

AFTER THE WAR OF DREAMS

When the laws of the Second Dream which the Fianrada denied were released and the essence of the First Dream forever banished and forced to comply with the laws of the Second Dream, so too was the essence of the First Dream which had long rested over the Second Dream dissipated. The Runic Energy, so long relied on by the Ullratha and the Rune Dukes, was gone from this Dream. As long prophesied by Brin Lansa, only "*the nine caskets that hold lore lost*" still held onto the runic energy of the First Dream. This was something of a poetic licence – the Ar Spirits could still form equivalent runic energies using the spark of creation within them and the Erith Thane Sentinels were so deeply bound with runes, they never relied on any external source – however it mostly held true that very little remained of the runic energy of the First Dream within the Second Dream.

With the runic energy gone, the Ullratha and other Rune Wielders who had relied on this energy for so long found themselves troubled. Each one's remaining runic energy was all that was left; no more would their runic potential recharge itself at midnight from the surrounding area. Also any runic items or bound abilities were similarly affected – anything which previously relied on recharging from the surrounding area at midnight would no longer do that; everything runic which had previously had a daily quota was now a consumable resource. The Chaos Rune Wielders started to sense a chance to move – their Gloranthan-based runes were native to the Second Dream and they faced no such hindrance.

Returning at this time, Odin – who had long past told those who sought him out that he would only return to being a Rune Duke rather than a God at the right time – recovered his Rune Casket from the Altar of The Temple of the Dark Earth Mother in Hrothgar Gap, where it had been left for safe-keeping and once more took up the mantle of Voden, Rune Duke of Tigers Maw. Knowing that it was time to move swiftly, before anyone took advantage of the weakened Ullratha Knights, he ordered a number of adventurers to travel down into Sunswallow and there to find the forge of the Rune Duke Dystygir. They were to inform him it was also time to return and lead Boars Tusk and that Voden and the other Dukes required his assistance at this time. He was currently uncontactable, so the direct approach would be required. While the adventurers travelled the dark caverns and corridors of Sunswallow, Voden spoke with the other Rune Dukes and outlined the information which had been whispered to him by Mimir. Returning successfully with Dystygir, Voden then explained the details of the plan that the Dukes had come up with using Voden's information.

Azaduke had already proven some if it, by recharging himself and his Legion by using his Rune Casket to refresh the bound runes in him which had been drained by Mortagyre. Combining this information with the portable rune sources taken from the Gloranthan Rune-wielding Knights of Genetic Purity, Voden explained he could attune them to instead be able to channel and hold the runic energy in their caskets. Dystygir would be required to then work on creating more of these rune sources, enough for all the Legions. By placing these sources in the caskets, each source would absorb sufficient energy to provide a runic source for an Ullratha to use their runes for 24 hours after accessing the source. After 24 hours the source would become drained and require refreshing by resting for 24 hours inside a casket. Each source would be attuned to a specific Legion, so each Legion's casket would become a vital source of their runic power. Each Ullratha must be careful to keep their portable source, as without it they would be unable to use any of their runic potential. Voden had no such solution for the newer Legion of Phoenix Flame, as without a Duke or Casket there was no such source of power for them. It was said that some of the Rune Dukes felt little for this, seeing the new Legion as an attempt to steal power that was rightly theirs, but some recognised that certain members of Phoenix Flame had potential and applications for other Legions were considered, in particular for the recently reduced ranks of Hel Hounds and Eagle's Wing – although most for Hel Hounds as Azaduke was not one who felt much sympathy for Phoenix Flame but Phos, as the Priest of the group, was more pragmatic.

THE ULLRATHA KNIGHTS

There are a number of legions within the Ullratha. When a player wishes to play an Ullratha Knight first they must consult with a referee, and once you have been given the OK to start a Ullratha Knight, you will then adventure as a warrior until 3rd rank. When at 3rd rank, and assuming all has gone well, you will be assigned a legion of the Ullratha Knights order.

Legion	Specialty Purpose	Rune Duke	Duchy
Bearsark	Berserkers	Vengence	Parvien
Boars Tusk	Heavy Assault	Dystygir	Caerleon
Catspaw	Command	Utterdark	Draconsmere
Dragons Fire	Guard Unit	Omburan	Haven
Eagles Wing	Speed Assault	Azaduke	Garda
Hawks Claw	Marines	Dignity	Region
Hel Hounds	Siege Unit	Phos	Amatyr
Tigers Maw	Heavy Assault	Voden	Ainsfarle
Wolfs Fang	Speed Recon	Flitch	Valsinglas

Akaidai, the "10th legion", are not available to start as they are dedicated to the destruction of the Rune Dukes! Although available, Catspaw legion are also restricted compared to the other legions.

Each legion has access to certain runeforms, tailored for their speciality purpose. These runeforms are actually small straight-line drawings, and form the basis of your teaching from your rune-priest. As a Rune wielder, you will have Rune points. These are used to 'buy' your runeforms, and are also the number of Runes points available for casting the runeforms, as runes, in any given day.

Most runeforms have a set cost of rune points and you may buy any runeform which is available to you, but they must be bought in numerical order, i.e. you must buy Raunensong 1 before you can buy Raunensong 2, and so on. Once you have learnt a runeform, you may 'cast' it as many times as you wish, provided you have enough rune points remaining to cast it. This takes the form of drawing the runeform in the air, investing some of your daily rune points into the rune.

Unlike buying the runeforms, the casting of a high level runeform as a rune only requires you to spend the points for the rune level you wish to cast. If you wish to cast a high level Raunensong, for instance, you only need to spend rune points on the level which you are casting, and do not need to cast the lesser versions which you know, i.e. whilst it costs 10 Rune Points to learn the runeform for Raunensong IV, you need also spend 4 rune points to cast it.

Some runeforms, known as the 'falls', behave differently. Once bought, you may cast these runeforms up to *double your casting rank* to a maximum of the 10th level rune. Absorption, for instance, costs 1 rune point to buy, but you may cast it with as many rune points as you like, provided this is less than or equal to double your level (and not more than 10). A 4th rank Ullratha Knight with Absorption, for instance, may spend from 1 to 8 rune points on this. At 6th rank, he may spend from 1 to 10 runes on a single casting.

All runes, unless specified otherwise, last for 5 minutes or 1 encounter per rune point spent on their casting, whichever is longer, except for Absorption. Ullratha Knights may only cast their runeforms on themselves or their bonded pair Knight. Rune Priests may cast their runeforms on whomever they see fit!

All runeforms have a range of touch except for the disenchantment runeforms, which have a range of 30 feet; Blast has a unique range. The disenchantment runeforms are Bladedull, Weakness, Standstill and Slow Other.

When the runeforms are cast as runes, they can be stacked on themselves. Note that the most recent rune to be cast will work first against any attack, thus an Absorption V followed by a Reflection 3 will have the Reflection try to protect first, then the Absorption. Only 1 copy of any rune may be stacked on a target at any one time, however (1 Absorption rune, 1 Reflection Rune, 1 Strength Rune, etc.).

The runeforms Raunensong, Strength and Speedself may be reversed into Bladedull, Weakness and Slow-Other respectively as often as is required – provided that both of each runeform pair is known. If only 1 part of each reversible runeform is known, that runeform cannot be reversed by the caster.

How They Work

Absorption

This runeform is one of the 'falls', and is special in that it lasts for 24 hours (unless depleted). Absorptions are used to 'soak' damage and spell levels cast at the recipient. For each rune point invested into the drawing of the rune, an *Absorption* is raised which can stop 1 Hit of damage (6LPs), or 1 level of spell up to Mantic 2, using up that *Absorption*. This effect will attempt to absorb all spells, beneficial or detrimental.

Absorptions apply before armour, and absorb damage in 6 life-point blocks. Even if only a single life-point damage is inflicted per blow, 1 block of 6LPs will be used to absorb this. If the recipient has a spell cast on them, the absorption will attempt to negate the spell at a rate of 1 *Absorption* per spell level. If enough Absorptions are present to cancel the spell's level, the spell will be cancelled and the Absorptions will be used. If not enough Absorptions are in place to cancel the spell's level completely, the spell will affect the target as normal; if the spell deals damage, however, the remaining Absorptions may yet completely negate some or all of the damage!

Absorptions can be used against most forms of life-point damage (including spells which cannot be negated), but spells which are more powerful than Runic simply cut through the Absorptions and cannot be negated. Absorptions are always completely dispersed by Absolute damages used against them, i.e. Cut to Bleed, Crushing Blow, but the absolute is stopped by the dispersing Runic energy. Take heed that a Poleaxe can cut through the *Absorption* and will not be stopped in this fashion!

Absorptions will not negate a spell that does not target them, such as area effect spells, unless they are the chosen target. A *Firestorm* will not be cancelled (although the lifepoints damage will be taken from the Absorptions), but a *Fireball* centred on a target with enough Absorptions up will negate the spell (completely). Spells which are *Mass* spells, such as *Mass Trip*, can be negated by the Absorptions, but this does not stop the spell completely; only for the person with Absorptions up. Visual or audible spells (affect through sight or sound) cannot be negated by Absorptions.

M3 or higher absolutes will drop all Absorptions *and* deal the absolute through them.

Bearsark Berserk

This runeform is special in that it is learned automatically when a Bearsark has 3 or more rune points. Bearsark Berserk is not available to any other Legion. This runeform places the target in a martial rage, much like the innate Ullratha berserk. The rune lasts for 15 minutes or until all FOE are dead. Runes may be cast whilst in Bearsark Berserk. While in this berserk, the Bearsark completely ignores all damage and effects of a Physical nature. Half affect all Mantic 1 and 2 stacking on the berserk. All (full) damage and damaging effects from Mantic 3 stack on the Berserk, the exception to this is Mantic 3 Spirit - Astral - this will cut through the berserk and affect fully. Mantic 4 and 5 full affect through the berserk. The Bearsark is able to resist 1 Mantic 4 damaging blow or effect per Ullratha Level. Only something such as warp weapons, Deathweave and the like will stop a Bearsark mid-flow when they are enraged!

NB - if the Bearsark suffers a loss of sight such as blindness or darkness, they will drop out of berserk in to a 5 second wind down instead of the usual unconsciousness. During this time they may apply healing.

Bladedull I-VI

The runeform *Bladedull* disenchant a weapon to deal less damage for the duration. The number of lifepoints of disenchantment granted by this rune is equal to the *Bladedull* level of the rune plus 1, multiplied by itself. A *Bladedull III* will therefore disenchant a weapon by $(3+1=4)^2=16$ LPs. The detrimental effect can make a weapon

deal OLPs if the disenchantment is large enough. Weapons of greater power than Runic are not affected by this disenchantment.

Bless

The runeform *Bless* grants the target 2 points of Runic AC. *Bless* is only available to Rune Priests and is automatically learned as a 24 Hour version (costing 1 rune point) when the Rune Priest is 5th level and as a Permanent version (costing 2 rune points) at 8th level.

Communication I-II

The runeform *Communication I* allows the caster to contact someone they know, sending them a short message to which a single one-word answer can be given. *Communication II* is similar, but allows a short answer to be given, rather than a single word. The message must still be spoken out-loud, and is by no means inaudible.

Curse

By calling out "I curse you now by the power of the Rune Dukes" and striking this runeform into the air, the Ullratha Knight may curse a target with -2 Runic AC. This effect can be stacked, and can be used to strip away enemies Runic Protections before *Rune Blasting* them. The curse normally lasts for 24 hours, but in the hands of a Rune Priest, this curse can be made permanent. (It is not possible to stack permanent curses from the same Rune Priest.)

Gate

This runeform is special in that it is learned automatically when a rune-wielder has 6 or more rune points. The rune summons a gate in front of the caster to a known location, which may either be a unique object known by the caster (i.e. all Ullratha tabards are unique for this reason, and gate points are usually an intricate pattern drawn or carved into the ground) or within line of sight. The gate will close after 6 people have travelled through it, or when 30 minutes has passed.

Ghost

This runeform is special in that it costs 1 irrevocable rune point to learn/cast (from both daily castable rune points and towards the total number of runeforms which can be purchased by the rune-wielder) and then lasts until the rune-wielder is killed. At that point, the rune-wielder may choose to return as a Runic Ghost provided that their spirit is still in their body (within 3 days). The rune-wielder is never forced to use their Ghost.

A Runic Ghost has the same stats and abilities as the rune-wielder before their death, but they are totally healed when they return. A Runic Ghost will last for up to a year and a day. A Runic Ghost is formed from pure Runic energy and as such is immune to Physical, Mantic 1 and Mantic 2 damage and effects and to ALL Psionics, as they do not have a mind which can be targeted in that sense. The exception to this is that they can still affect themselves with their own runes. They take full effect from any higher Mantics. A Runic Injunction or Coup De Grace will immediately dissipate the Runic Ghost.

As per standard returner rules, Up to 8th level (6th level Ullratha) all runes (or other casting) are once ever. Between 9th and 11th level (7th-9th level Ullratha) all runes (or other casting) will reboot once. After 12th level (10th level Ullratha), the Runic Ghost becomes of unlimited duration and all runes, etc return as per normal.

Even if resurrected, the rune point expended in buying *Ghost* will never return, and a further point must be spent irrevocably to gain a new Runic Ghost returner.

NB if the ghost is struck with Nightmare Damage then the ghost is instantly destroyed

Heal

The runeform *Heal* is a 'fall'. The amount of life-points healed by drawing this runeform is equal to the level of the rune plus one, multiplied by itself. A *Heal VIII* would heal $(8+1=9)^2= 81$ LPs. This healing is Runic in nature, and may affect things otherwise immune to healing.

Protection

The runeform *Protection* is one of the 'falls' listed above. The target receives 1 point of Runic AC for each rune point that is used to draw the rune. The normal armour cap applies to armour granted by this protective rune.

Raunensong I-VI

The runeform *Raunensong* enchants a non-enchanted weapon to deal Runic damage for the duration. The number of lifepoints of Runic enhancement granted by this rune is equal to the *Raunensong* level of the rune plus 1, multiplied by itself. A *Raunensong III* will therefore enchant a weapon to deal $(3+1=4)^2=+16$ LPs Runic. As a temporary weapon enhancement, this damage may be above stress resistance but is still limited by system's max damage.

Reflection I-V

This runeform places a field of reflective Runic energy around the target, which will bounce back attacks sent at it. It reflects any melee blow or ranged attack to whatever location was struck by the offender and will also reflect spells of Mantic 2 or lower back at the caster. The damage dealt to the transgressor is Runic, and bonus damage which would have been inflicted *if* the blow had struck is **not** reflected. For example, if an ice creature is struck with a Flaming Quad instead of a Flaming Double because ice creatures normally take double effect from fire, this would reflect back as a Runic Double because the blow never actually landed. Similar effects which multiply damage (for better or worse) do not apply to the reflected damage.

The rune will reflect 1 blow for each level of the rune, but will not reflect a Poleaxe, Decapitation or Death Blow – those blows will take all the Reflections down and affect the target. Crushing Blow and Cut To Bleed of Mantic 2 or lower power can be reflected. Mantic 3 and higher Crushing Blows and Cut To Bleeds will take all the Reflections down and affect the target as normal.

If a *Reflection* reflects onto an offender who also has a *Reflection* up then both involved are stuck in a reflection loop. This is a situation which freezes both rune-wielders in time, stuck in a never ending reflection loop as runic energy bounces and begins to exponentially build between the two in a never-ending, self-sustaining loop. If two people are left in a reflection loop for an extended duration, they will eventually disappear; all the energy in their body and spirit consumed to feed the loop. There are certain ways to escape from a reflection loop, but they are not commonly known.

Release

Release makes you immune to restricting or holding effects (*Glue, Blindness, Halt, Standstill, Entangle*, etc.), which target the recipient, for 30 seconds so long as it is cast prior to the restricting effect. If it is cast to remove a restricting effect (normally by a Rune Priest or by an Ullratha's pair), this merely cancels the restricting effect and does not last for 30 seconds. The rune can only dismiss effects of power level equal to or lower than Runic.

Rune Blast

The potent runeform *Rune Blast* is a 'fall', and throws a bolt of pure Runic energy towards the target. The damage inflicted is the level of the blast plus one, multiplied by itself. A *Rune Blast V*, for instance, deals $(5+1=6)^2=36$ LPs damage. Against monsters, this damage is divided by 2 to work out Hits. The range of a *Rune Blast* is equal to the number of life-points damage, in feet, i.e. a *Rune Blast V* has a range of 36 feet.

If the target has points of Runic AC, these degrade the level of the *Rune Blast*, reducing the amount of damage taken exponentially – possible reducing the damage to 0. Non-Runic points of AC which would work against Runic damage do not downgrade a *Rune Blast*, but do reduce the damage normally.

Shielding

This runeform is a protection specifically against *Reflection* loops. Once cast, this rune serves to defuse the build-up of a reflection loop on the target. It may also be used once inside a *Reflection* loop to break out of the loop, but this does not prevent further *Reflection* loops. The *Shielding* safely dissipates the reflected runic energy, causing no injury to either party.

Slow Other I-VI

The runeform of *Slow Other* disenchants the target's body, stiffening internal shocks and weakening strong tissue, increasing the damage caused by impact. The rune increases the amount of damage taken by a factor of the rune's level + 1, i.e. a *Slow Other I* will increase damage taken to double. In monster terms, this decreases your total number of hits – *Slow Other I* halves your hits, *Slow Other II* thirds your hits, etc.

The damage increasing effect applies to the damage after it has breached armour.

Speedself I-V

The rune of *Speedself* enhances the target's body, softening internal shocks and strengthening weak tissue, reducing the damage caused by impact. The rune reduces the amount of physical damage taken by a factor of $1 / (\text{Speedself level} + 1)$, i.e. a *Speedself I* will half physical damage. In monster terms, this increases your total number of hits - *Speedself I* doubles your hits, *Speedself II* triples your hits, etc.

This powerful rune is only able to ward the target's body against physical damage, and applies to the damage after it has breached armour.

Standstill I

Standstill I will cause the target to stand motionless (held rigid by Runic energy) for 30 seconds or until struck for damage, whichever is the sooner.

Standstill II

Standstill II will cause the target to stand motionless (held rigid by Runic energy) for 5 seconds regardless of any damage they may take.

Strength I-V

The runeform *Strength* grants its target bonus points of strength. The amount of strength given to the recipient is equal to the level of the rune plus 1, multiplied by itself. A *Strength IV* will therefore grant $(4+1=5)^2=25$ points of Strength. This rune does not increase the target's stress resistance.

Weakness I-VI

The runeform *Weakness* grants its target a detriment to strength. The amount of strength taken from the recipient is equal to the level of the rune plus 1, multiplied by itself. A *Weakness IV* will therefore drain $(4+1=5)^2=25$ points of Strength. Targets reduced to 0 Strength fall to the floor, unable to cast or move and barely able to hold their breathing steady.

Special Commando Runes

These runeforms are usually only available for purchase by members of the Commando.

Armour

This runeform (2 rune points), only available to commando rune wielders, constructs a Runic field of armour about the target by empowering his or her current armour. The armour worn by the target is elevated to a Runic level, and the target also gains a non-locational bonus to his or her armour equal to the armour value worn by the target. E.g. If an Ullratha Knight is mostly wearing studded leather and has *Armour* cast about them, any armour worn by that Knight becomes Runic, and a bonus 3 point Runic AC is given all over.

Light

This runeform (2 rune points), only available to commando rune wielders, sets forth a powerful light from where it was cast at a Runic power level. The most powerful portion of this light extends for 15 feet from where it has been drawn (whether in the air or upon an object).

Resurrection

This runeform (1 irrevocable rune point) acts as a normal resurrection, but at a Runic level. The (deceased) recipient is returned to life minus one level of experience. *Resurrection* is only available to Commando Rune Priests.