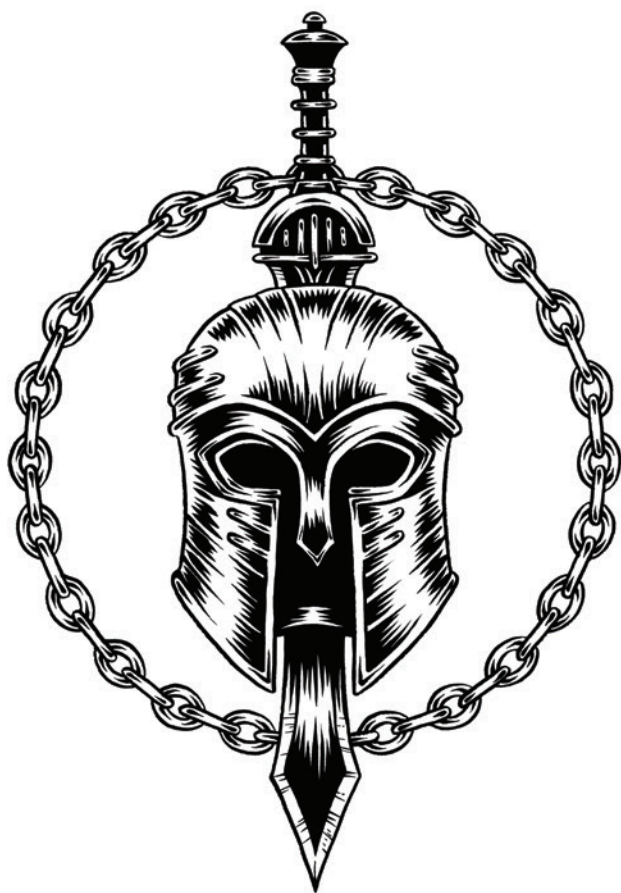


TALES OF
GOR
COREAN ROLEPLAYING



Tales of Gor

GOREAN ROLEPLAYING

FANTASTICAL ADVENTURES ON THE COUNTER-EARTH

Authorised and based on the Gorean books of John Norman

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Do not ask the stones or the trees how to live; they cannot tell you; they do not have tongues.

Do not ask the wise man how to live, for, if he knows, he will know he cannot tell you.

If you would learn how to live, do not ask the question.

Its answer is not in the question but in the answer, which is not in words.

Do not ask how to live, but, instead, proceed to do so.

Preview

Booklet

INTRODUCTION

Tales of Gor is the imminently released Gorean role-playing game. A science-fantasy/sword and planet game of – somewhat – adult fantasy, set in the 30+ book series of Gor novels by John Norman.

This booklet is something of a preview for the game, showing some of the approach, some of the art and showing off some of the material of the game and what it is about.

Get ready!

The Silver Ships are coming.

MY GOR

I was gifted the first twenty-four books of John Norman's *Chronicles of Gor* when a friend of mine went away to university. I was still at school at the time, in my final year, voraciously reading any and all science fiction and fantasy I could find (at the rate of up to six books a day on weekends).

To receive over twenty books, completely new to me, out of the blue was an enormous gift and I threw myself into reading them, one after another until they were all done. Here was a series of books with much of the same fantastical imagination as Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Barsoom* series or the Hyborian fantasies of Robert E. Howard, but drawing on the same imagery of Greek and Roman heroism I'd learned at school and had seen in the films of Ray Harryhausen.

Where Burroughs' and Howard coyly turned aside at the last minute, however, trapped by the relative prudishness of their times (for all the livid covers and descriptions of a more liberated – and naked – society), Norman's hero did not. The fate of the handmaidens and slave girls that Tarl Cabot encountered was never in question, but then nor was the fate of the oiled, male silk slaves under the aloof, free women of Gor's cities.

Tarl Cabot's struggles adapting to the fierce Gorean world were in many ways a reflection of adolescence for me, and for many others. Fiction helped many of us to understand and accept the more adult and cutthroat world we were entering via the ravages of puberty. For many others – in the days before the Internet – the Gorean world was also their first exposure to the aesthetic of BDSM and D/S, their first hint that this was something normal, or that it was a kink shared by others. The importance of that, to so many, along with his book *Imaginative Sex* cannot be underestimated.

Despite the great success of the Gorean cycle, selling between six and twelve million copies and *Tarnsman of Gor* being reprinted twenty-two times, the Gorean series was interrupted in 1988 when it was dropped by its publisher, allegedly for political reasons. There were, as a result, thirteen years between *Magicians of Gor* in 1988 and *Witness of Gor* in 2001 and another seven years after that until *Prize of Gor* in 2008.

'Political correctness' in the late eighties and through the nineties made such sexually explicit and controversial fantasy difficult to know what to do with and the 'Social Justice Warrior' mindset of today causes similar problems.

Fortunately the Internet rose during the same period and fans of Norman's work began to form their own communities online. Forums and chat rooms sprang up by the dozen, Internet Relay Chat played host to dozens of Gorean role-play rooms, people sold, resold and naughtily transcribed the books as they went out of print and created online resources for these communities as they arose. As the Internet advanced, so did the complexity of these resources and as graphical role-play became possible it spread there, to the point where – in 2009 – it was estimated that there were some fifty-thousand Gorean role-players on *Second Life* alone as well as being some of the first role-play groups to arrive in *The Palace* and *IMVU* back when those started.

The Internet would also come to the rescue of the series, in time.

The advent of cheap print on demand and e-books has meant the series has managed to continue and the entire back catalog has become available to purchase once again, via the company E-Reads (and Open Road Media, and Orion's Gateway Imprint) breathing new life into the series and bringing new revelations and new stories to its fans.

In all this time, however, there has never been an official Gorean role-playing game. Everything that exists online is unofficial and organized by fans, strange for a series of fantasy books whose publishing peak coincided with the boom period of the popularity of *Dungeons & Dragons* and other role-playing games.

High time it had one.



Role-playing Games

Role-playing games are games of make-believe, but they're games of make-believe that you describe with your words and which have rules to determine what you can and cannot do and to stop people arguing with each other. You can think of them like telling a story together or playing a board game together, only without a board. You picture what's happening in your mind and describe it to each other, coming up with your own epic tales that span the Counter-Earth.

When you play the game one player will take the part of the Games Master. They look after the rules and determine the story that lies behind the action. They describe where you are, the enemies you face, the action as it unfolds and they come up the plots and enemies that you'll solve and eliminate as you make your way from adventure to adventure.

Role-playing games emerged in the nineteen-seventies with *Dungeons & Dragons*, the one role-playing game – or RPG – that most people have heard of. Since then role-playing has expanded into a global hobby with millions of players and a huge variety of different games using different rules and different ideas for many worlds from traditional fantasy to horror and science fiction. In all this time, however, there has never been a Gorean role-playing game, though there have been Gorean role-players for a very long while.

Gorean role-play appears to have been through many different incarnations. There are fan versions that use various gaming systems, there have been forum games, web-chat games, IRC games and various graphical, online games culminating in the currently very active *Second Life* Gorean role-players.

It's our hope that *Tales of Gor* will provide a common language and basis for the existing Gorean community and will provide an introduction to tabletop role-playing for those who love the novels.

For those who are already role-players it may introduce them to a classic series of science-fantasy fiction of a very different sort.

Gor's Genre

The genre of Gor can be broadly described as science-fantasy since, despite the presence of aliens, space ships, immortality and strange technologies it primarily takes place at the level of fantasy. Gor also shares a great many things in common with the classic 'Planetary Romance' novels and the barbarian fantasies of the pulp era. What made Gor even more risqué and controversial than the pulps that inspired it – and were considered a bad influence in their day – were Gor's more explicit inclusion of sex and especially dominance and submission, beating *Fifty Shades of Grey* to the punch by fifty years and thirty novels.

Gor draws on diverse sources from the pulps, adventure stories, science fiction, fantasy and 'spicy tales', but it also draws from human history and most especially and foundationally classical Greece and the Roman Empire upon which much of 'civilised Gor' derives aspects of its culture.

From this heady mix you have the potential for engaging and rewarding adventures on an alien world, shaping the fates of cities, civilisations and even planets – all from the point of a sword.

Example of Play

Tales of Gor uses a modified version of the *D6 System*. The *D6 System* is an 'open system', which means there are many fanpages and resources out there on the internet for people to use and customise into their own games. The *D6 System* was also – once upon a time – used to power the first Star Wars role-playing game, for which it was a perfect introductory system and, which many people have fond memories of.

For Gor, which has a similar – in some ways – science fantasy setting of high adventure and which needs to appeal to new and old gamers alike, it seems perfect.

This will show you how a typical session of a game of *Tales of Gor* might go, at least a short part of it. You won't understand all the rules parts yet, but it will help you understand what a game might go like:

Corvus and Kantos – played by Chantal and Kevin – are approaching a slaver's compound at night. There's a rumour that the camp holds an incredibly valuable slave and they have been promised a considerable sum if they can capture her and return her to their sponsor. A slaver's camp is not an easy thing to break into, but they're determined to try. Emily is their Games Master, describing events and looking after the rules.

Games Master: The slaver's camp is a permanent camp, one used for the transit of slaver's caravans along the Viktel Aria to or from Ar. Approaching the camp at night you catch a whiff of roasting tarsk and the sound of muted conversation, but otherwise it's strangely quiet.

Even in the darkness of the night you can see a few guards, half-heartedly patrolling the walls, complacent this close to Ar.

Corvus: Can we move into the scrub to get closer, see if we can spot a guard?

Games Master: Yeah, you can get a bit closer without risking being seen. There's one guard a little isolated from the others. The lanterns on his side are burning a little lower, making the shadows a little deeper.

Corvus: Alright, I'll cover with my crossbow while you try and get closer. I've got more range with my crossbow than you do with your knives. Sound good?

Kantos: Sounds good to me. I'll slip a knife free, ready to throw, and try and sneak up to the wall, underneath the guard.

Games Master: Alright, roll your stealth, with a +5 bonus for the darkness. You need to beat the guard who gets... 18.

Kantos: I roll a sixteen, with the bonus that makes 21. I make it.

Games Master: Great. You push free of the scrub and make a low run to the wall, getting beneath the guard's line of sight before he can spot you. You're in position, ready.

Kantos: My turn to cover. I'll look up, knife ready, and keep an eye on the guard. Just in case.

Games Master: Same difficulty. Your turn to roll your stealth!

Corvus: I roll 21, with the bonus of +5, that makes 26. I make it.

Games Master: Alright, you're side by side at the base of the wooden pallsade. The guard shifts from foot to foot above you, clearly bored out of his mind. He won't spot you if you stay here, you don't think.

Kantos: Well that's no good and there's no way we can scale the wall without him seeing us. We'll have to take him out.

Corvus: Agreed.

Games Master: How are you communicating this without being heard?

Kantos: We'll use hand gestures, or whisper through cupped hands.

Games Master: That's fair, they won't hear you then. So what's the plan?

Corvus: We'll step back from the wall and launch a surprise attack at the same time. Dagger and crossbow together. With luck we can take him out in one go.

Games Master: OK, surprised he can't dodge or use his shield, which means only his helmet will count reducing damage. You only need to beat five to hit him.

Kantos: I step back and hurl my readied quiva, just going for the body. I roll... 15. That beats the difficulty by 10, which gives me plus two damage. I roll... ugh... 12 damage total. Minus his helmet that's 11, right?

Games Master: Right. The quiva flies true but he turns as you throw and the knife digs into the meat of his thigh, missing anything vital. He cries out in pain!

Corvus: Only to get hit by my crossbow bolt to finish him off! I get 19 to hit, that beats by 14, which is plus one die. I only got 14 damage though, so that's 13 with his armor. Damn it.

Games Master: Alright, he's down to 12 health, that's minus five to all his actions, but he's still up and able to act. That's surprise done; now it's normal initiative. Roll! The guard gets... 19.

Kantos: I get seven.

Corvus: I get nine, looks like he gets to go first.

Games Master: The guard loses his bow into the dark, where your shots came from and screams for help, jumping down from the palisade. Despite his wounds. He gets 14 to hit... you Corvus.

Corvus: I try and evade. With the penalty against ranged shots I get 14. He nearly hits me!

Games Master: He's out of sight now and he's going to draw more guards. What do you want to do?

Kantos: Give me a boost to get onto the wall.

Games Master: It'd be a difficulty 20 climb normally, but you can have a +5 bonus for Corvus helping.

Kantos: I get 25 with the help.

Games Master: No problem, with a boost you scramble over the wall. The wounded guard is screaming and staggering towards the other guards, an alarm bell begins to ring and more of them begin to appear.

Kantos: Why can things never, ever go smoothly for us? I'll lean over and reach down to help Corvus up...

And so the adventure continues....



Caste of Scribes

Castes are integral to the Gorean world and also constitute templates, upon which characters are created. Here is an example, the blue-robed Caste of Scribes.

The Caste of Scribes are the arbiters of language, the guardians of knowledge and the explorers of the boundaries of that knowledge. The Scribes include cartographers, researchers, historians, writers, philosophers and other intellectuals of all kinds as well as many skilled accountants and record keepers. *Add six dice to Abilities and five dice to Skills to customise this template.*

Agility 1D

Dexterity 3D

Care 3D+2

Sleight of Hand 3D+2

Body 1D

Reason 3D

Philosophy 4D

Culture 4D

Kaissa 4D

Navigation 3D+2

Scholar 5D

Arts 3D

Aesthetics 3D+1

Composition 4D+1

Poetry 3D+2

Charm 1D

Speaking 1D+2



Adventures on Gor

A common question when it comes to role-playing games, however cool the setting, however exciting the premise, is: “Yeah, but what do you do?”

Gorean adventurers need a reason to come together from the various parts of Gor to work together. Fortunately the isolationist city-state period that Gor existed in fifty years ago has largely melted away into a more cosmopolitan society of alliances and trade. Still, there are only a few ideas for creating groups that will work with anyone from across the world:

Agents of Kur

The Kur have many agents and often give power to women, brought from Earth, over their operations. The Kur pay well and make promises of power, wealth and freedom. Those greedy enough to listen to their offers and turn against their own species may be rewarded well and may come from anywhere on Gor – or Earth.

Agents of Priest Kings

The Priest Kings have their own agents amongst men, though much more present on Gor than on Earth. The Priest Kings do not offer anything for service and sometimes force men into working for them, fitting them with devices to use them as spies and keep them controlled. They rely on humanity choosing to support its own best interests, though this is often not the case given humanity’s self-destructive nature. Since the founding of the new nest the Priest Kings have been more distant and alien than usual and – perhaps – less reliant on their human agents though they still have use for them and rely on them to understand their human – and Kur – enemies.

Clanmates

Clans are loose, extended familial structures that spread through many neighbouring cities, even enemies. City and caste are normally more important than clan to Goreans but some take family more seriously than others. A clan might put people together to deal with problems that face the greater clan and their business interests in a way similar to organised crime families on Earth.

Members of the same Caste

Castes have a bond that transcends cities and other alliances. While members of castes may fight on different sides, in peace time they also work together. Castes have interests, seek to secure their skills and responsibilities, to keep their secrets secret. The Merchant Caste especially have their own web of intelligence agents across Gor, observing and manipulating events to the best interests of the caste.

Mercenaries

Mercenary groups often have a core, recruited from one city, but they pick up stragglers, members and fortune hunters from all over. Some are grand armies that rival those of cities while others are little more than bandits. Mercenaries seek to make a name for themselves, a fortune and to enter the annals of legend through their deeds, but more often than not they are chancers, moving from job to job and trying to survive.

Merchant Retinue

Merchants are the most cosmopolitan and well travelled people on Gor. The roads and the wilds are dangerous though, given the many beasts, bandits, deserters and other hazards to be found out there. Then there's deals that need to be enforced, debts to pursue (or evade) and opportunities to exploit. Merchants may pick up assistants from all over Gor to deal with their various problems – and they pay well.

Outlaws

Men who are banished from their cities, or forced to flee, men who are left with no Home Stone are forced to become outlaws. Outlaws have nowhere to go and nobody to rely upon but themselves. Panther Girls are another form of outlaw, fled slaves and free women seeking a life away from slavery and Gor's male-dominant society. Many outlaws settle in the Northern Forest, the vastness of which conceals them and allows them to trade with each other and with visiting traders. Amnesties are sometimes offered for great battles when troops are needed, but the causes are often already lost.

Pirates

Port Kar is one of the most open cities on Gor. Only recently having a Home Stone it has a long history of being a port of rogues, thieves and pirates and a place that a man can make a new name and a new reputation – forgetting his past.

The ships of Kar form crews of men who have sworn anew to their city and can, otherwise, come from anywhere. Barges and river boats also claim Kar as their home, as do many mercenary bands and ‘road pirates’ – highwaymen and bandits.



Kaiila – Desert

Gor has many fantastical beasts on its surface, lost beasts from human pre-history, alien creatures brought by the Priest Kings or the Kurii and its native life – just as strange, much of it megafauna.

The desert, or southern, kaiila is a hardier breed than the plains kaiila and unlike its northern brethren is omnivorous. The kaiila are a dangerous but beautiful mount, unusual in that they are predatory.

Scale: 3

Agility: 4D Athletics: 5D, Evade: 4D+2, Fistfight: 7D, Stealth: 5D

Dexterity: 2D

Body: 4D Fitness: 5D, Endurance: 6D, Run: 7D, Survival: 8D

Reason: 1D+1, Initiative: 2D+2, Senses: 2D+2

Arts: 1D

Charm: 1D+2 Confidence: 3D, Intimidation: 3D, Will: 3D

Movement: 21/32/63/105

Power Bonus: 3D (Claws 4D+1, Teeth 4D+2)

Armor: 3

Health: 41



*Weep, Free Maiden.
Remember your pride and weep.
Remember your laughter and weep.
Remember you were my enemy and weep.
Now you are my helpless captive.
Remember you stood against me.
Now you lie at my feet.
I have bound you with yellow cords.
I have placed you on the scarlet rug.
Thus by the laws of Tharna do I claim you.
Remember you were free.
Know now you are my slave.
Weep, Slave Girl.*

