

A Personal View of Barbarian Life What My Father Told Me

Who are you?

I am Harek Farthrower, a thane of the Stone Raven Clan.

Who are we?

We are the Stone Raven Clan. When the wife of Joerf the Cursed birthed twins, they split up the tribe and went their different ways, so kin would not fight kin. Our ancestors followed Travec the Seer to these lands. We cleared parts of the forest for our fields and have lived here ever since.

Are we a great people?

The greatest. The world is full of many kinds of people but none can measure up to us. Travec the Seer led us through the Great Forest. When the Elves tried to bar our way, he tricked them in granting him safe passage. He followed a Raven made of green stone to this place, and where it built its nest, he raised his hall. His grandson Jaranek Ironfist knocked out a Yeti with his bare fist and made peace with the wolvern packs. My father traveled to the south and returned with treasure laden thrall girls. I have killed seven men in single combat and 2 concubines warm your mother and me in bed.

Where do we live?

We live in this valley and the next two to the east. All longhouses here belong to families of our clan. Ours was build by my grandfather and his family. Your uncle, his wife, their sons and his thrall live with us here. The north of this valley belongs to us. From the forest down to the creek, where we hunt urox and wild boars. This is the Land Travec gave to our ancestor who followed him. My father cleared the fields on the eastern side of the creek and now they are ours too.

How do we live?

I am a thane, a landed free man of our tribe. This land is held by our family for the clan. In battle I lead five carls, free peasants. While they are free, they are not as wealthy as our family. We plow, and sow and reap what the Earthmother gives

us. Every man plows or wishes to, or works for a thane or a free carl. Our food is wheat, barley and rye. We hunt and fish, and rarely go to bed hungry.

We love cattle for a man's importance and wealth is counted in the cattle he possesses. There have been wars due to it. But normally we only raid cattle from our neighboring tribes, and they try to raid us. It keeps our warriors sharp and the cattle healthy.

For shelter we build longhouses where we live with our families, thralls and livestock. Property is owned either by the clan or by persons. Clan property is all that the clan owns, like the land, or the mill down at the creek or our prize bull. Personal property is all you get on your own, like our cattle, your mothers jewelry or Knee-biter, my axe and my chainmail shirt.

What is important in my life?

You are a member of the clan. Only members of your family and clan can be fully trusted. Only they will always stand beside us, as we will stand beside them. Soon you will have your adulthood rites and the elder women will introduce you into the secrets women do not share with their men. You have already learned to lead a household for your future husband. During the festivals young men will try to impress you with their prowess and sweet words. Do not dishonor yourself and us by giving in too easily. Speak with the other women and discuss your suitors' virtues and wealth.

Do not worry I have set aside a fine dowry for you and young able men will court you, for we are a strong and honorable clan and your future husbands family will be allied with us.

When you die we will bury you in the Earthmother's womb, so your spirit finds its way into her halls and does not linger here. Your children and family will shout your name and list your accomplishments so the Goddess knows that a worthy child returns to her bosom.

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Who rules us?

Thrakir the Bold rules us now, after Caross was killed in an avalanche last year. He knows all the laws and when to sow and when to harvest. He knows the words to make a warrior's blood boil and how to calm them down, when a fight would be unwise.

We are loyal to the chiefs of the Stone Raven clan and we will follow them as long as the old vows are followed. We are bonded by history, tradition and blood and only something terrible and severe – like them kneeling before the orc tribes – would make us break those bonds.

What makes a person great?

All persons can be great if they follow the virtues. Things are bad that try to restrict our traditional ways. Trust your family and friends, honor your elders and betters and they will do the same to you.

What is evil?

Anything that tries to restrict us or to make us follow rigid laws is bad. Anything that tries keeping you from honoring your ancestors and the gods is bad. Anybody that demands to kneel before him or her is bad and must be shown the error of their way.

The old emperors in the south tried to subjugate us, but we killed their soulless soldiers and send them home crying.

What is my lot in life?

Work hard and marry well. Find a good husband who makes your cattle herds grow and fills your belly with many brave sons and daughters. Though men and women are obviously different, there are some who have exchanged their roles and there are shield maidens in every clan's history. When you grow older you will sit in council maybe and help the chief. You will help your children and grandchildren to find mates that will help their families and hopefully make them happy, too.

How do we deal with others?

Our clan is our family, we share the same ancestors. Even the no-good cousins in Yeti vale are blood kin and as long as any of us draws breath, they will not starve.

Friends come next to family they are better than treasure. You are not required to keep friends that are unreliable, you are judged by the friends you keep. Malkar Wolfskinner is a fiend, you know, not kin but I would trust him in a shieldwall or testify for him at the thing.

When you see someone you do not know use the greeting. Anybody who follows their ancestors knows it and if they do not know it you know where they stand. When Malkar traveled the wilds he walked and hunted from the ocean, where the sun settles to cool off, to the hills in the east all knew the greeting and treated him properly.

Be careful with strangers, some are entertaining and most are harmless. Remember that they are different and do not know our ways. Do not get angry lightly when they insult you or act stupidly – they are not guided by the wisdom of their ancestors as we are. You can learn much of them. But if they are enemies fight them fair or foul, and make sure they stay dead!

Who are our enemies?

These days we have two great foes. The mountain orcs are our greater enemies. They are slaves to mighty spirits they call gods. These gods are evil. Their rites are dirty. They seek to destroy everything of our way of life. They kill our men and enslave our women to serve their vile needs in their caves. None are to be trusted.

The Redfall clan is our foe, too. Ever since Dirnagir Firespear stole the kill of a sea serpent from us at Serpent Lake¹ we have been their foes. We bested them at the Battle of the Falls, but they hurt us with the Wyrms' Claw. Curse them and their ancestors.

¹ Serpent Lake is the name of Lake Eld among many barbarian tribes.

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Yeti are a lesser danger, mighty winter spirits they come down from the mountains during the coldest winters and break into the longhouses to feast on our cattle. A yeti's breath can chill a person to the bone, and you need many men to drive them off or even kill them. Jaraneek Ironfist felled a Yeti with his bare fist and its fur still adores the clan's great hall. But during these days Yeti are rare, let's hope it stays this way.

Who are our spirits?

All of the small tribes and most of the great ones follow the path of the Horned Man. During the War of Spirits the dead and the living could not be separated. Ghosts came to their living kin to live among them as they did in life.

Then the Horned Man came to us and he separated the living from the dead. He led them to their rewards after death, and taught us how to contact them. There are a lot of lesser spirits in the lands around us. Not all are the spirits of dead men and women. Other people like wolveren and even the hated orcs have spirits. Certain places have their own spirits, and even animals have spirits. The Horned Man taught us how to make them work for us, but he also taught us how to appease them, because an angry spirit can cause much trouble.

The Earthmother is the mightiest spirit of them all and all spirits of the land serve her. We love and adore her, for she gives us a good harvest, strong cattle and healthy children. You must never insult the Earthmother for her wrath is terrible.

In the south the people worship great powerful spirits they call gods. They build huge shrines for them called temples and the gods have their own slaves, called priest. Be weary of them for those spirits have other needs then our ancestors.

When we feast we leave a bit of food on the plate and some ale in the horns, this is the spirits portion and allows them to enjoy the memories of food and drink. When you fight and cut off a man's head his spirit will not be able to go to the afterlife. So you can keep the wisdom of the killed

away from his clan. While I have killed seven men only two of them were worthy enough to take their heads. You have seen them they hang from the wall behind my chair.

What is there to do around here?

In the spring we plow and sow the fields, and help the cattle with calving. The damage from winter is repaired and runners are sent to the other families of the clan to get news. At the solstice we drive away the last of the winter sprits with a large bonfire, and pairs often wander into the woods to wake lazy spirits with the sounds of life.

For warriors summer is the best time, there is not much to do on the fields. So we train our skills which we use on cattle raids. We do games and dances to hone our bodies and enjoy the long days. One group is send to the Serpent Lake to catch and prepare fish there.

In fall we harvest what we sowed in spring and thank the Earthmother for her bounty at the solstice. While there might be raids only the foolish wage a war in fall when all must work together to brace for the coming of winter.

Winter is a time of darkness when malignant spirits howl around the settlements. Every handful of years it is our turn to represent the clan during the hunt at the Serpent Lake. That's a great opportunity to prove ones mettle and the young warrior are always eager to be chosen.

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