

The Initiation

By Ken Walton

This is intended as an introductory adventure for new RuneQuest characters, who will play young members of an Orlanthi tribe. The adventure can be run with only the core rulebook, though those wishing more details of the cultures involved may wish to refer to *Glorantha: The Second Age*. Text in italics is meant to be read to the players, where appropriate.

Players' Introduction

It is Midsummer's Eve, the middle of the Fire Season. Summer heat beats down, warming the crops and the cattle grazing in the meadows of Sky End Stead, by the Solthi River in the land of Kathaela.

It is the time when the young people of the clan are initiated as warriors. Today, you will set off with your childhood friends and the old priest Forgo on the two day trek to the ancient stone circle in the Trollwood. There you will enter the Hero Plane and re-enact one of the myths of your people. If you are brave and do what is right, you will return with magical rewards and the acclaim of your kin. If you fail, it will be another year before you can try again.

Trek to Trollwood

It is a whole day's journey to the Trollwood from Sky End Stead. Your anxious parents stand at the gate of the stead and wave you off as you cross the River Solthi at the ford. The journey takes you through pasture lands and on into wild heathery moorland, under a blue sky. You come to the shadowy borders of the Trollwood late in the evening, though it never gets really dark on Midsummer's Eve. In the shade of the trees you build a fire, and Forgo tells you the story of Odayla and the Manticore. Then he tells you that tomorrow you will go into the Trollwood, to the old holy place, where you will pass into the Hero Plane and re-enact the myth. You should all try to get some sleep, though someone should stay on watch. He snugs down under his blankets and leaves you to it.

Odayla and the Manticore

The myth that Forgo has chosen for the Adventurers to re-enact is as follows:

Once upon a time, the clan house of Orlanth the Storm God was troubled by a manticore. Every night the great beast, a terrible lion with the face of a man and the tail of a scorpion, attacked the settlement, killing many and eating others alive. After three nights of terror, Orlanth decided something must be done – the manticore had to be tracked to its lair and killed before it could strike again. Immediately, Orlanth's son, Odayla the Hunting God, stood up. "I will hunt the beast!" he said. "Who will follow me?"

There was a silence in the hall. All the warriors looked down and would not meet each other's eyes. They were scared of the creature. Finally, a youth stood up. "I am not yet a warrior," he said. "But if you will arm me, I will go with you and hunt the manticore." Immediately some of his friends stood up too. "We will join you," they said.

"See how the young people shame their fathers!" said Orlanth. "So be it." And Orlanth armed the young people with his own hands. Then Odayla and his young band set off running through the winter snows, up into the mountains, following the tracks of the dreadful beast.

For a whole day they ran, quenching their thirst with handfuls of snow. Finally, they came to a great cave in the hillside. The entrance was strewn with bones and rotting flesh, and a terrible stench wafted out on a cold wind.

Striking a light, Odayla led his young band into the cavern. There was the beast, its eyes glimmering red in the dimness. It leaped at the Hunting God, its poisonous stinging tail stabbing at him. But Odayla rolled aside and escaped it. Then all the hunters attacked it, stabbing with their spears while it slashed

with its mighty claws and stabbed with its tail. Finally, the beast was worn out by its injuries and a mighty blow finished it off.

Then Odayla took the creature's head and they returned to Orlanth's hall. There, all the people gathered, and Odayla was praised as a great hunter. But the most praise went to the young people who had helped him. "Today," said Orlanth, "you became mighty warriors. You are children no more." And he gave them gifts, and they feasted long into the night.

Trollkin!

In the middle of the night, have whoever is on watch make an opposed test using their *Perception* against the trollkins' *Stealth* skill of 40%. If the character wins, he will spot a number of trollkin sneaking out of the woods to attack the Adventurers. If the watchman loses the opposed test, there will be no warning before the trollkin are upon them. There should be one trollkin for each of the Adventurers.

Forgo is too old to fight well and will need to be protected. Or at least, that is the impression he likes to give – if the Adventurers get in real trouble, he will come out fighting with his short sword. But it is the Adventurers' initiation, after all, not his!

If any of the trollkin are captured alive, they will say that they are getting revenge for the humans' attack of the previous night. It will become apparent that someone else is in the Trollwood apart from the Adventurers.

The Holy Place

The following morning, Forgo will lead the Adventurers deep into the Trollwood. This is a dark and spooky place, cold and shadowy even on a summer's day. There are strange sinister bird calls in the distance and mysterious rustlings with no apparent source. The day will get darker



and there will be a rumble of thunder with heavy drops of rain starting to fall though the trees.

Eventually the Adventurers will get to a clearing, in which is a ring of standing stones. The blue sky of yesterday is lost behind heavy storm clouds, and there is lightning in the distance. Forgo says this is a good omen, for are they not members of the Storm Tribe?

Have the Adventurers make a *Perception* roll at the stone circle. If anyone makes it, they will see footprints within the circle of boots with heels – the prints of civilised people, not barbarians or trollkin. (If the Adventurers all fail the roll Forgo will point out the tracks).

Forgo is a little worried at strangers sneaking around an Orlanthi holy place but says

they are here now and should complete their initiation.

Forgo positions you in a circle within the standing stones. He stands outside the ring and begins chanting. The summer storm has been getting heavier, the rain lashing down, and a cold wind is rising. Visibility closes in until you cannot see even the standing stones, only the dim silhouettes of your friends. The cold rain turns to sleet, then snow. Then, with a last icy blast, the snow whirls away and you can see again.

You are no longer standing in a stone circle. Instead, you are in an open space before a wooden clan hall, its roof golden, its eaves carved and painted with warriors, dragons and monsters. Other wooden houses surround you, and beyond is a palisade. Snow lies on the ground, churned up and bloodstained in places. Somewhere, you can

hear a woman sobbing, and from within the clan house come angry shouts.

The Adventurers are standing outside the clan house of Orlanth himself, in the aftermath of an attack by the mantichore. The HeroQuest has begun.

The HeroQuest

The important thing for the Adventurers when performing a HeroQuest is to stay on the plot of the myth – at least until it starts to go wrong. If they do the wrong thing for more than a few rounds, they will find themselves ejected from the myth and standing back in the stone circle in the Trollwood. Forgo will be very disappointed with them, and there will be no feast when they get back to Sky End Stead.

The First Station: The Hall of Orlanth

Have each Adventurer make a *Perception* skill test to notice they are no longer carrying their weapons, which are nowhere to be seen. The Adventurers should be able to figure out from the myth they heard that it is their job to go into the clan hall and volunteer their services to Odayla. They will find themselves in the warm smoky dimness of the clan hall. Orlanth, a mighty bearded warrior, sits at the head of a long trestle table; various other warriors, including Odayla, are sitting round the table, and many others are sitting at other long tables. The Adventurers will notice faces they recognise – warriors of their clan who have been killed in battle, dead grandparents and other relatives. The room is in an uproar and nobody pays them much attention, except some warriors gestures them to a place at one of the benches. They seem to be arguing about who should have been on watch and how well the warriors were prepared to defend the stead against the mantichore. Some have lost loved ones to the creature and are visibly upset.

Suddenly, Orlanth slams his fist on the table and shouts "Quiet!" with a voice literally like thunder. His shout is accompanied by

The Initiation

a flash of lightning from outside. Everyone immediately shuts up. "We have lost enough people to this beast," he says. "Someone must track the creature to its lair and kill it before it strikes again!"

A tall, heavily-muscled warrior stands up. You immediately recognise him as Odayla the Hunting God. "I will hunt the beast! Who will follow me?"

A deeper silence falls over the hall. The warriors do not meet each others' eyes, but stare at the table in front of them.

If the Adventurers volunteer, Orlanth will take weapons down from the wall and give them to the Adventurers. These will appear more or less the same as the weapons they had in the real world, but for each Adventurer, their favoured weapon will be enchanted, adding +5% to weapon skill and +1 to damage.

As soon as they have weapons, the scene will fade away – go to *The Second Station: Hunting*. If the Adventurers do not volunteer, there will be an awkward silence, Orlanth will shake his head sorrowfully, the scene will fade away and the Adventurers will find themselves back at the stone circle.

It is possible the Adventurers might decide to follow the sound of sobbing at the beginning of this scene. If so, they will come across Chalana Arroy, the goddess of healing, tending a woman who has had a leg bitten off by the mantichore. As the Adventurers watch, the leg will regrow before their very eyes. Then Chalana Arroy will turn to them and tell them they have better things to do than watching her work – should they not be with Orlanth in the clan hall? If they still hang around, the scene will fade and they will be back in the stone circle.

Second Station: Hunting

You are running uphill through snowy mountains. Ahead of you, Odayla keeps up a punishing pace. Every now and then he will stop to look at tracks on the ground, but

before you have time to catch your breath, he is off again.

The Adventurers will be running for 20 minutes without a rest through snow. Use the Fatigue rules (*RuneQuest Core Rulebook* page 61) to see how this affects the characters. If any character stops to have a rest, they will drop out of the HeroQuest and be back in the stone circle. Characters will need to make four rolls at a medium level of activity, although the most fatigued a character can get is the wearied level of fatigue.

Eventually the Adventurers will see a dark cave in a rocky cliff-face ahead of them. Move straight on to the Third Station.

The Third Station: Meeting the Mantichore

You stand outside a large cave entrance. The ground is littered with bones, still partly covered with rotting flesh. A foetid wind blows out of the cave, carrying the stench of decay. You have reached the lair of the mantichore.

Let the Adventurers decide what they are doing. Do they have materials on them for making a light? If anyone thought to mention it earlier in the HeroQuest (knowing from the myth that they would be going into a cave) they find they have torches and tinderboxes. If not, Odayla will have a torch in his pack.



Adventurers may also want to rest to reduce their Fatigue before entering the cave. This would require a long rest, but Adventurers may use First Aid skill to recover by one level of Fatigue. Allow the Adventurers 10 minutes to get ready to go into the cave, then spring the Surprise Attack on them. If they look like going into the cave without a rest spring the Surprise Attack on them earlier just before they enter.

Surprise Attack

As you are about to enter the cave, there is sudden flurry of arrows from behind some rocks to the left of the cave. One of them strikes Odayla solidly in the chest and he goes down. Four warriors in furs spring from behind the rocks, swords drawn, and rush at you. There is something wrong about them. They should not be here!

The four warriors are God Learner adventurers; their leader, the sorcerer Baylis who brought them into the Hero Plane, is hiding behind the rocks. The party are now, of course, in combat. Odayla is not dead, but has a Serious chest wound.

Keep track of where the combat is in relation to the body, as Baylis will attempt to run out and loot Odayla's body for the god's weapons if he gets the chance. If he succeeds in getting the god's famous hunting bow his own HeroQuest is over, and he and his warriors will fade away.

Allow the Adventurers a couple of rounds of combat with the warriors, then read or paraphrase the following:

Suddenly, above the clashing of swords, you hear a terrible roar! With a mighty leap, the manticore bounds out of the cave, and is upon you. Its body is that of a maned and tawny lion: its face is that of a cruel and ferocious man, with sharp pointed teeth in an oversized mouth. The sinister stinging tail of a scorpion arches above its back.

At this point the God Learners will retreat, leaving the fight to the Adventurers, though Baylis will continue to try to snatch Odayla's weapons if given the chance. This should be a difficult fight, and if this is the players' first game you may need to remind them about their Hero Points! If the manticore manages to get to the body of Odayla, it will begin trying to devour it, while holding off the Adventurers with its stinging tail.

Eventually, the Adventurers should be triumphant, though probably somewhat bloody. Odayla will need healing and the arrow removing before he regains consciousness. He will praise the Adventurers for their heroism in killing the manticore, and will insist on removing its head to take back to the stead. If questioned about the God Learners, he will be dismissive, claiming they were probably mountain bandits. They were not part of the myth and so not really within his understanding. He will lift the manticore's head and say "Come. We must return home. There will be feasting in Orlanth's hall tonight!"

The scene will fade, and the Adventurers will go onto the Fourth Station.

The Fourth Station: The Feast

You are back in Orlanth's clan hall, and the mood is very different from what it was the last time you were here. There is food and drink, laughter and singing. The head of the manticore is hung on the wall at the end of the hall and everyone is joyful. Orlanth bangs on the table, and raises his goblet to you. "To the Manticore Band!" he shouts. "The heroes of the day! They went out children and came back adults. The Manticore Band!" Everyone raises the goblets to you and cheers.

Then Odayla stands up and says "I have gifts for the heroes." He reaches out and touches each of the characters on the

forehead, and they can feel his power course through them..

Every character will become runetouched at this point, some will receive the benefit of an Earth Rune, others the benefit of a Beast Rune, as best suits the Adventurers, at Games Master's discretion. Once these have been given, the HeroQuest fades, and the Adventurers are back in the Trollwood.

Aftermath

Once the Adventurers return to the real world, they will find the storm is over. Any wounds taken in the HeroQuest are healed, their magical weapons are no longer magical and they each are runetouched in recognition of their driving off the Godlearners in addition to facing down the manticore.

Forgo appears not to be around at first, but he will come out from hiding up a tree. It seems the remaining God Learners (those not killed by the Adventurers) came through the stone circle some time ago and headed off southward. The Adventurers may wish to follow – this would be a whole new adventure, possibly the beginning of a campaign, as the Adventurers track the God Learners and try to get back any items they stole from Odayla, which would become holy relics of the tribe. But Forgo will discourage them, saying they have been heroic enough for one day, and urge them to return to Sky End Stead.

The return home will be uneventful, and the Adventurers, assuming they performed properly in the HeroQuest, will be asked to tell their stories. Then they will be hailed as new adults of the clan, and known forever after as the Manticore Band, after their exploits in defeating both the manticore and the God Learners. There will be much feasting at Sky End Stead that night.

The Initiation

Non Player Characters

Forlo (God Speaker of Sky End Stead)

Forlo is getting old, though his thin, sinewy body is still strong. He often travels about Kethaela, keeping alive the old ways of the Orlanthi in the face of new beliefs such as the dragon worship of the Empire of Wyrms's Friends, but always returns to Sky End Stead for the Fire Season (summer) initiation ceremony.

Quote: *What would Orlanth do?*

Forlo, Acolyte of Orlanth Adventurous

		D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	12	1–3	Right Leg	0/5
CON	11	4–6	Left Leg	0/5
SIZ	10	7–9	Abdomen	0/6
INT	15	10–12	Chest	0/7
POW	12 (15)	13–15	Right Arm	0/4
DEX	14	16–18	Left Arm	0/4
CHA	14	19–20	Head	0/5
Combat Actions	3	Typical Armour	None	
Damage Modifier	0	Traits	—	
Magic Points	12 (15)	Skills	Athletics 53%, Evade 46%, Evaluate 34%, Healing 53%, Influence 54%, Lore (Orlanth) 68%, Lore (World) 45%, Perception 61%, Persistence 47%, Resilience 36%, Survival 38%, Unarmed 45%	
Movement	8m	Combat Styles	Sword 67%	
Strike Rank	+15	Equipment	Short Sword, Healer's Kit, Bedroll	
		Common Magic 58%	Bladesharp 3, Mobility 2, Thunder's Voice 3	
		Divine Magic	Pact (Orlanth Adventurous) 41%; Dismiss Magic, Flight, Elemental Summoning (sylph)	

Weapons

Type	Size	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Short Sword	M	S	1D6	6/8

The Trollkin

A ragged band of wild trollkin looking to avenge themselves on the humans who attacked their homes earlier. They are like most of their kin, weak in combat and cowardly.

Quote: *Please don't hurt me. I good enlo.*

		1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	7	1-3	Right Leg	1/5
CON	11	4-6	Left Leg	1/5
SIZ	10	7-9	Abdomen	1/6
INT	10	10-12	Chest	1/7
POW	11	13-15	Right Arm	1/4
DEX	14	16-18	Left Arm	1/4
CHA	7	19-20	Head	1/5
Combat Actions	2	Typical Armour	Thick skin (AP 1)	
Damage Modifier	-1D2	Traits	Darksense, Dark Sight	
Magic Points	11	Skills	Athletics 42%, Evade 42%, Perception 40%, Persistence 43%, Resilience 43%, Stealth 40%, Survival 35%	
Movement	8m	Combat Styles	Club 35%, Spear and Shield 33%, Sling 30%	
Strike Rank	+12			

Weapons

Type	Size	Reach	Damage	AP/HP	Range
Club	M	S	1D6-1D2	4/4	—
Shortspear	M	L	1D8+1-1D2	4/5	—
Buckler	M	S	1D3-1D2	6/8	—
Sling	L	—	1D8-1D2	1/2	200m

The Manticore

A beast of legend it is highly aggressive, giving no quarter in battle.

Quote: *Roar!*

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	4D6+12	26	1-2	Right Hind Leg	3/10
CON	4D6+6	20	3-4	Left Hind Leg	3/10
SIZ	4D6+12	26	5-6	Tail	3/10
INT	7	7	7-9	Hindquarters	3/11
POW	3D6	11	10-12	Forequarters	3/11
DEX	3D6	11	13-14	Right Front Leg	3/11
			15-16	Left Front Leg	3/10
			17-20	Head	3/10
Combat Actions	3	Typical Armour	Tough Hide. No Armour Penalty		
Damage Modifier	+1D12	Traits	Night Sight, Poison Sting		
Magic Points	11	Skills	Athletics 60%, Evade 45%, Perception 55%, Persistence 43%, Resilience 70%, Stealth 40%, Survival 40%, Track 40%		
Movement	10m	Combat Styles	Claw 70%, Gore 50%, Sting 40%		
Strike Rank	+13				

Weapons

Type	Size	Reach	Damage	AP/HP	Range
Claw	M	M	1D6+1D12	As for Leg	—
Gore (tusks)	M	T	1D8+1D12	As for Head	—
Sting	M	VL	1D6+1D12+Posion	As for Tail	—

The Initiation

Baylis (God Learner Sorcerer)

Baylis is an ambitious young sorcerer, determined to rob other cultures' myths of their magic for his own personal power. He is quite handsome and charming, but there is a ruthless look in his eyes. He is also quite cowardly, this being one of his first forays into HeroQuesting, and as such he will not risk his life by bringing attention to himself. He will just stand at the back and attempt to steal Odayla's weapons if he gets the opportunity.

Quote: *Odayla is just a semi-sentient manifestation of a primal hunting rune currently unknown to God Learner science.*

		D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	8	1-3	Right Leg	0/5
CON	11	4-6	Left Leg	0/5
SIZ	10	7-9	Abdomen	3/6
INT	15	10-12	Chest	3/7
POW	14	13-15	Right Arm	3/4
DEX	13	16-18	Left Arm	3/4
CHA	11	19-20	Head	0/5
Combat Actions	3	Typical Armour	Malkioni Armour of Faith (3 AP Abdomen, Chest, Arms)	
Damage Modifier	-1D2	Traits	—	
Magic Points	14	Skills	Athletics 34%, Evade 46%, Evaluate 44%, Influence 36%, Lore (Malkioni Theology) 68%, Lore (World) 55%, Perception 40%, Persistence 58%, Resilience 46%, Survival 32%	
Movement	8m	Combat Styles	Rapier 38%	
Strike Rank	+11 (+14)	Equipment	Jrustelan Rapier, Malkioni Armour of Faith, 4D6 silver, 2D6x10 copper	
		Sorcery	Manipulation 35%, Lost Truths Grimoire 58%: Cast Back, Palsy	

Weapons

Type	Size	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Jrustelan Rapier	M	L	1D8-1D2	5/8



God Learner “Mountain Bandits”

These ruffians like to think of themselves as Knowledge Questers for the Middle Sea Empire, but they are merely hired toughs, providing the muscle for Baylis's plundering of other people's myths.

Quote: *Shall we kill 'em, boss?*

		D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	13	1–3	Right Leg	1/5
CON	12	4–6	Left Leg	1/5
SIZ	11	7–9	Abdomen	1/6
INT	12	10–12	Chest	1/7
POW	10	13–15	Right Arm	1/4
DEX	10	16–18	Left Arm	1/4
CHA	10	19–20	Head	0/5
<i>Combat Actions</i>	2	<i>Typical Armour</i>	Soft Leather (AP 1, all locations except Head)	
<i>Damage Modifier</i>	+0	<i>Traits</i>	—	
<i>Magic Points</i>	10	<i>Skills</i>	Athletics 38%, Disguise 30%, Evade 39%, Evaluate 33%, Lore (World) 50%, Perception 35%, Persistence 38%, Resilience 32%, Riding 36%, Stealth 35%, Survival 45%, Unarmed 53%	
<i>Movement</i>	8m	<i>Combat Styles</i>	Sword 48%, Bow 45%	
<i>Strike Rank</i>	+9 (+11)	<i>Equipment</i>	War Sword, Leather Shirt & Trews, 3D6 silver	

Weapons

<i>Type</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Reach</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>AP/HP</i>	<i>Range</i>
War sword	M	M	1D8	6/10	—
Short Bow	L	—	1D6	4/4	80m