye Spirit is growing more and more powerful in this age of Thundering Weapons, as it has never been easier to slay a person. Though not as hungry for blood as the Spirit of Rage, the Deadeye Spirit is still a bringer of death; it simply prefers to savor the death it brings as though savoring the Holy Fire Water. This spirit joins with those who seek to become the best at slaying with Thundering Weapons, granting them remarkable accuracy that may seem impossible, speed which is beyond what is normal by any of the Many Peoples living upon this world. It is said by those who have witnessed this spirit that shadow covers the face of the shooter, leaving only a single glowing eye visible, an eye which fills those around it with dread as the slaying starts.

The Reaper Spirit looms over all other Wrathful Spirits, for all eventually must share their bounty of souls with that of the Reaper Spirit. It is different from the Spirits Which Guide us to the Heavens upon our death, for it is not a guide for the soul; it is a dangerous and powerful force of destruction. The Reaper Spirit is a bringer of death in all its forms: violence, plague, natural disasters...anywhere there is great loss of life, the Reaper Spirit is likely to have had influence. Some once believed that the Reaper Spirit could be called upon to enact revenge against those who wrong you, but far more deaths than you can imagine were the result, for friend and foe alike are forfeit when dealing with the Reaper Spirit. Were all life to end upon the Broken Care that Still Imprisons and the Reaper Spirit consume every soul of every person and animal here, it still would not be satisfied.

#Lore24 – Entry #170 – Wild West Month #18 – The Towns that Vanish

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

As the People from Beyond the Great Walls spread into the lands of the Bitter Frontier, they bring their towns and buildings with them. The wisest amongst these build new walls to protect them from the many dangers that roam the land, along with many armed with the Thundering Weapons. However, even all of these precautions were not enough to save some of these towns. The Towns that Vanish are many, though most are easily forgotten by the People from Beyond the Great Walls, for they do not understand the dangers of the Bitter Frontier and are blinded by their lust for the treasures they seek.

Sometimes the Bitter Frontier and the Many Spirits upon it simply reclaim the land upon which the town was built. It is during these Little Uproars that the landscapes which were once familiar change, sometimes overnight, sometimes over the course of several days. The Little Uproars leave only scattered remains behind, sometimes broken shells of the buildings that once stood there, perhaps a handful of survivors, those fortunate enough to have been away from the towns when the changes occurred, seeing some land that is familiar, thinking they have come home, only to find new land before them, little or no sign of their homes or families remaining. Some are driven mad by such a thing, for it is hard for the minds of those who cannot comprehend the ways of the Many Spirits to understand what has occurred.

One of the reasons we of the Kerra-Kerra travel is because of these Little Uproars. Our bonds with the Many Spirits allow us to know that such an event is coming; thus we do not linger too long in one place.

There are Towns that Vanish that are not the work of the Little Uproars. You will know these, because the buildings of the towns are still there, perhaps even the valuables and perhaps even the animals as well. Only the people of these towns are gone. There are several of the Ghost Towns of the Vanished Peoples that dot the Bitter Frontier, and these places we do not go, for even we do not know exactly why such a thing would happen. To the south, perhaps it is the Goblin People who are the cause, sneaking in at night and stealing the people away, but in other places, there are no such dangers. Perhaps it is the Reaper Spirit at work, claiming the entire town in its hunger to end all life. Or perhaps it is something of the Devil-Wardens, their lost dark sorcery at work that steals the people away, perhaps to other long forgotten Cages deep within the earth, or perhaps in realms beyond.

#Lore24 – Entry #171 – Wild West Month #19 – The Demon-Tainted People of Many Places

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

Like the rest of the Many Peoples of the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons, the Demon-Tainted People of Many Places were brought here by the Devil-Wardens long ago. You have no doubt seen them, but their appearances are always different from one to another, they share certain features: horns upon their heads, unusual colors of skin that seem unnatural, eyes like those of goats, tails with barbs, hooves instead of feet, and perhaps other strangeness, and features aren't always the same among those who are related. This is the taint of the Blood of Ancient Demons that still runs strong in them, their very nature that of chaos.

They are called the People of Many Places because they are spread throughout the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons, even amongst the Kerra-Kerra and Horse People and Orc tribes. Their Demon-Tainted blood allows them to mix with any of the Many Peoples and they will share features of them but are distinctly not fully of them. The Mountain River tribe of the Horse People and the Horned Puma tribe of the Kerra-Kerra are mostly made up of those of the Demon-Tainted People of Many Places now, and though they generally hold to the ways of our peoples, it is with an unpredictable nature. It was said by our Ancestors that in the ancient times, the Demon-Tainted People of Many Places were almost entirely female. Since the Great Uproar this has not been the case. The Broken Cage that Still Imprisons has broken even the unbreakable ties to the chaos of the Blood of Ancient Demons, it seems.

In the lands Beyond the Great Walls, we know little of the ways of the Demon-Tainted People of Many Places, but we know that some have their own ways and places, while others simply take to the nature of the peoples they live among. Many are accepted, some are outcasts, perhaps seen as less than the tribal peoples of the Bitter Frontier so it is said. Though none of the Kerra-Kerra have gone so far to the north, it is told by the Orc People that some tribes of the Demon-Tainted People of Many Places roam the frigid tundra where even the Orc People dare not go.

#Lore24 – Entry #172 – Wild West Month #20 – The Humans who Dwell Beyond the Great Walls

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

Many are the Humans who Dwell Beyond the Great Walls, for it is they who first sought those walls for safety during the Great Uproar. Few are the humans who dwell upon the Bitter Frontier, and perhaps it is better that they are not among us, for it is said that humans bring chaos and destruction wherever they go; this is not always true, but it is true more often than it is not. They are a short-lived people, so they do not long remember what it is they do, for they are always pushing forward to things “new and better,” even if these things are not so.

I have spoken to several humans who have ventured into the Bitter Frontier; these are usually peaceful enough, simply wishing to live for themselves and survive much as we of the Kerra-Kerra do, hunting and trapping and foraging, but often they search for the shiny gems and rocks that are so valued in the lands Beyond the Great Walls. It seems to be that humans only grow troublesome when in great numbers, for they are easily swayed into taking actions which we consider foolhardy and destructive. Unfortunately, their numbers are growing daily, and they are pushing beyond the Great Walls now, into the Bitter Frontier, leading the charge to “tame and civilize” our lands in the name of their “progress”. Troubled times are ahead for the Kerra-Kerra, for our people have already had violent encounters with the humans, and more are coming daily as their Howling Steel Chariots and Bands of Wood and Steel are raided.

It would be wise to be cautious of any Humans who Dwell Beyond the Great Walls that you encounter upon the Bitter Frontier. Those who have lived amongst us and proven themselves have told me that they care little for what their kind has started and will likely remain allies to us. However, do not forget that one’s blood counts for much, and it is likely that even the friendly humans of the Bitter Frontier could one day become enemies if they are persuaded by a greater number of their kind. I have been present to listen to some of the Humans who Dwell Beyond the Great Walls when they have made speeches about coming into the Bitter Frontier and have witnessed how well they can speak. The words are often strange to the Kerra-Kerra, but they speak with passion and with authority, yet without depth of wisdom or experience.

For whatever troubles come, there is one thing we can be assured of: the Bitter Frontier will not be tamed as easily as the humans believe; they will learn this lesson one way or another.

#Lore24 – Entry #173 – Wild West Month #21 – The Dead That Do Not Rest

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

Be ever aware of the smell of death, for one cannot ever be certain that what lies dead will stay still upon the Bitter Frontier. Dark sorcery, perhaps lingering from the times of the Devil-Wardens, can steal the body once the soul has gone, using it as a vessel to consume the living. Such things are often the work of the Reaper Spirit, for once the soul is consumed, the bodies that remain are but tool for it to use to slay more of the living. These are the Dead That Do Not Rest.

The Corpses that Walk are the lowest of the Dead That Do Not Rest, shells of the living that still move and have a fierce hunger for fresh flesh. Without a soul, the body is as a puppet, controlled by this hunger, doing all that it can to sate its unrelenting with fresh meat. They are not always easy to kill, for a dead body feels no pain, but a well-placed arrow into their heads is best, or crushing or removing the head entirely; fire is also effective, but best used when the Corpses that Walk are many. The greater threat is their numbers, for they carry a foul sickness with them that will weaken and kill almost anyone who is bitten by them, and those who succumb have their souls consumed by the Reaper Spirit, their bodies turned into its vessels.

There are more fearsome Dead That Do Not Rest, those who have once served the Reaper Spirit perhaps, thinking they could control it, or who have succumb to their own dark sorcery. These Dead That Do Not Rest, while having no souls, still have a shadow of their former living souls within them that grants them deadly cunning in addition to greater power. The Corpses With Bloody Claws and Fangs consume flesh like the Corpses that Walk, but still think and attack from ambush, or, in some cases, consume the recently dead as would any scavenger; if there has been a great battle, be ever cautious, for these are likely near. They are fast and deadly when one is not prepared to face them; holy magic from the Great Mother will work well against them, as will it against all Dead That Do Not Rest, as does fire, or cutting them to pieces through strength of your warrior spirit.

Even more powerful are the Corpses that Drink Living Blood, for they are the most powerful and cunning of the Dead That Do Not Rest, for they are the users of dark sorcery who have willing brought the Reaper Spirit into them. They can appear as they did in life, hiding their true nature and using their dark sorcery to control the minds and bodies of animals and people alike, luring them close so they may consume the blood that flows within their veins using their hidden fangs. Those so chosen by the Corpse that Drinks Living Blood can remain as a cow does, a constant supply of blood, until their body finally fails, which is when they too become a Corpse that Drinks Living Blood, albeit weaker. However, they can live for many, many years if they are smart, so their power will eventually become the same as the one that spawned them. These are weakest during the day, and should they touch the light of the sun, they will burn. It is best to try to paralyze them with a wooden stake to their hearts and drag them into the light of day, or use much fire, for their bodies are strong and hard to hurt without holy magic. Great care must be taken when dealing with these abominations.

#Lore24 – Entry #174 – Wild West Month #22 – The Bleakwood

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

To the north and to the east of the Peaks Reaching to the Sky lies one of the Places We Do Not Go. This place we call the Bleakwood, for it is a dangerous and cursed place where those who venture inside never return. The Bleakwood appears at the base of the Peaks Reaching to the Sky, and while it seems as any other forest at first, the nearer you come, the more unsettled you will feel. The wood grows darker and more foreboding, and soon you can see that the very trees are not normal, looking to be sickly and dying, filled with disease, and yet they somehow still grow. The Bleakwood is shrouded by mists beyond its edge, even during the hottest of days. The animals, what few there are, too are sick and not to be hunted, for their flesh is poisonous. One should never get closer than the warning totems that we have placed upon the outskirts of this place, for to do so would invite misfortune.

It is not known what truly lies within the Bleakwood, but it is possibly one of the places once held by the Devil-Wardens and may contain their dark spirits that cannot find rest, for one can hear terrible wails coming from the wood, as if a soul is being tortured. The ancestors speak of the foolhardy who dared to venture inside, and the wailing of these unseen spirits that were drawn to them that finally went silent for a time, once they had consumed their prey. None who wish to live should ever go near this place.

Yet, now that the People from Beyond the Great Walls come into the Bitter Frontier, they have learned of this place. The Kerra-Kerra have tried to warn them, but I am told by my Brother-and-Sister Shaman in our Dream Meetings that the warnings have gone unheeded, for the belief that there is great treasures beyond is strong. More and more the outsiders venture inside, and more and more they fail to return. The wailing of the dark spirits within grows louder and more numerous, and the fog grows thicker, even spreading beyond the edge of the Bleakwood now. This is deeply troubling.

#Lore24 – Entry #175 – Wild West Month #23 – The Great Scorpion Flats

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

To the far west and south of the Peaks Reaching to the Sky, beyond the Pass of Shining Stars, lies the Great Scorpion Flats. This region is not to be traveled lightly, if at all; truly only the desperate or the foolish would venture here, though perhaps the tribe of Demon-Tainted People who call it home would say otherwise? They do not feel the heat of the great desert like we do, and have learned to survive in this place, for they have embraced the spirit of the Great Scorpion.

With the land hot enough to sear flesh and water found only in places hidden beneath the earth, this land is harsh enough, but the creatures that dwell there are just as deadly. As it is so named, the Great Scorpion is found here, the smallest of these the size of a fully grown panther, the largest as big as a Howling Steel Chariot. Their temper is foul, for they always seek fresh meat to sate their hunger. Some of them are tamed, so to speak, by the Demon-Tainted People who live there, but even they only dwell in places the Great Scorpions do not go, high upon the tops of the many stone spires that rise from the hard-packed sands like gigantic fingers. Their shell is thick, so much that even a Thundering Weapon will barely get through it, and their poisonous stingers are deadly with but a scratch.

And yet, the People from Beyond the Great Walls still try to venture there, seeking some great treasures they are sure are hidden there. They know of the Demon-Tainted People who have raided beyond their lands, but they do not understand that is for their survival, not to hoard the shiny baubles and stones that are so prized beyond the Great Walls. I have been told that they wish to find a way through the Peaks Reaching to the Sky for their Howling Steel Chariots, to cross this dangerous place with their Bands of Wood and Steel, perhaps to settle there.

There are times when I think that all People from Beyond the Great Walls are crazy.

#Lore24 – Entry #176 – Wild West Month #24 – The Vast Dry Sea of Salt

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

North of the Great Scorpion Flats lies another place our people rarely travel, the Vast Dry Sea of Salt. There are no giant scorpions and it is not quite as hot, but still deadly for those who do not know how to survive in this unforgiving part of the Bitter Frontier. The land is mostly flat here, stretching for as far as the eye can see, but not as far as the Plains Which Stretch Forever. Once, in the times before the Great Uproar, this place was a sea filled with salt water, like that of the great oceans. Many are the remains of the fish that once were within it and the boats that were once upon it, encrusted with the Salt that Blows Like Sand that can rend flesh from bone in the strong winds that are found there.

Sometimes great storms come to the Vast Dry Sea of Salt, filling it with rainwater for a time, perhaps only hours, before the water vanishes once again, leaving behind the salt. Water can be found in caves that lie beneath the surface, through cracks in surface, but it is as salty as everything else, not fit for drinking. The sea can be crossed in a day, but only if one is prepared and has no other choice; it is safer to circle wide to the north or south, where the land is better.

This place is not without its bad spirits. There are spirits of the earth that are ill at ease, sometimes leaving openings to vast chasms below hidden by thin layers of salt that one cannot discern from regular ground. The wind and earth spirits move huge stones while no one is looking, leaving behind miles long trails in the salt, but for what purpose, not even we know. We think it is a sign of distress, perhaps even of prophecy, but so far, we have not been able to come to terms with these spirits.

Worse, at the center of this sea lies a place of the Devil-Wardens, the White Obelisk, jutting out from a great chasm in the center of the Vast Dry Sea of Salt, the salt glinting in the sunlight like the precious stones those from Beyond the Great Walls value so much. The White Obelisk can be seen from far away, appearing much closer than it actually is, and is almost like a spine of some great creature jutting from the earth, not unlike the bones of ancient fish that once lived in the sea, with broken ribs jutting from its length. Some of the brave and foolish have dared to venture close to the White Obelisk, close enough to peer into the darkness of the chasm that surrounds it. Some did not return, nor were any traces found; others have told of strange sounds from below, lights moving in the darkness that suddenly swarm toward those who cannot escape quickly enough. Sometimes you can even hear a keening upon the wind even to the edges of the sea, a sound that can make your teeth hurt, though in the times I have heard it in the presence of those not of the Kerra-Kerra, they cannot hear it. Perhaps the White Obelisk is calling to us? It is something we contemplate from time to time, but thus far, we have found no reason to brave the dangers there.

#Lore24 – Entry #177 – Wild West Month #25 – The Horses that Go Up in Flames

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

To the east of the Peaks Reaching to the Sky, north of the Plains Which Stretch Forever, and west of the Hills of Coal, there lies a stretch of cursed land where little grows, and few animals live, the very rock of the area painted in the shades of blood where they are not burnt black. But, unlike so many places, the Burnt Lands are not cursed by the Devil Wardens, but by the spirits themselves. Here is the land of the Horses that Go Up in Flames.

From the distant hills and mountains that surround this region, in the darkness of night, you can see the Horses that Go Up in Flames from many miles away, for they leave fiery trails stretching behind them. Most often you will see but one, but on some nights, you may see a half dozen or more running together, not stopping even for the mesas, running up and over them as if they were not there. For those daring to venture closer, you can see that the horses are spirits of fire, their skeletons visible and the color of charcoal, wreathed in billowing flames. Their pained, angry cries can be heard before they are seen, but by then, they are likely already upon you, for they move with the speed of a wildfire.

The Horses that Go Up in Flames are a mystery to the Kerra-Kerra and the Horse People. They do not seem to wish to speak with us as other spirits do, and may not be entirely of the spirits of the elements. Horses that have strayed from our tribes as they travel around the Burnt Lands sometimes end up there. Tales speak of these horses running as if possessed by a spirit, not fearful in the least as they drive headlong toward the Horses that Go Up in Flames. As they approach, they cry in agony as their bodies erupt in flame, and in moments, they join the flaming herd as if they belonged there all along.

It is best to cross the Burnt Lands on the outside, for the Horses that Go Up in Flames do not stray from the area they have claimed, though what it is they may protect or guard we do not know, though in times of great need, you may dare cross through these lands; it is best to do so in the day, for the Horses that Go Up in Flames are less active then.

#Lore24 – Entry #178 – Wild West Month #26 – The Great Valley of Stone Towers Reaching to the Sky

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

South of the Peaks Reaching to the Sky, west of the Plains Which Stretch Forever, several days before you would reach the harsher deserts of the Great Scorpion Flats and the Vast Dry Sea of Salt lies the Great Valley of Stone Towers Reaching to the Sky. Surrounded by higher mesas, the valley drops sharply from these heights. Below lies a land that is more hospitable than the other desert areas I have spoken of, with plants and animals and water that are more easily found. Most striking of this wide, long valley are the Stone Towers Reaching to the Sky, standing as high as the mesas surrounding the valley, but dotted all throughout the valley floor. It is almost as if they were pushed through the earth by the spirits of earth and accepted by the spirits of the sky.

We sometimes journey to the Great Valley of Stone Towers Reaching to the Sky, for it is one of the sacred meeting places of the Kerra-Kerra, a place where we commune with the Many Spirits of the Broken Cage that Still Imprisons, for days, sometimes weeks. It is one of the places that we come closer to our Great Mother Saressh, and a place where we lay our venerated dead to rest, hidden amongst the many Stone Towers, where the spirits welcome them into the Great Beyond and home to the Great Mother so that they may be born again.

There are many pathways hidden amongst the Stone Towers Reaching to the Sky that lead to the flat tops, for that is where we perform our communion with the Many Spirits. These paths may be found by those not of the Kerra-Kerra, but only the brave would venture to such places, for the spirits often do not allow those who do not commune with them to come into these places. There are other dangers for those who do not venerate the Many Spirits, for the Valley itself is guarded by the mighty Thunderbirds that make their nests atop the Towers, and they do not recognize outsiders as welcome, and they wield the power of thunder and lightning as easily as we wield our bows and spears and guns. Not even one of the Howling Steel Chariots could survive the attack of a Thunderbird.

#Lore24 – Entry #179 – Wild West Month #27 – The Land of Deadly Water that Shoots to the Sky

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

A land that is both sacred and deadly, not to be traveled by the unwary, though perhaps if the Many Spirits are willing, one who is not familiar with the region may survive their journey through it. The Land of Deadly Water that Shoots to the Sky can be found many days to the west of the Hills of Coal, within the northeastern reaches of the Peaks Reaching to the Sky. The land is both good and bad here, for there can be found many places where animals and plants for food are plentiful, especially around the many lakes spread around this region, but also many places that will kill without thought or mercy, for the Many Spirits are often in conflict here.

It is the spirits of the earth and water which are most often in battle within this area, and perhaps it is the spirits of fire that stoke the feuds between them. There are parts of this land where you can find Pools of Smoking Water that Smell Foul, and though colored in beautiful ways, the water is deadly. Not only will it boil flesh while you still live, perhaps before you even realize it, but it will also poison if cooled and drank. Even the earth around these pools of water is not safe, for it can be thin and misleading, breaking off to dump you into the very boiling water that is hidden beneath it. In other regions, the Many Spirits of Earth and Water make pleas to the spirits of the Air and Sky to aid against the Spirits of Fire, shooting huge streams of boiling water into the sky. One would be wise to tread carefully when you begin to smell foul air and feel rumbles beneath your feet, and watch for the bones of animals, for they too fall prey to the battle of the Many Spirits here.

Even with the dangers here, the good parts of this land are very good, and it is shared amongst the Kerra-Kerra and the Horse People throughout the year as we roam from place to place. In recent times the Many Peoples from Beyond the Great Walls have begun to venture into The Land of Deadly Water that Shoots to the Sky, ever seeking their shiny treasures and the dark blood of the earth. I have seen for myself their folly in venturing unwarily through this land, and you will likely see their bones scattered amongst the Pools of Dangerous Water and in the Places Where Water Shoots to the Sky.

#Lore24 – Entry #180 – Wild West Month #28 – Gods of the Peoples Who Are Not Our Own

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

There are many gods that exist alongside our Great Mother Saressh. I have spoken of Lashana and her followers before, of how we sometimes have our disagreements, but do not seek conflict if it can be avoided. This is not often the case with those of other gods, for not all gods are good, and not all gods are just. As with the Many Peoples, there are many reasons that the gods do what they do, and why they guide their followers as they do. Always be wary when dealing with those of the other gods; you may not know their intentions, but you can keep some things in mind.

Amongst the Gods of the Peoples Who Are Not Our Own is one that you should be very cautious of, the evil god known as Malvaxor. His ways are deceptive, preaching of healing the sick and the mad, only to make those who fall for his treatments worse, often hidden within the new Fortresses of Stone and Metal. There have been times terrible abominations of flesh have been created by his followers, and great plagues have spread because of his “healers”. Though the followers of Malvaxor do not recognize the Many Spirits, they are doing the work of the Reaper Spirit without question.

The followers of Goldeneyes, the Seekers of Knowledge, may seem trustworthy, but be cautious what you may reveal to them. They seek to know all, even that which should remain sacred and amongst only the Kerra-Kerra. Though they say they record this knowledge to preserve it, who is to say what others may use this knowledge for? Always guard our secrets, especially around the followers of Goldeneyes.

Though the God of Death, Mausolus, and his followers, do not often work with the Reaper Spirit in mind, for he is a vain and prideful god, and his ways are only of benefit to him. Those seeking the death of a specific person will often ask for his favor, the bounty killers and assassins of those with great power Beyond the Great Walls, usually, but his influence is spreading into the Bitter Frontier.

If life in upon the Bitter Frontier has taught us anything, it is that chaos is firmly in control, and this is pleasing to Old Man Entropy. Some say he knows not what he does, for he is mad, but this is not so; mortals simply cannot fathom the true nature of his ways. Understand that all tries to return to chaos, and this is the ultimate goal of Old Man Entropy. It is said that he sometimes will reveal himself upon the great buttes and mesas on nights of the full moon, appearing as a great steed composed of starlight twinkling in shadow, a great horn upon its head. Be ever cautious of such a strange vision, for it is a sign to contemplate and consider well what may come.

Chief among the gods of the Orc People of the north is Mantok Badaxe, a great warrior god who seeks to guide his people beyond the ways of the raider and barbarian. His people upon the Bitter Frontier do not listen often to him and may have even forsaken his teachings altogether. A rare few, however, still seek to follow his ancient ways, and it is these orcs who are often reaching out to live amongst other peoples, to learn their ways and live “civilized” lives. If that is the path they have chosen, then so be it; be wary of them as you would be for any outside the Kerra-Kerra, but if their intentions are true, they will find their own rewards with Mantok.

It is often difficult to say where you will find followers of the goddesses Erisaya and Yurisaya, for they are as two halves of the same being, one standing in light, the other in shadow, sometimes in a temple, sometimes in the Houses of Whores and Fire Water. Generally, they are goodly, bringing healing and their chosen forms of “love and compassion” to the world, but this often brings with it stirred passions and its own form of chaos as the hearts and minds can be swayed by their ways. Always be careful around them, for they know well the ways of the flesh, and can say sweet words that will twist the mind as surely as any dark sorcery to sway those to their ways of thinking.

#Lore24 – Entry #181 – Wild West Month #29 – Those who Face Bullets with Swords

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

Strange are the ways of the Peoples from Beyond the Ocean Which Leads to the Lands of the Setting Sun. Though very rare within the Bitter Frontier, sometimes you will encounter one of them, and you will know them by the long, curved swords they carry. They are often of elven blood, though mixed usually with human, but not always, and the swords they carry are said by our ancestors to have once been favored by our own people, though the ways of making them have long since been lost to us.

It is a unique method Those who Face Bullets with Swords use. I have seen some of them forsake the use of Thundering Weapons altogether in my travels, while others will use them almost as often. But more curious about their methods is their ability to use their Curved Swords to deflect the bullets fired by those wielding Thundering Weapons. It may seem impossible, but I have witnessed this for myself. It is not a feat undertaken lightly, for the slightest failure in their training will see them dead or dying, for one cannot see the bullet and must rely upon their honed instincts. Their ways are as mysterious to us as our shamanic ways must seem to the outsiders, but everyone must forge their own path.

If you witness one carrying such a Curved Sword, be wary should you have to engage them in battle. An arrow will do little good unless you catch them completely unawares, for they are much easier to predict than a bullet. I have seen one such person split a bullet in twain with their blade, sending the halves of it into enemies on either side of them. I have seen them deflect a full six shots from one of the revolving Thundering Weapons only to charge forward in the time it takes to blink to cut the gunman down. I have likewise seen those who have failed in their dangerous way, receiving a lesser wound than they would have, perhaps, only to be taken out by another bullet fired moments later.

A strange way indeed.

#Lore24 – Entry #182 – Wild West Month #30 – Those who Make the Thundering Weapons

As told by Kumiko Stalks-Amongst-the-Stars, shaman of the Midnight Panther tribe of Kerra-Kerra

Though the Kerra-Kerra have long sought not to make use of Thundering Weapons, as our lands are threatened more and more by the Many People from Beyond the Great Walls, so too must we learn to use them if we wish to keep our sacred places as they should be. Our ways of living upon the Bitter Frontier mean that we cannot make the Thundering Weapons for ourselves, and that those who seek to do us harm will try to keep them from us. Should you ever find yourself in battle and slay one using a Thundering Weapon, if you can, take it and its bullets with you; if you do not use it for yourself, then someone in our tribe or another will. As such, you should be aware that not all Thundering Weapons are created equal, for some are better than others, and will see you live where a poorer weapon would see you dead.

As our people have learned, through use and conversation with those who do not seek to harm us as they explore the Bitter Frontier, be aware of the revolving Thundering Weapons that bear the mark of the young Filly. Filly pistols are amongst the finest made, and among the most common you will find for this reason. They are reliable, accurate, and deadly. Their ammunition is short, marked with the numbers “45” in the common tongue. If you cannot have a Filly, then those from “Weston & Smythe” are nearly as good, though their bullets are not always of the same size, and sometimes harder to find. There have been many gunslingers who carry those W&S weapons which break open from the top, for they are quicker to reload, and easier to do so from horseback.

For the hunter, the long Thunder Weapons bearing the name “Winchauster” are regarded as the best. They make the “shotgun” like no other, for it can spread many tiny bullets far and wide. They make them with one or two barrels, some that can even hold more than one or two cartridges. These weapons, up close, can tear a man in half. Never ever underestimate the power of such a weapon. Likewise, the “Winchauster” also make the best “rifles”, the kind of Thundering Weapon that shoots bigger bullets for longer range and greater power. Their “rifles” hold many bullets and load and reload quickly, using the lever on the bottom to do so. There are others who make such weapons, but the quality is not the same, nor are their ammunition, which is harder and harder to find.

Special “rifles” of note are those that are very long and very heavy compared to the “Winchausters” and bear the name of “Keens”. Sometimes you will find them with a Tube of Crystal and Brass atop them, devices that will allow you to clearly see the much further than normal, but most often not. They use the largest of the solid bullets and are loaded one at a time from the rear. These are very powerful, best used for hunting the largest of buffalo, and can even pierce the shells of the giant scorpions in the Great Scorpion Flats at distance. These are rare compared to others, but highly prized.

A new kind of Thundering Weapon is becoming more common upon the Bitter Frontier now, and can be found upon the Howling Steel Chariots, and are a terrible sight to behold. These are called the “Ripley Guns”, and they can lay waste to entire war parties, for they fire many, many rounds one after the other without need to reload. You will know them for they have many barrels, arranged in a

circle around a center tube, and are fired by turning a crank on one side. They are mounted and stationary but are often hidden behind walls of steel, firing through smaller openings. It is best to run when one of these Thundering Weapons is brought to bear against you, unless you are able to take out the ones firing it from cover. We do not favor such weapons, for they are heavy and hard to carry. Destroy them if you can, but do not risk your life to do so.