

Talon of the Vogel

Artifact

The Talon of the Vogel dates back to ancient times, before vogel society had yet developed into a peaceful and organized union. At the time of its creation, the four factions of the vogel were vying for control of their fragmented lands. These were the clans of Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter. These clans fought for thousands of years, none ever able to hold power for more than a short period of time.

It was prophesied that deep in the darkness of these ages a hero would arise who would bring peace to the vogel. During these times of great conflict, a warrior-hero named Kaa emerged from the fighting as an inspirational leader for his clan. This young bird man was a clever and ambitious general of the largest vogel army at that time, and he conceived of a scheme to wrest power from the four clans. In secret, he met with the high priests of each of the clans, pledging his allegiance to each one for the price of a powerful enchantment.

The four rituals were all conducted in secret on the same moonless night, and Kaa carried a bundled object from one to the next, each faction imbuing it with their greatest magics. Once he possessed the Talon, Kaa turned his army against all the clans, declaring himself supreme ruler of the vogel. With Kaa bolstered by the Talon, the four clans were unable to defeat him. Eventually Kaa reigned supreme and crowned himself emperor of all the vogel lands.

Kaa's rulership finally brought peace to the vogels, as was prophesized, although their time of terror was far from over. Kaa held sway for a thousand years, kept alive by the magic of the Talon. He was a cruel and heartless dictator who forced his people to live lives little better than those of slaves, their efforts spent on glorifying him and his name. The capital island of the Vogel Empire was slowly built up until its surface was entirely covered by a fantastically ornate palace, the seat of Kaa's ragged empire.



In the thousandth year of Kaa's reign, the clans achieved what seemed impossible in previous eras: The vogel accepted each other as equals. The united vogels formed an army and stormed Kaa's palace. The vogel fought their way to the center of the palace in this bloody civil war, where the combined powers of the four high priests struck Kaa and the Talon simultaneously. Kaa was destroyed, the palace sank into the ocean, and the talon was splintered by a temporal explosion, its powers lost to the victors. With Kaa finally over-

thrown, the clans put an end to the miseries of the vogel, and founded a new society based on cooperation and equality. This society is the basis of the vogel social structure still in place today.

The talon itself, although damaged, still retained much of its power, and eventually turned up, far away in both time and space. Its history since this time is long and varied, and filled with many unknown chapters. Presently it is lost, but no one doubts it will turn up again, likely to the detriment of the world.

The talon of the vogel is temporally shattered, and takes on one of four forms, as dictated by the present season of the year. If brought into a land or area without seasons, it usually selects the form most appropriate for the local conditions. The four forms of the talon are as follows:

The Blossom of Spring

At the moment of the equinox, the ice of the *Sword of Winter* begins to melt and drip away, leaving behind a single delicate rose. This bloom conveys on its bearer the powers of life and of the rain and the ocean. The blossom is not an effective weapon, but contains great magic nonetheless. Any adult who holds the *Blossom of Spring* instantly becomes youthful again; their Strength and Wisdom are reduced by 1 from their standard adult scores. Additionally, the blossom gives its bearer the powers of *water breathing*, *control water*, and of *freedom of movement*, as well as the power of *plant growth*, and the ability to *speak with plants*. Once per day, the bearer can cast *true resurrection*, and

three times a day, she can cast *mass heal*, *regenerate*, and *greater restoration*. The wielder can also cast *cure critical wounds* at will. Anyone holding the blossom is protected from the cruel grip of death, as if under the effect of a *death ward*. The blossom continues to bloom and grow larger and fuller throughout the season.

The Torch of Summer

In the last few days before the solstice, the *Blossom of Spring* begins to dry out and harden, finally bursting into a bright flame at the exact start of the new season,

t r a n s -
forming
into the
Torch of
Summer.

Anyone who holds the torch of summer is cast back into the prime of life, shedding off any stat modifiers due to age. The torch itself functions as a +5 *flaming burst* greatclub of *disruption*, and also gifts its bearer with the powers of fire, heat, and exuberance. The torch sheds *daylight*, and cannot be extinguished. Three times per day, the wielder of the torch can cast *fire storm*, *sunburst*, and *wall of fire*. She can also cast *heat metal* at will. Additionally, any living creature who gazes upon the flame of the torch is filled with joy unless it succeeds at a Will save (DC 20), and will cease all attacks and be overcome with a desire to celebrate life as long as it remains within sight of the torch. This effect is dispelled if the joyous creature is attacked. The bearer of the torch is totally immune to the effects of fire or heat, magical or otherwise.

The Sickel of Autumn

As summer winds down, the torch slowly burns downward, and by the equinox its flame is extinguished, leaving only a bent, wilted ash. As the ash falls away, a curved blade is re-

vealed; the Talon has now become the *Sickel of Autumn*. Anyone holding the sickle is instantly cast into middle age, losing 1 point from Str, Dex, and Con, but gaining 1 point of Int, Wis, and Cha. These changes are calculated from standard adulthood scores. The sickle itself is a +5 *vorpal* weapon. The bearer of the sickle gains mastery over the earth and the harvest. She can *create food* at will, as well as *shape stone*. Three times per day, the wielder of the sickle can cast *earthquake*, *stoneskin*, and *wall of stone*, and once per day she can cast *imprisonment*. The wielder of the sickle is immune to petrification and gains a burrowing speed of 20 to her movement.

The Sword of Winter

On the night of the winter solstice, the sickle begins to grow cold to the touch and water vapor begins to condense around it. The blade of the sickle straightens out, and at the first moment of the new season, the water

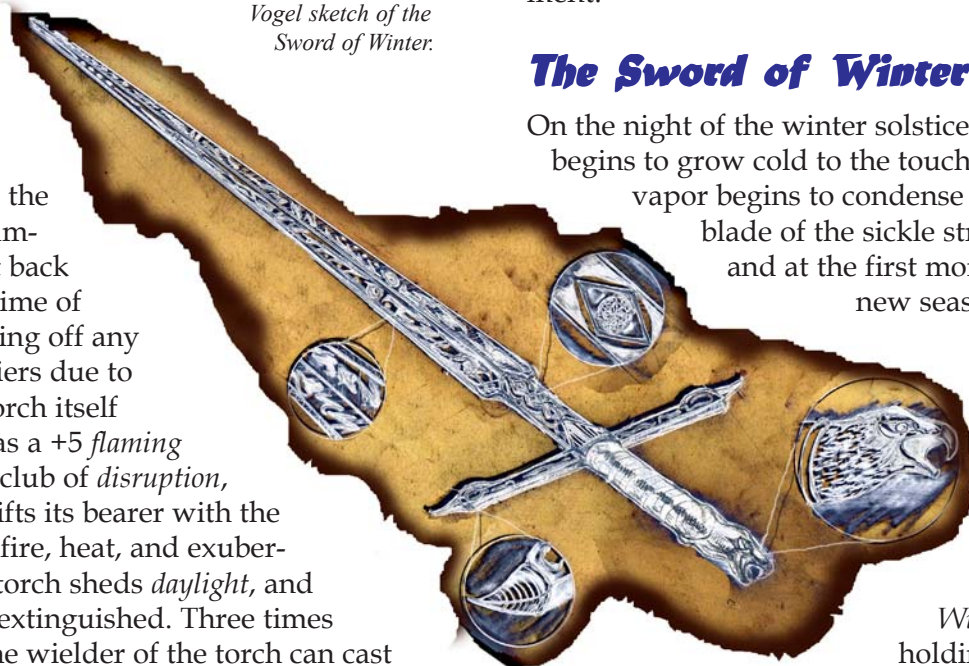
freezes into
solid ice,
forming a
beauti-
fully
crafted
weapon, the
Sword of

Winter. Anyone
holding this sword
is immediately cast into old

age, losing 3 points from Str, Con, and Dex, and gains 2 points of Int, Wis, and Cha. These changes are calculated from standard adulthood scores. The *Sword of Winter* is a +5 *keen* weapon, and upon a critical hit, it freezes its victim and shatters him into a thousand shards (effectively disintegrating him). The bearer of the sword also gains the power of cold and of the storm, can *fly* and take *gaseous form* at will, and also is immune to damage or effects from wind, electricity, or cold. Once per day, the bearer of the sword can cast *whirlwind*, and three times per day she can cast *chain lightning*, *control winds*, and *cone of cold*.

Caster Level: 20th; Weight: 3lbs; DC for all spells and effects is 18 + spell level.

Vogel sketch of the
Sword of Winter.





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