



waist with fresh blood. Finally, the Fimm who have been holding the captive push or throw the corpse into the water. The whole ceremony is conducted with a calm, controlled dignity in silence or with low rhythmic chanting; only the victim raves or screams; his cries are limited by the rope choking him and then suddenly cut short when he is hit across the head.

This monthly sacrifice under the full moon serves two purposes. Firstly, it honours the memory of Fimúl at the time when he is believed to be most watchful of his children (the full moon representing his open eye). Secondly, it represents an act of revenge against Humanity for what the men of the Waterland did to Fimúl. Despite the brutality and symbolic vengeance of the ritual, it is conducted in a solemn, dignified manner, with no sense of excitement. Outsiders, especially those who've had the misfortune to witness sacrificial rites by the followers of Chaos, are likely to be confused or perhaps more greatly horrified by the apparent lack of passion and enthusiasm shown by the Fimir. Although the Fimir consider this monthly sacrifice hugely important, they cannot find much joy in it. The memory of Fimúl's ancient murder is a bitterly sad one for them, and they know the deaths of a few Humans can never bring him

The Tale of Fimúl's Murder

Hear me now as I remind you, children of the soil and rain, of the terrible tale of the Father's death at the cruel hands of the men of the Waterland.

The men of the Waterland were jealous of the love Maris had shown to Fimúl, and hated him for it. The men came together as one and bound our Father and tied a rope around his neck, and led him out into the desolate places of the Waterland. Where the earth was mossy and sodden they brought him, and at the edge of the water they beat his head with sticks and stones until he almost forgot who he was and almost forgot whom he loved and almost forgot his dear children. But even as he sought to remember these things, the men of the Waterland tightened the rope around his neck so he could not shout the names of those he most cared for. Not satisfied with this cruelty, the men of the Waterland drew a blade and slashed Fimúl's throat from side to side so that his blood poured onto the earth and into the water. Finally, they took his body and heaved it into the mud of the Waterland, too foolish and too unthinking to know how fitting a place it was for Fimúl's body to lie. There the Father sank into the earthy waters and rested.

We are the children of Fimúl, and of Maris, and we shall not forget our Father or the cruelty done unto him by the men of the Waterland. Our remembrance of him will heal him and strengthen him, and in time he will return to us. Be glad, for he may already have returned to Maris the Mother, ruling with her in her castle on the Wandering Island where one day we shall all live together.

back to them (although some Fimir storytellers optimistically suggest otherwise - see the conclusion of **The Tale of Fimúl's Murder**).

Perhaps surprisingly, sacrifices are rarely ever made to Maris. One rare exception is when an old Meargh decides it is time for her apprentice to take over from her (all but a tiny few Meargh however, prefer to drop dead of old age first). This sacrifice is very different from the one described above. The whole clan, probably Daemons and elementals (especially water elementals) and possibly Meargh or their representatives from other clans all assemble on the night of a half moon, when Maris and Fimúl are considered equally watchful. The rite is a very simple one, carried out in silence or with a low, murmured chant. The Meargh to die is led out into the marsh, or the waters of a lake, river or sea, by her apprentice. The Meargh turns to her clan and those others assembled (who cease their chant) and says her farewell and tells a story of Maris and Fimúl that seems relevant to her at that point. Then, the Meargh lies down in the water and her apprentice holds her under until she drowns. The apprentice, now Meargh of her clan, orders a short period of silent reflection, before initiating celebratory death rites for the drowned Meargh.

Death Rites

Although not sacrifices in the usual sense, Fimir death rites share some similarities with the monthly sacrifice, specifically that they are whole-clan events, involve putting the body into the marsh or water and Daemons are likely to be invited to attend. The deceased's body, however it died, is viewed as an offering of sorts to Maris and Fimúl; 'gone to Maris' or 'gone to Fimúl' are common Fimir euphemism for death, as are 'gone into the marsh' or 'gone to sea'. Bodies are wrapped in the best available materials and put into the water swiftly but with reverence. Even if the clan is short of resources, Fimm with armour and weapons take them with them, and the same is true for the sacrificial blades of the Dirach and Meargh. Shearl craftsmen are sent with the tools of their trade. Most Fimir believe the dead go to be with Maris and Fimúl, but only a few believe strongly in the idea of the Wandering Island as a Fimir heaven.

Despite their often morose or dour natures, Fimir prefer to celebrate the deceased's life rather than mourn its passing (this might seem normal for us, but it is not yet a fashionable idea for most Older Worlders still influenced by the imagery of Mórr and his priests). It is an opportunity for storytelling, and the more significant the individual within the clan, the longer the rites can go on - death rites for a Meargh can last for days, led by the new Meargh and even attended by other Meargh, especially ones who had dealings with the departed in life. Even a Shearl's passage into the marsh can last the night if he had acquired a reputation.

Magical Sacrifices

In addition to religious sacrificial rites, sacrifices are sometimes performed as part of magical workings. Whilst spell ingredients are not essential, sacrifice of intelligent living creatures can boost the chances of a spell succeeding and may be essential components for specific rituals. Sacrifices during spell casting are quick and simple, with minimal ritual. A bound victim is swiftly killed with a large sacrificial dagger, throat cut or stabbed up under the sternum into the heart.

Punishment Sacrifices

Fimir who commit the severest of crimes, such as attacking the Meargh, advocating certain heresies, betraying their clan or worshipping Chaos, become victims of another ancient sacrificial rite: burning alive at the stake. Even the bodies of such criminals already dead are burnt in this fashion. Burnings are typically conducted as far away from water as the Fimir can reasonably travel, preferably on a rocky outcrop. Burning, distance from water and moonless nights are key ritual elements. The purpose of punishment sacrifices is to symbolically sever any link between the Fimir being punished and the element of water, and with it any connection to the Waterland and Maris. With the absence of a moon, Fimúl the father, too, turns away from the criminal. Sometimes, especially despised criminals (such as those who have turned to Chaos) are taken into deep caves, mines or abandoned underground strongholds to be burnt where even rainwater cannot touch their ashes.

Such sacrifices are rare and lack the formality of the monthly Fimir sacrifices remembering Fimúl the Father. The criminal is brought, usually bound at the wrists, to the place of execution and tied to a stake. If a convenient tree is available, the criminal is tied to it (some large, tough trees that can survive the flames have been used several times down the centuries, giving rise to local legends). Firewood and dried grasses are piled up around the criminal and set on fire. Usually the burning is conducted and observed by a small party of Fimm and a Dirach, but if it is a Dirach who is being punished then all the clan's Dirach and possibly the Meargh attend, just in case the victim's magical abilities or Daemonic friends cause trouble.

Given these executions usually take place away from Fimir lands (which are usually too close to water) they may be witnessed by non-Fimir. A strange fire might be seen one night atop a distant hill and prompt an investigation. Or a party of travellers could come across the burnt, blackened remains of several strange skeletons. Or some adventurers might even encounter a burning just about to take place and decide to rescue the apparent victim, little suspecting those Fimir with the flaming torches were probably about to do the world a favour.

Slaying the Father: Fimir Heresies

As with any belief system, there are those who interpret those beliefs differently or tell variations and additional stories

shedding a different light on events and individuals in them. Very, very few Fimir reject their myths altogether: even the few that turn to Chaos are able to reinterpret the myths to incorporate the Chaos powers. For example, Fimúl the Mud God is easily presented as a Daemon prince of Nurgle, or Maris as a servant of Slaanesh who summoned Fimúl to satisfy her dark lusts. However, those particular ideas are abominable enough to drive other Fimir to war with the heretics, who will be lucky if they are simply slaughtered and burnt. On the other hand, there are heresies that are tolerated to a greater or lesser extent by different clans, beliefs that may be held personally and privately by individual Meargh and Dirach, or discussed during theological discussion, or adopted by whole clans. Most Fimir may frown on these ideas and reject them, but they rarely lead to anything more than a war of words.

One unusual heresy concerns the nature of the race's father, Fimúl. Some Fimir clans believe he was a servant of a good god, an angel who dared to fall in love with a Human. The result of this doomed relationship was the Fimir, a race of monsters consumed with a self-loathing that soon twisted into a hatred for all others. For this crime, Fimúl fell from favour with his god, who cast him out. Fimúl fell into the marsh and sank without trace, seeking to hide his shame. For this reason, the Fimir have always sought to hide themselves from the sight of others in places where they can be close to their father. Some Fimir who believe this to be a truer account of their race's origin believe it is possible for them to redeem their father in the eyes of his god by rejecting evil and performing acts of good. Of course, they are severely hampered by their physical ugliness in the eyes of other races, their terrible reputation and appalling need to abduct and rape women to ensure their race's survival. Unsurprisingly, it is rare for a clan to choose this path, and it typically results in bitter disappointment if not disaster. These clans usually have to be content with treating their captives as best they can under the circumstances, and performing the odd good deed in secret, such as guiding lost travellers out of the marsh by scaring them away from danger. Individual Dirach who truly believe they can bring their father redemption have been known to leave their clans and travel into Human lands seeking to do good wherever they can. Martyrdom is their likely destiny. A variation on this heresy also says that the father was a good being, but tremendously ugly. The Fimir were cast out of the Waterland for their appearance, *not* for any inherent evil (people could not bear to live alongside anything so repulsive). It was only because they could not grow their own food in the lands left to them or bear children of their own that they turned to theft and kidnapping. When they turned to evil, their father was cast out too for bringing this scourge into the world. Unlike the first version of 'The Good Father' heresy, this version places the blame for Fimir behaviour firmly in the hands of Humans, arguing that it was the rejection of the Fimir by their sibling race that forced them to descend to rape, murder and theft to