



FOREWORDS

Anyone who knows anything about heroquesting can tell you that unexpected dangers lie around every mist-shrouded corner, and that you can't always be sure of what you might bring back with you when you return to the world of men. This was the lesson we learned in 1998 when we first began work bringing Greg Stafford's classic fantasy world, Glorantha, back to active life as a roleplaying game. We aimed to create a simple, story-based game that would appeal to the worldwide network of stalwart fans who have loved the setting since its first appearance in 1975, while also bringing a new wave of players to its wonders, drama, mystery, and humor.

The birth of that game, *Hero Wars*, was a difficult one. You might even say that we returned from the Hero Planes before we had fully completed our daunting quest, so eager were we to bring back a great treasure for the Glorantha Tribe. Even so, the fervent legion of Glorantha fans embraced it, worked to plumb its mysteries, and now deserve our undying gratitude for their devotion to both the world and the game.

I am very proud to see that this new incarnation of Glorantha, *HeroQuest*, is infinitely clearer and better presented than its predecessor, much closer to my original vision. Now it is truly ready not only for its established adherents, but for the new generation of fans that is sure to come. In the back-to-basics roleplaying scene we now find ourselves in, with dungeons once more filled with monster-bashers and treasure-seekers, we need the mind-blowing, imaginative sweep of Glorantha more than ever. Our long, arduous heroquest has finally succeeded.

—Robin D. Laws, January 2003

The Hero Wars are Between...

Boxes placed throughout this book describe some of the many conflicts brewing in the time of the Hero Wars. These give a sense of the strains pulling upon the world, peoples, and religions of Glorantha. Your hero will not be torn by *all* of these conflicts, but they are going on around him. These texts provide some deep background to help understand the cosmic war.



"One day I helped a dragon, who whispered hot words of gold and legend to me."

I was twelve when I read those words, in the foreword to a board wargame called *White Bear and Red Moon*, and I have been entranced by Glorantha ever since. It was the richness of the writing, the quirky humor, the epic sweep, but above all the sense of immersive and seductive depth, the sense that there was a whole world to be experienced, not just a few battles to be re-enacted with cardboard counters and dice.

This commitment to making the reader more participant than spectator was evident from the first. The game presented itself as "the instrument for the unfolding history of Dragon Pass, Fantasy and yourself." Ultimately, though, it was just a boardgame, and I wanted more. Shortly thereafter, *RuneQuest* emerged, a fantasy role-playing system that in many ways redefined the genre, precisely by placing at its very heart the world, its cultures and mythologies. We had fun adventuring with *RuneQuest*, but this was still not a game of the heroic scale Glorantha demanded. And yet, right at the back of the book, was a tantalizing hint of future glories, mention of a game called *HeroQuest*: "a revolutionary approach to myth, magic and role-playing" in which the players could be those heroes, and travel into legend and history.

That was in 1979.

Since then, so many false starts, tantalizing hints, and cruel rumors. *RuneQuest* rose, fell, rose again, and fell again for the last time. For years, the torch was held aloft by Glorantha's dedicated—indeed, I'm tempted to say fanatical—fans, especially the magazine *Tales of the Reaching Moon*. And running like a thread of hope through this all were the hints and promises. *HeroQuest* would be out soon. Maybe next year, maybe the year after. But soon. It became in part an in-joke among the fans, but always with that edge of expectation and anticipation. Like a messiah, we knew it would come some day, and when it did, it would change everything.

And here it is. Foreshadowed by *Hero Wars* (which showed what could be), *HeroQuest* really is out. Not next year, not "sometime soon," but now. At last, it is time to listen to that dragon's whispers, it is time to be a hero.

—Mark Galeotti, March 2003





Here is *HeroQuest*.

Here is the game, 37 years in the making. In 1966 Glorantha poured into and through me for the first time, and I imagined having a team of people who could work to manifest it, for surely that was too much for just me. Now, in 2003, after much effort and the assistance of many, it is a reality, and this game its latest output.

I am very pleased with this game and feel it is the best representation of Glorantha so far. The rules system and story-telling support each other. It has allowed me to put down the best image of the interweaving and interlocking magic systems that generate the world. I am extremely pleased to at last give examples and statistics for magical hills, guardian spirits, and the effect the housewives of a clan can have in withholding support for the actions of their husbands. Glorantha has been a lifelong ambition and revelation for me. This, its latest incarnation, is the best.

I want to thank some key individuals for making this possible.

First, to the members of the Glorantha Trading Association, without whom *Issaries* and this book would never have been real. You are the tribe, and your tangible support has made this creation possible.

Secondly, to Stephen Martin, who has borne the burden of administration for *Issaries*, and whose unflagging reliability and support have made it possible for *Issaries* to release this book.

Third, to Robin Laws whose creativity sparked the

breakthrough for this game. I asked him to do this because I was tired and weary of my burden. He bore it like a sprinter and delivered the manuscript on time. His design for *HeroQuest* is a perfect fit of method and content.

Next is Jonathan Geere, the right man in the right place at the right time. His previous diligence in commenting on products had earned him a look at *HeroQuest* when I was weary of it. He stepped in to make some critical organizational revisions and changes, and pointed out some flaws. When I was most weary, he bore the project forward.

Next, to Mark Galeotti and Roderick Robertson, each of whom has authored portions of this work perfectly to my instruction and design. More importantly, they did the work on short notice, with professional content and good cheer.

Also to Fergie (Dave Ferguson), whose enthusiasm and game play provided the breakthrough

for me in seeing how the system works.

Finally, to the crowd of others listed in the credits whose parts, large or small, have contributed to this work with a spirit of community and creativity. It is better for their help, and we hope we have not left anyone out. If we have, we apologize.

These all have made the good parts of this book, and the faults, slips of type, and oversights were all mine.

At last, I give my thanks to my wife Suzanne, for encouraging this project and providing moral support in dark times, and dinners.

—Greg Stafford, *HeroQuest* Designer

*The Hero Wars are between...
Cosmos and Chaos*
The deities are the keepers of the Eternal
Order that is called the cosmos.
Ever since Creation, the cosmos has been
opposed by Chaos, which is everything that
does not fit within or exist inside of the
cosmos. Chaos eternally seeks to reclaim or
destroy the cosmos, and the very essence
of the deities is to resist its entropy.





INTRODUCTION

The gigantic fist splintered the oak door. Javern and his companions pressed themselves into the corners, each chanting their favored prayer or spell. Javern's hauberk glowed briefly, then pulsed from bright to dark as his magic solidified upon the bronze to make it like dull, dark iron. The hand opened long fingers the color of rotten grass, with claws between them like poison cat claws each the size of a big man's leg, smelling like vomit. Across the hall, on the farthest corner, Olyssa's spear rang its sharp clanging war cry, Bardar's bared hands glowed green hot. The structure groaned as the demon heaved its shoulder, cracking the doorjamb. Javern looked down to where Eva huddled behind the worktable, clutching her straw paper in her hand. The demon hand slapped blindly once and shattered the hay cart into javelins and darts that rained down upon on her. The fist clenched again, its bony joints cracking like old men's knees.

"Now, Oroctor," commanded Javern. The spirit woke up and his shield glowed as he leapt forward into the room and, with a single stroke, lopped off a thumb the size of a child. Hot blood drenched Javern as the fist recoiled and the cabin shook with its roaring outside. Javern barely raised his shield as the fist twitched and grabbed him, clutching like a man might grab a mouse that bit him. Snaky veins rose on the fist and fingers when it flexed, and Javern nearly drowned in the surging blood searing his skin. The dark magic of his armor pulsed once in response to the crush that could have pulped an elephant. He was hanging in the fist, near the ceiling.

Bardar leapt forward, grabbed Javern's feet, and pulled. His hands glowed green, his arms were orange, and his body and feet were a deep green that seemed to merge into the earth beneath him. A moment later Olyssa rushed in, screaming her Killing Howl, and thrust her spear deep into the wrist over her head and twisted it out. Though the blood gushed, she nimbly somersaulted to safety beyond, unsullied.

The demon outside roared again and the fist jerked open. Javern dropped to the floor, still held by Bardar. They scrambled but failed. The hand, palm open, slapped down on both of them so hard that Eva, crouched and kneeling, was knocked down. She struggled up, still clutching her paper figure.

She had her best paper, her feather paper, imported from the farthest East. Now it was ready. She felt it moving in her hand, joyfully alive and strong in the way only feather paper can be. She looked up. Olyssa stabbed again, her spear pierced deep, nearly to her own handhold. But it did not stop the momentum of the

hand once again slapping hard onto the two prone men. Even Olyssa was thrown to the ground by it, loosing her grip on the spear. Javern looked dead, unmoving and covered with blood, but he had his armor and should not need help. Bardar, though, was twisted in a way that living people should not be, so Eva concentrated to make the Harmonious Yellow Songbird to heal him. Olyssa was up, drawing her sword, and might expect a Snowflake Dripping Blood. Beebee, her secret spirit helper, was screaming

over and over again, "Your butterfly hat! Your butterfly hat!" because it was afraid of them being killed and always wanted that protection. But she made the Gio Elephant, breathed on it to be weighty, and tossed it into the fray. The little paper creature tumbled over when it hit the ground, but had already begun to grow. When it gained its feet next to Javern it was already three feet tall, and when the palm slapped down again it

was the elephant that took the brunt. It did not stagger or stop, but its tusks had hardened already as it rushed through a wall, not stopping at all. Javern was on his knees now—he had rolled aside and was tugging Bardar to the edge of the barn. The hand slapped empty floor, though everyone fell down.

Outside the demon howled again, but this was not the rage and deathly slaving this time. It was a cry of pain and surprise as the thing pulled its hand from inside the barn. The thing pulled so hard and the barn was so damaged that the structure crashed down around them and pinned them. Nonetheless Eva twisted through the splinters and boards to peep out of a crack. She saw the demon, sooty and horned and covered with scabs, tumble to the ground upon an elephant half its size. The lumber that had been a barn creaked and shook from the fall, several screams and moans sounded, and bits of paper flew into the air as the demon ripped his foe to shreds.

"What's that?" shouted Olyssa, unable to see. "What's coming now?" The shredding stopped and the demon sat down, clearly cut and hurt by the tusks along its legs and groin as well as upon the mutilated right hand. It surveyed the carnage of the barn, and looked at its hand. It kicked a piece of paper around, it was already fading like light tissue now, and looked at its legs. It groaned once, a terrible groan of suffering and pain that made Eva smile with satisfaction. It lumbered to its feet, unsteady and favoring one leg. Blood ran from its wounds, leaving a clear striking trail where it went. It moaned as it left.

"Are you women all right?" asked Javern. "Where are you?" "How's Bardar?" asked Olyssa.

YGVV:
Your Glorantha Will Vary.
This publication is a starting point, not the ending point. Whether you are a narrator or a player, if you need a solution, YOUR answer is the right one.