

VOICE of the ANCESTORS

Kickstarter Special Adventure Booklet

Black Machairodus

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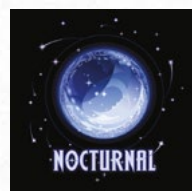
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Black Machairodus

It's such a shame that our Würm characters never get to encounter saber-toothed tigers! Something had to be done about that. The only problem is that the European saber-toothed tiger, machairodus, died out about 200,000 years before. That would explain why the encounter the PCs are about to have will be a rather chilling one...

In a Few Words...

The characters are on a mission to source good quality flint when they discover a strange skull with huge canine teeth. From that moment on they are haunted by the Spirit of a long-dead feline, which gives them incredible powers. However, when they return to their camp, the PCs realize that they are all bringing bad luck to their families. Soon the whole clan – or what's left of it – is begging them to go into exile and find a solution. What is this curse? What if the only people who could help them are the mysterious Bear-men that once lived in this area, before they were driven out long ago?

The Clan and its Situation

This scenario is designed for a group of Long Men. The GM can easily insert this story into a Würm campaign for his players' usual characters if they are Long Men and Women. If that is not the case, then the new characters will be part of the **White Wolf Clan**, who are in turn part of the great **Totems Tribe**, a vast group (almost a nation) spread out over the great Tribe Lands. The White Wolf clan is made up of 32 people, including the hunt leader **Wolf Fang**, the two shamans **Tawny** and **White Paws**, and the old **Crescent Moon**, the clan's Voice of the Ancestors.

The clan's camp is set up in a large rock shelter nestled in the heart of a valley, well sheltered from the wind. Its territory covers an area full of hills and streams. Towards

the rising sun are the high, windy plateaus of the Causses. Towards the setting sun, lies the Forest of the Giant Pines. The clan of the Gray Wolf and the clan of the Owl are nearby, respectively three and seven days' walk towards the setting sun. The Horse clan is five days' walk to the North and the Aurochs clan six days' walk to the South.

Fall has arrived and it has been raining a lot. Three of their women are with child, three births expected during the cold season, which is already on its way and is expected to be harsh this year, once again. As they do each year, the hunt leader and the Elders have planned a great reindeer hunt to help the clan face the first moons of winter. However, the clan is running low on flint, and they will need plenty of freshly sourced, good quality stones to make tools for this campaign, to hunt, skin and butcher the animals. They need to refill their stocks and quickly.

The PCs are being sent off to the **Misty Hollow** to get some **Red Flint**. They have equipment, rations for four days each and half-season clothes (1 Protection Point). The stone they are looking for is of excellent quality (+1 for all Crafts Tests) and large nodules of it can be dug out of the banks of the Hollow. The PCs' mission is simple: they must dig out some good quality nodules (at least three or four each), fashion some rough proto-tools and proto-weapons to lighten their load for the return journey, then head back as soon as possible.



The Flint and the Skull

The site is two days' walk away, including a one-night camp on the way. The journey is an unpleasant one. It's raining. Although it's not the torrential rain that stopped a few days ago, it's still drizzling. The PCs frequently find themselves up to their knees in icy mud. They will have to walk barefoot if they don't want to lose their beautifully sewn reindeer skin slippers.

When the PCs arrive at their mist-shrouded destination, they discover that a nearby river, swollen by the rain, has flooded the Hollow. The water has started to go down, but it will take a while for the Hollow to be completely empty. The more optimistic PCs can realize that it will be much easier to pull the nodules from the soaked earth. The more pessimistic ones will moan about the delay it is causing and the unpleasant conditions working on the muddy slopes.

After a day's wait, the Hollow is accessible again. The PCs can help this happen sooner by dragging away the obstacles that are keeping the water in the Hollow, mainly birch trunks.

While the PCs are digging at the boggy ground with their stakes, after finding a few nodules (DT 5 to find them), they come across a strange and fascinating skull, made of stone instead of bone. It is the skull of an animal they have never seen before, with impressively long canine teeth. It is the fossilized skull of a machairodus, an animal that has been extinct for over a hundred and fifty thousand years. The PCs don't know anything about this creature. They recognize it as the skull of a feline, quite similar to that of a gray lion, but they have never seen a lion with such teeth.

If they look around nearby, they can find the lower mandible, a few vertebrae and

some broken ribs from the same animal. All of them are fossilized of course. During the first night after they discovered the skull, the PCs are overcome by strange dreams, haunted by the dark shadow of a saber-toothed cat. Its eyes glow green. They feel a mixture of terror and fascination during these extremely vivid dreams. When they wake up, there is a real sense of awkwardness among them, yet the PCs feel exhilarated, full of a new energy. Something inside them has changed. Whether the PCs take the skull with them or leave it where they found it, they are now possessed by the Spirit of the terrifying feline (see inset). Before they head back to their camp, the PCs must preform the nodules into proto-tools. To do so the GM can have them carry out three Easy Tests (DT 5), or one Average Test (DT 7) per nodule. Don't forget the bonus (+1) for these Craft Tests, due to the exceptional quality of the flint. On their way back, unless they decide to hurry or ration themselves, the PCs will need to hunt. It could also be good for

their reputation to bring back some prize game animals as well as the flint. With the wet weather, there are plenty of tracks to follow in the damp ground (DT 5). The hunt goes as indicated in the Core Rulebook. However, as they follow the tracks, the PCs get a feeling that they are being followed by something. A shadow. Maybe the creature's ghost? If they look for tracks, they won't find anything in the mud, but they can spot a few big cat paw prints... in the surface of a long block of stone.

Back at Base Camp

The PCs arrive back at the camp under a light drizzle that changes into full-on rain during the night. Heavy black clouds roll across the sky. If the PCs have returned with the skull and they show it to the others, they immediately attract the attention of the whole clan, especially the hunt leader. They also awaken the wariness of the shamans. The negative effects of the skull immediately begin to affect the clan and make the days darker. During the night after their return,

Favors and Curses of the Black Machairodus

The PCs gain one of these Strengths each, of their choice, to be written down on the Character Sheet as a Favor of the Spirits:

- Black Fury** (+1d6 to hit in hand to hand);
- Dark Force** (+1d6 for Damage);
- Ancestral Breath** (+9 Stamina Points);
- Feline Reflexes** (+3 for Dodge, +1d6 for Initiative).

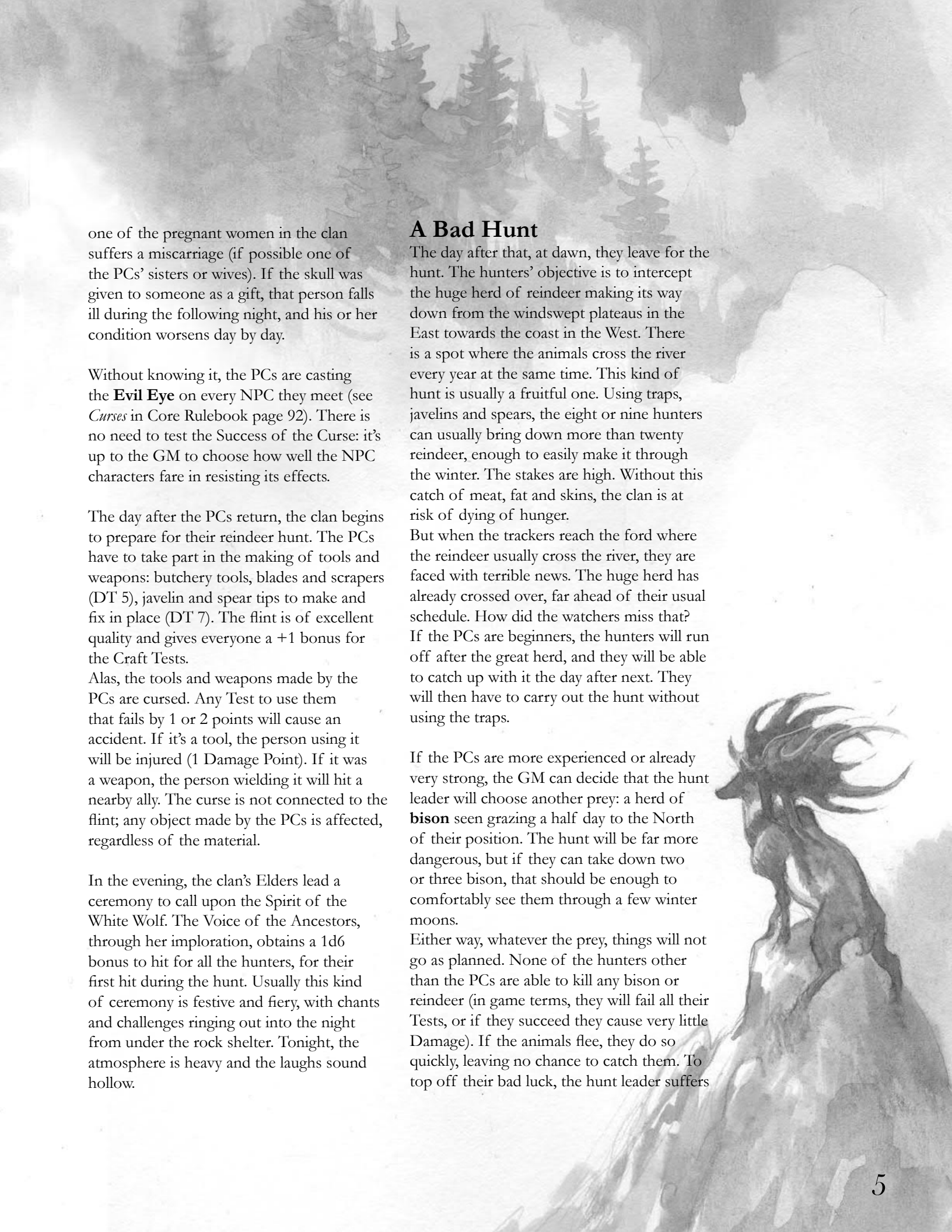
The effects of these Strengths cannot be accumulated with those of similar Strengths (*i.e.*: *Black Fury* and *Fury of the Lion*)

At the GM's discretion, the skull bearer can combine two of these Strengths.

The GM can choose to only reveal these gains during the next combat.

Furthermore the connection with the PCs' true Guardian Spirit (the Great White Wolf) is wavering. When using a die from the Manna pool, if the result is an even number, help doesn't come and the die has no effect.

Black Blood – During the adventure, the PCs will have the unpleasant surprise to find their blood is becoming darker and darker until it becomes completely black in the last few days. Their skin will take on a dark and ashy complexion.



one of the pregnant women in the clan suffers a miscarriage (if possible one of the PCs' sisters or wives). If the skull was given to someone as a gift, that person falls ill during the following night, and his or her condition worsens day by day.

Without knowing it, the PCs are casting the **Evil Eye** on every NPC they meet (see *Curses* in Core Rulebook page 92). There is no need to test the Success of the Curse: it's up to the GM to choose how well the NPC characters fare in resisting its effects.

The day after the PCs return, the clan begins to prepare for their reindeer hunt. The PCs have to take part in the making of tools and weapons: butchery tools, blades and scrapers (DT 5), javelin and spear tips to make and fix in place (DT 7). The flint is of excellent quality and gives everyone a +1 bonus for the Craft Tests.

Alas, the tools and weapons made by the PCs are cursed. Any Test to use them that fails by 1 or 2 points will cause an accident. If it's a tool, the person using it will be injured (1 Damage Point). If it was a weapon, the person wielding it will hit a nearby ally. The curse is not connected to the flint; any object made by the PCs is affected, regardless of the material.

In the evening, the clan's Elders lead a ceremony to call upon the Spirit of the White Wolf. The Voice of the Ancestors, through her imploration, obtains a 1d6 bonus to hit for all the hunters, for their first hit during the hunt. Usually this kind of ceremony is festive and fiery, with chants and challenges ringing out into the night from under the rock shelter. Tonight, the atmosphere is heavy and the laughs sound hollow.

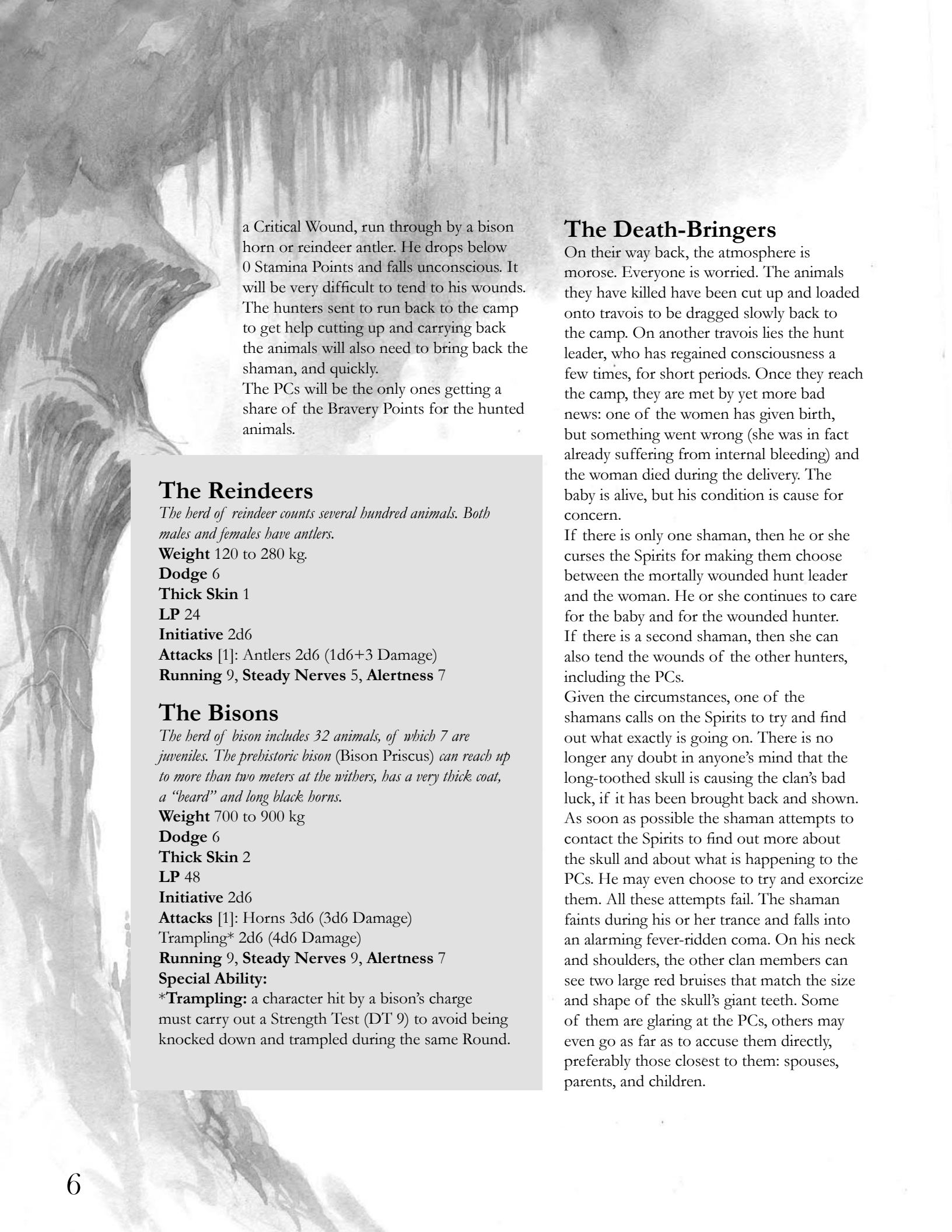
A Bad Hunt

The day after that, at dawn, they leave for the hunt. The hunters' objective is to intercept the huge herd of reindeer making its way down from the windswept plateaus in the East towards the coast in the West. There is a spot where the animals cross the river every year at the same time. This kind of hunt is usually a fruitful one. Using traps, javelins and spears, the eight or nine hunters can usually bring down more than twenty reindeer, enough to easily make it through the winter. The stakes are high. Without this catch of meat, fat and skins, the clan is at risk of dying of hunger.

But when the trackers reach the ford where the reindeer usually cross the river, they are faced with terrible news. The huge herd has already crossed over, far ahead of their usual schedule. How did the watchers miss that? If the PCs are beginners, the hunters will run off after the great herd, and they will be able to catch up with it the day after next. They will then have to carry out the hunt without using the traps.

If the PCs are more experienced or already very strong, the GM can decide that the hunt leader will choose another prey: a herd of **bison** seen grazing a half day to the North of their position. The hunt will be far more dangerous, but if they can take down two or three bison, that should be enough to comfortably see them through a few winter moons.

Either way, whatever the prey, things will not go as planned. None of the hunters other than the PCs are able to kill any bison or reindeer (in game terms, they will fail all their Tests, or if they succeed they cause very little Damage). If the animals flee, they do so quickly, leaving no chance to catch them. To top off their bad luck, the hunt leader suffers



a Critical Wound, run through by a bison horn or reindeer antler. He drops below 0 Stamina Points and falls unconscious. It will be very difficult to tend to his wounds. The hunters sent to run back to the camp to get help cutting up and carrying back the animals will also need to bring back the shaman, and quickly. The PCs will be the only ones getting a share of the Bravery Points for the hunted animals.

The Reindeers

The herd of reindeer counts several hundred animals. Both males and females have antlers.

Weight 120 to 280 kg.

Dodge 6

Thick Skin 1

LP 24

Initiative 2d6

Attacks [1]: Antlers 2d6 (1d6+3 Damage)

Running 9, **Steady Nerves** 5, **Alertness** 7

The Bisons

The herd of bison includes 32 animals, of which 7 are juveniles. The prehistoric bison (Bison Priscus) can reach up to more than two meters at the withers, has a very thick coat, a "beard" and long black horns.

Weight 700 to 900 kg

Dodge 6

Thick Skin 2

LP 48

Initiative 2d6

Attacks [1]: Horns 3d6 (3d6 Damage)

Trampling* 2d6 (4d6 Damage)

Running 9, **Steady Nerves** 9, **Alertness** 7

Special Ability:

***Trampling:** a character hit by a bison's charge must carry out a Strength Test (DT 9) to avoid being knocked down and trampled during the same Round.

The Death-Bringers

On their way back, the atmosphere is morose. Everyone is worried. The animals they have killed have been cut up and loaded onto travois to be dragged slowly back to the camp. On another travois lies the hunt leader, who has regained consciousness a few times, for short periods. Once they reach the camp, they are met by yet more bad news: one of the women has given birth, but something went wrong (she was in fact already suffering from internal bleeding) and the woman died during the delivery. The baby is alive, but his condition is cause for concern.

If there is only one shaman, then he or she curses the Spirits for making them choose between the mortally wounded hunt leader and the woman. He or she continues to care for the baby and for the wounded hunter. If there is a second shaman, then she can also tend the wounds of the other hunters, including the PCs.

Given the circumstances, one of the shamans calls on the Spirits to try and find out what exactly is going on. There is no longer any doubt in anyone's mind that the long-toothed skull is causing the clan's bad luck, if it has been brought back and shown. As soon as possible the shaman attempts to contact the Spirits to find out more about the skull and about what is happening to the PCs. He may even choose to try and exorcize them. All these attempts fail. The shaman faints during his or her trance and falls into an alarming fever-ridden coma. On his neck and shoulders, the other clan members can see two large red bruises that match the size and shape of the skull's giant teeth. Some of them are glaring at the PCs, others may even go as far as to accuse them directly, preferably those closest to them: spouses, parents, and children.

What if the PCs don't bring the skull back, or hide it?

Of course, it is perfectly possible that the PCs may not take the skull back with them, or even that they couldn't care less and just toss it aside where they found it. They will still be haunted by dreams of the dark and mysterious feline and be affected by the curse. They will also benefit from the Strengths of the Black Machairodus. When they reach the base camp, the shaman(s) and the Voice of the Ancestors will begin to suspect there is a problem when the first events occur, and more still after the catastrophic hunt. They will question the PCs, hoping to find answers. If the PCs pretend that nothing is wrong, the other clan members will still develop an increasing and instinctive mistrust towards them, sensing the influence that the Creature of Darkness is having on them. The GM has two options: either he makes sure the shamans somehow discover the truth, by calling upon the clan's Guardian Spirit, or he can let the PCs take the blame for the inevitable bad luck that will continue to affect the clan until the end, which can be interesting (see "The adventure in the White Wolf camp"). If the PCs hide the skull, it is easier to just arrange for someone to eventually stumble across it and ask the PCs to explain themselves.

All the members of the clan are now avoiding the PCs. No one is speaking to them. No one wants to work, eat or sleep anywhere near them. They are regarded with a great amount of fear.

The Vigil

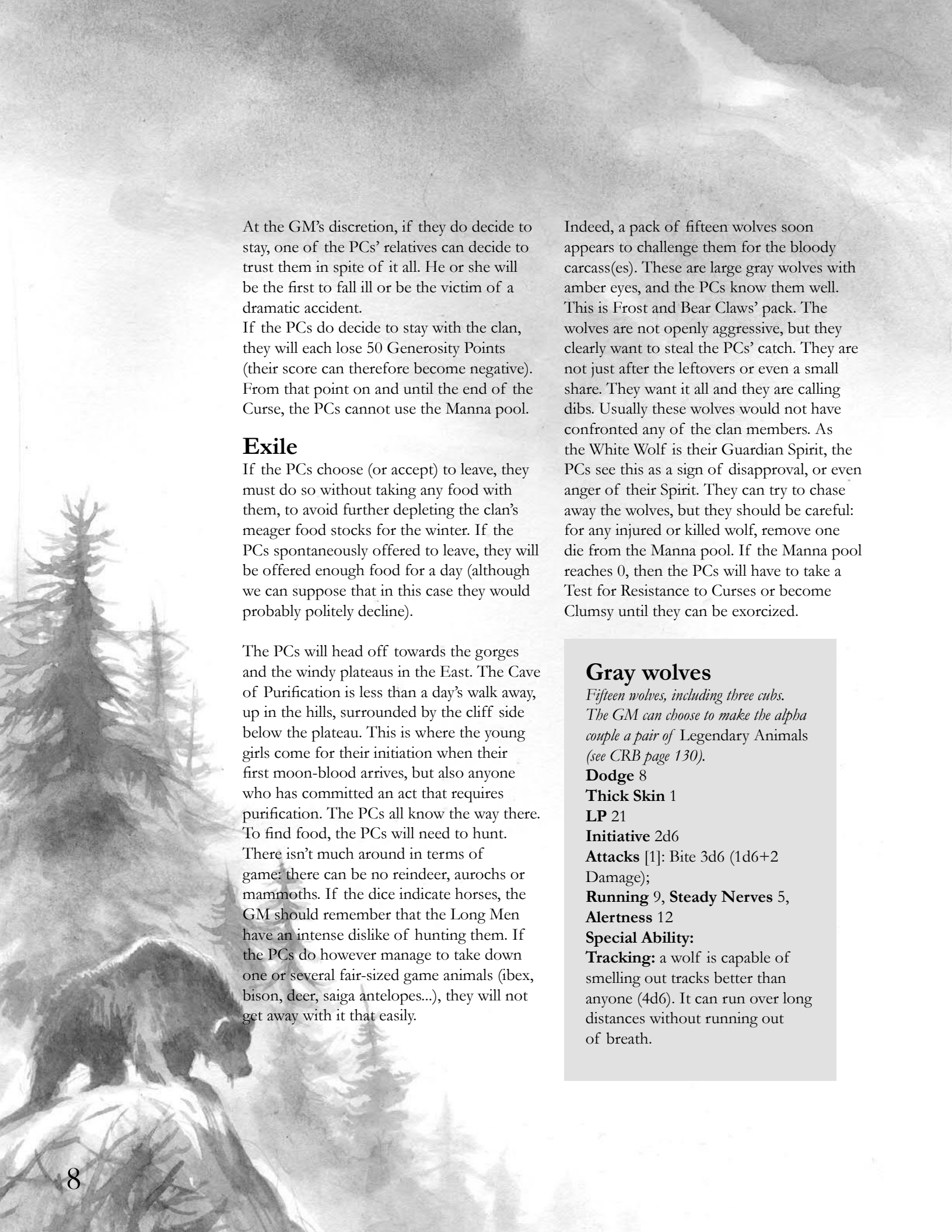
During the vigil, an Elders' Council is held, to which the PCs are invited (unless the GM prefers them not to be present). The Voice of the Ancestors and the shaman confirm that the PCs have been cursed. If the skull has been brought back or even just mentioned, the connection is made between this strange lion skull with its giant teeth and the curse that they are suffering from. But some go one step further. Other clans and tribes also visit the sacred Hollow to dig out red flint and use its great quality for their weapons and tools. What if these clans were jealous or hostile towards their clan for some reason, and had voluntarily chosen to curse the whole clan through the PCs? Some hunters think that this curse could have been cast by the Bear-men who used to live in this valley long ago, before climbing up to hide in the gorges and windswept plateaus in the East. However the Voice of the Ancestors doubts that the few rare Bear-men who still live nearby have anything to do with this curse. As she ponders this, the old woman's gaze dives into the glowing red embers of the fire. What if, on the contrary, they could help the PCs? The Bear-men lived in the area

long before the real men arrived; maybe they know where this curse comes from.

As the debate comes to an end, the Voice of the Ancestors and the Elders (at least, those left in the absence of the hunt leader and one of the shamans) agree that the PCs should go into exile, for the good of the White Wolf clan. They suggest that the PCs travel to the mountains, and find shelter in the **Cave of Purification**, and that they stay hidden there until they find a way to end the curse, or until it goes away of its own accord.

That said, the PCs are free to choose their own path. The Elders' Council is limited to giving their advice, and cannot give orders to anyone. Only a unanimous decision by all the members of the clan could truly force anyone's actions. And with an unconscious shaman and hunt leader, two of the clan's key authority figures are no longer available to comment. The PCs can, therefore, try to impose their presence on their community and try to overrule the Council's advice.

After all, were they not the only ones to take down any animals during the hunt? They are therefore far too feared and powerful now to be audibly contradicted, especially if they remain united. However, if they do choose to ignore the Elders' Council, their relatives will suddenly turn their backs on them and, even if they don't manage to make them leave, it will be painfully clear that they are no longer welcome within the clan.



At the GM's discretion, if they do decide to stay, one of the PCs' relatives can decide to trust them in spite of it all. He or she will be the first to fall ill or be the victim of a dramatic accident.

If the PCs do decide to stay with the clan, they will each lose 50 Generosity Points (their score can therefore become negative). From that point on and until the end of the Curse, the PCs cannot use the Manna pool.

Exile

If the PCs choose (or accept) to leave, they must do so without taking any food with them, to avoid further depleting the clan's meager food stocks for the winter. If the PCs spontaneously offered to leave, they will be offered enough food for a day (although we can suppose that in this case they would probably politely decline).

The PCs will head off towards the gorges and the windy plateaus in the East. The Cave of Purification is less than a day's walk away, up in the hills, surrounded by the cliff side below the plateau. This is where the young girls come for their initiation when their first moon-blood arrives, but also anyone who has committed an act that requires purification. The PCs all know the way there. To find food, the PCs will need to hunt. There isn't much around in terms of game: there can be no reindeer, aurochs or mammoths. If the dice indicate horses, the GM should remember that the Long Men have an intense dislike of hunting them. If the PCs do however manage to take down one or several fair-sized game animals (ibex, bison, deer, saiga antelopes...), they will not get away with it that easily.

Indeed, a pack of fifteen wolves soon appears to challenge them for the bloody carcass(es). These are large gray wolves with amber eyes, and the PCs know them well. This is Frost and Bear Claws' pack. The wolves are not openly aggressive, but they clearly want to steal the PCs' catch. They are not just after the leftovers or even a small share. They want it all and they are calling dibs. Usually these wolves would not have confronted any of the clan members. As the White Wolf is their Guardian Spirit, the PCs see this as a sign of disapproval, or even anger of their Spirit. They can try to chase away the wolves, but they should be careful: for any injured or killed wolf, remove one die from the Manna pool. If the Manna pool reaches 0, then the PCs will have to take a Test for Resistance to Curses or become Clumsy until they can be exorcized.

Gray wolves

*Fifteen wolves, including three cubs.
The GM can choose to make the alpha couple a pair of Legendary Animals (see CRB page 130).*

Dodge 8

Thick Skin 1

LP 21

Initiative 2d6

Attacks [1]: Bite 3d6 (1d6+2 Damage);

Running 9, **Steady Nerves** 5, **Alertness** 12

Special Ability:

Tracking: a wolf is capable of smelling out tracks better than anyone (4d6). It can run over long distances without running out of breath.

If the PCs leave the animals they caught to the wolves, then the pack won't bother them for the rest of the adventure. The GM can decide that the PCs will be hit by a far worse curse if they really choose to harass the wolves.

With a bit of luck, the PCs will have time to hunt again before they reach the cave, or try gathering some food. At this time of year they can still hope to find a few berries, nuts or mushrooms.

The Cave

The PCs reach the site at the end of the day, or after sunset if they wasted a lot of time hunting or gathering. They can settle in there to sleep and shelter from the rain, which has started up again after a few dry days. The cave is quite big and the first few tens of meters are nice and dry. The entrance porch is high (7 m) but quite narrow (3 m at the base). There are a few useful items near the opening (skins, poles, trellises).

A stream runs through the deeper part of the cave to an underground pool, accessible after a short climb (DT 5). The PCs can bathe there, as is usually the custom for those who require purification (the pool is no deeper than 1.2 m). Unfortunately for them, their bathing won't have much of an effect on their curse(s). The water is, however, very cold.

If the PCs wish to set up camp in the cave while waiting for a sign, nothing is stopping them. Their nights will be restless. If they have hunted a large animal, then a pack of **eight cave hyenas** will attempt to steal it from them, attacking by surprise during the night. If the GM thinks that the hyenas might be too hard to beat for beginner PCs, a **lone hungry brown bear** can play that part. If the PCs stay in the cave too long, then the two encounters can happen one after the other.

Cave hyenas

The pack is made up of 8 hyenas.

The leader is a large and cunning female.

Dodge 8

Thick Skin 1

LP 24

Initiative 2d6

Attacks [1]: Bite 3d6 (2d6+2 Damage);

Running 7, **Steady Nerves** 9, **Alertness** 9

Brown bear

Drawn in by the smell of the freshly killed prey, this lone male is stubborn and grumpy. It is about 15 hands tall when standing on its hind legs.

Dodge 6

Thick Skin 2

LP 36

Initiative 2d6

Attacks [1]: Bite 3d6 (2d6 Damage);

Running 7, **Steady Nerves** 9, **Alertness** 9

Special Ability:

Bear hug: if a brown bear manages to hit its opponent during two Combat Rounds in a row, it can attempt an opposed Wrestling Test during the third Round (3d6). If the Test succeeds, the bear inflicts 1d6 Damage Points per Round on its victim for as long as it can hold on, and it can bite at 4d6 instead of 3d6.

When they fall asleep, the PCs will once again dream of the Black Machairodus. It becomes clearer, more terrifying, yet the PCs can feel their connection with this creature growing stronger. In spite of their troubled sleep, they feel as if they were drawing a special strength from this spiritual contact.

During the day, nothing happens inside the cave. If the PCs try to regenerate the Manna pool, they realize that they can no longer do so. It is as if the connection with their Guardian Spirit was cut off or blocked. If the PCs look for clues around the cave, they discover, among other things, the tracks of some Bear-men nearby (or even in the cave itself, why not), and the tracks are fresh.



The Bear-men

Whether they stumbled across their tracks outside the cave or while out hunting, the PCs will soon become aware of the nearby presence of the Bear-men. Depending on the PCs' attitude the Bear-men can be the ones to trigger the encounter (by surprise, even), or they could be completely oblivious of the approaching Long Men. The group is made up of three adult Bear-men, two women and one man. One of the two Bear-women is old and very ugly, but she speaks the Long Men's language (the common language of the Totems Tribe, maybe?). Her name is **Trosha**. The other woman is younger, sensual and intriguing despite her strange face with its enormous eyes, nose and mouth that would usually seem hideous to Long Men. Her name is **Vo'dani**. The Bear-man is young but incredibly strong and quick. His name is **Fingol**. Trosha is the mother of the two youngsters. The Bear-men are wary, but not necessarily hostile. They will defend themselves if they are attacked, but their first reflex will be to run away. They wear light skin garments and rain capes made of long vulture feathers.

If the PCs manage to start up a conversation, the Bear-men will be friendly and willing (maybe not for free, however) to take them back to their camp, a half-day's walk away. If they show them the machairodus skull, they will not be able to identify the animal. If they have become trusting enough, they will suggest that the PCs meet **Thaggiaq**, the "old man who never dies", back at their camp. Nobody knows how many winters the old man has seen, but he has a great amount of knowledge and knows many secrets.

If the PCs don't speak to the Bear-men, it is possible to follow them back to their camp with a few Fair to Average Tracking Tests

(DT 5, DT 7). If the PCs kill the Bear-men, then it will be much harder to find their camp. The GM can require them to carry out two or three Difficult Tests (DT 9) to follow the tracks.

The Ancient Campfire

The Bear-men's camp is high up, set into the side of a gorge sheltered from the wind. Their camp is nestled in a cave with an easily defendable entrance. A wide river runs below it, and fish are plentiful. The camp includes eight solid huts covered in skins, in which nine people live: four women, **Trosha**, **Vo'dani**, **Loirani** and **Mai**, three men, **Fingol**, **Daggar** and old **Thaggiaq**, as well as two children under seven years old. A great fire burns in the center of the camp, in a deep, wide hollow that was once a rock pool. The old man is always next to the fire. He also sleeps there, under a light fur pelt and sheltered by a windbreaker. Like Trosha, the old man speaks the common language of the Totems (the PCs' language). If the PCs arrive in the camp with Trosha and her children, they are welcomed as guests, and food and resources are shared without question. If the PCs arrive at the camp alone, their arrival is a little tenser, and they need to either negotiate or force their way into the camp.

Once inside the camp, the PCs can notice that the Bear-men use the same red flint, although in smaller quantities (mostly they use regular pebbles and quartz). It therefore seems clear that they are aware of the Misty Hollow site, and that they took stones from there fairly recently. The PCs are not offended by this. During this period, it would have been a rare and curious thing for a human clan to dare claim the exclusive rights to a natural resource.



If the PCs tell their story, and especially if they show the skull, Thaggiaq shows his surprise and nods gravely. Solemnly, taking his time to find his words in the Long Men's language, he tells the story of the creature that is haunting them, the creature whose skull they found. Thaggiaq calls the creature the **Black Ripper**. According to him, it is a dark Spirit of the night, the Spirit of a very ancient creature, one that used to live in this area long ago. The Spirit wants to revive its long-extinct species, and to do so, it needs to

possess creatures that are capable of killing. Once they have shed blood to reinforce the dark Spirit's hold on their bodies, the PCs are destined to die to allow the Black Ripper's children to be reborn. The creature's curse is instilled in the Long Men's blood. When their blood is dark enough, a pride of lionesses will come to devour them. When they do, they will be impregnated by the Spirit of the Black Ripper and they will give birth to new machairodus cubs.

The Bear-men

They wear capes made of vulture feathers, and they speak with high-pitched nasal voices. They are welcoming but they can become extremely violent.

Dodge 7 (10*); **Protection** 1 (light skin garments)

Stamina Points 30 (40**)

Initiative 2d6, (3d6*)

Attacks [1]: Stone-tipped spear or Heavy club 2d6 (3d6 Damage);

Running 7, **Alertness** 7

Special Ability:

The Bear-men all have the *Heart of Ice* and *Strength of the Bear* Strengths.

On top of that,

Trosha has the *Song of the Blackbird*;

Vo'dani *Grace of the Swan*;

*Fingol *Reflexes of the Lynx*;

old Thaggiaq *Wisdom of the Mammoth*;

Mai *Secret of the Bear*;

**Loirani and **Daggar *Breath of the Giant Stag*.

If the PCs doubt or question this knowledge, Thaggiaq explains that he learned this story from old Thahoum, a powerful shaman who died many years ago. Long before the Long Men arrived in this country, his ancestors had come across the same skull in the banks of the Misty Hollow.

The old man then explains what the PCs should do to protect themselves from this curse: they must force the dark Spirit to leave their bodies in order to fight it and be rid of it. The best way to do so would be to return to the place where they found the skull and carry out a ritual. This ritual can be carried out during the daytime, but the evil Spirit would then attack them by surprise during the night. It would be wiser to carry out the ritual on the night of the full moon: then the Spirit would have to fight immediately and the PCs would see well thanks to Mother Moon.

To help the PCs, Thaggiaq is willing to give them a little of his old fire. It is inhabited by a very ancient Spirit, and it may be able to help them. The PCs can call upon it when the sun sets by saying "Fire Spirit, Fire Spirit, will you talk with us tonight?". They can also ask it for its help by saying "Fire Spirit, Fire Spirit, your servants humbly request your help". The Spirit can then manifest itself. It will be naturally hostile towards the dark creature and will lend the PCs its magic powers during the combat. If the PCs accept this help then they must build a fire cage (DT 7) to carry the magic embers. If they ask the Bear-men what they want in return for such a gift, they seem to be surprised by the question and simply ask that they be left in peace.

Invoking the Darkness

Old Thaggiaq recommended that the PCs return to the Misty Hollow. If they have the skull with them, they do not actually need to. The PCs can choose to return to the Cave of Purification to carry out the ritual. If, however, they don't have the skull nearby, then they need to go to wherever it is. If they decide to go all the way back to the Hollow, then it takes them almost four days' walk, as the Bear-men's camp is a half day away from the Cave of Purifications. If the PCs have time to sleep before carrying out the ritual then they yet again have incredibly vivid dreams where black saber-toothed tiger cubs appear around them. They are overwhelmed with mixed feelings of both affection and fear. When they wake up, they feel nostalgic for the atmosphere of these dreams, and some of them even seem to be completely disheartened. They must carry out a Test (DT 7) to resist this spell. A Failure will give them a penalty of -1 for all their future Tests, until the blood flows at the beginning of the ritual.



One night (the second night of their journey if they are heading back to the Hollow), or around sunset before they prepare the ritual, the PCs are attacked by a pride of **lionesses** (one per PC). The humans are able to detect the presence of the cats as they approach, although it is difficult (DT9). The lionesses are careful, but they are really set on devouring the PCs. As soon as the combat begins, the PCs can tell that the Strengths of the Black Machairodus have left them (for good). If they brought the Fire Spirit with them, they can only ask for its help if a real camp fire has been lit (a torch or glowing embers won't be enough). The lionesses will flee if three of them are seriously wounded or if two are killed.

The Old Fire Spirit

It lives in the heart of the Bear-men's campfire. When it appears, it can take the appearance of a flaming crow. The Fire Spirit can occupy up to three fires and appear in each of them at the same time.

Dodge 9; **Thick Skin** 0

LP 21

Initiative 4d6

Attacks [2]: Flaming claws 2d6 (1d6+2 Damage);

Small fireball 1d6+2

Large fireball 2d6+4

Running 12, **Alertness** 9

Special Ability:

Fireballs: the fire Spirit can throw large or small fireballs over a distance of up to twenty meters. A small fireball can hit 1 target and cause 1d6+2 Damage Points. A large fireball can explode and cause 2d6+4 Damage Points to all targets within a 3-meter radius. A fireball always hits its target, but the target can reduce the burn Damage by half with a successful Dodge Test (DT 9). The fire Spirit can throw a small fireball once per Round, but after throwing a large fireball, it must wait 1d3 Rounds during which it can only attack with its claws or defend itself.

The lionesses

They are cave lionesses (gray lions) attracted by the call of the Black Machairodus. They stand between 1 and 1.10 m tall at the withers.

Dodge 8

Thick Skin 1

LP 36

Initiative 3d6

Attacks [2]: Claws 3d6 (2d6 Damage)

Bite 3d6 (2d6+1 Damage)

Running 7, Steady Nerves 12,

Alertness 9

The Black Machairodus

The Machairodus is a big cat, extinct in Europe for two hundred thousand years. Its saber-shaped teeth are long, but not as long as those of the Smilodon. It could reach over 1.2 meters at the withers.

The Black Machairodus is a Creature of Darkness. The "normal" characteristics of a machairodus are the same as those of a gray lion, although its bite can inflict 3d6 Damage Points.

Dodge 9

Thick Skin 1

LP 45

Initiative 3d6+1

Attacks [2]: Claws 3d6+1 (3d6 Damage)

Bite 3d6+1 (4d6 Damage)

Running 8, Alertness 10

Special Ability:

The Black Machairodus has all the special abilities and vulnerabilities of a Creature of Darkness:

Terror, Transform into a fog, Life

Drain: see Würm Core Rulebook, page 126, for the details of these powers.

Once they arrive at the Hollow, or the place where they have chosen to carry out the ritual, the PCs can set up a camp. They shiver, feeling a deep cold that chills them to the bone, and they can feel in their tingling senses that the Spirit of the Black Machairodus is growing wary. Old Thaggiaq told them that the ritual should take place as follows:

The PCs must light a great fire using the magic embers, adding dry wood (pine) and green wood (birch). They must shed their own blood into the flames so that the Fire Spirit can get a measure of the dark curse that has infected them. They must then call the Fire Spirit to help them, make a cut across their chests (1 Damage Point each) and let the thick smoke from the green wood purify their blood and their whole body.

The Black Machairodus appears during this last step.

It flows out of the blood seeping from their chest wounds like a black smoke, before taking shape among them and roaring ferociously before attacking them. If the PCs have had time to rest after their combat with the lionesses, or if they are still in pretty good shape, the Creature of Darkness summons two or three new lionesses (two if there are only three PCs). They join the combat after the first two Combat Rounds, during which the Creature of Darkness can wait in its fog form or choose to fight. The Black Machairodus fights until it is destroyed. The lionesses fight to the death, but they will run if the Creature of Darkness is defeated first.

By carrying out this ritual, the PCs are reconnected with the Guardian Spirit of the White Wolf. They also regenerate the Manna pool without even realizing it, adding 1 die per PC +1 die (5 dice for 4 PCs for example). Far away in the distance, they hear a majestic wolf howl. If the PCs are in too dire a situation, the GM can summon Frost and Bear Claws' pack in their defense, but only if the PCs abandoned their prey to the wolves earlier in the scenario.

Once the Creature of Darkness has been killed, its Spirit dissipates and everything becomes peaceful. If the lionesses came to fight and they are still alive, then they immediately flee. The PCs can tend their wounds. Their blood has become red again. If the skull was taken away from the Hollow, it can be buried again or destroyed. The PCs know that the Bear-men of old who suffered the same curse chose

to respect the skull even after their ordeal, and buried it again. It's up to the PCs to choose between wariness, forgiveness and vengeance.

The PCs can now return to their camp, with the ancient Fire Spirit as a trophy. They can take the bodies of any slain lionesses back with them if they wish, and they could even stop to hunt on the way and return to their families with providential gifts. When they arrive at the White Wolf clan's camp, if they defeated the Black Machairodus, then all the sick and wounded clan members are on their way to a complete recovery. The last pregnant woman gives birth to a perfectly healthy baby a few weeks later.

The adventure in the White Wolf camp


What if the PCs decide not to leave their ancestors' camp and impose their will on the rest of the clan? As mentioned before, that choice would cause their relatives to turn away from them and, sooner or later, even attempt to harm them. Some may try to convince them to leave, others may try to murder or poison them. Once the PCs notice the complete loss of the connection with their Guardian Spirit (no more Manna, no more contact), they may try to convince the rest of the clan to accept the Black Machairodus as their new Guardian Spirit. That would be a despicable treason for some, a sad but inevitable change for others. If the PCs have the skull with them, some of their closest relatives, including the Voice of the Ancestors, their fathers or brothers, try to break the skull while the PCs are asleep. Whether or not they manage to, this will not change anything about the curse. For every day the PCs stay in the camp one or two people fall ill, then become unconscious, overwhelmed by a terrible fever.

In the end, nine days after the Elders' Council, the Strengths of the Black Machairodus leave the PCs, and the lionesses come to claim their flesh when the night comes. There are a lot of them, 2 per PC, and they use every ruse to attack their black-blooded prey. If the PCs manage to defeat the lionesses, they may still have time to improvise a quick ritual to try and rid themselves of the influence of the Black Machairodus. One way or another they will have to fight the Creature of Darkness and win if they want to save their own lives and those of their clan members. If they survive the combat they may still have to convince the rest of the clan not to be too hard on them...

Epilogue

If one of the PCs was seriously wounded or killed by one of the lionesses, and if the lioness that attacked him is still alive at the end of the adventure, whether she managed to flee or whether she was voluntarily spared, then – miracle or curse – the impossible will happen. Four months later, the lioness will give birth to a litter of 1d3 black machairodus cubs. The PCs know the lions and lionesses that live in their Tribe Lands. They will soon notice the young creature(s). Strangely enough, the cubs will feel a connection with the humans, due to their “biological father”. After a few months, the young machairodus cubs will be driven out of the pride. If several of them were born and survived, they will set up a little pride of their own, although it will be a short lived one, as the animals are all sterile. If only one machairodus cub is born, then it will try to join the PCs' clan, and ask for their protection. The PCs are therefore free to let it into the camp and keep it as a companion – assuming they can convince the Elders' Council that it won't bring bad luck to the whole clan.

Emmanuel Roudier



Thank you for backing !
May the Good Spirits
be with you.

