

By order of Relias, Sovereign of the One True Kingdom of Man

On this 85th day, in the 3rd year of the reign of Relias, rightful ruler of the Western Kingdoms, I, Janusk of Altar, scribe and loyal companion to the Lord, do hereby set my mark to this assemblage of knowledge belonging to the sons and daughters of man, the stories of our fathers and forefathers, the tales of the Magi, and the Titans, and the rise of the house of Aegon, and the destruction of the world that we knew, and in so doing attest to its ultimate truth, as did my predecessors before me, Eldrana the Blessed, Sarandus High Mage of Zad-

Zabril, and Rox Janeel, who first set down these stories thousands of years ago.

Though much of what was - the knowledge assembled, collected and copied by man through the Three Ages - has now been lost, I swear to all who pick up these pages in search of the truth about our world, and the lives of the Men and Titans who came before us, that this is the one and true Hiergamenon.

So signed: Janusk, Scribe to the King at Athica



E1609: The First Book Of The Magi

THUS HAVE I HEARD: THUS I SHALL WRITE. In the east of the world there was a chieftain named • Hallas, and he had many followers. He had many wives as well, yet of those wives, he had but three sons. These were Linn, the eldest, Ereog, the middle, and Torg, the youngest. Hallas, his sons, and all his followers too, came one day to the valley of Khin-Lo, at the mouth of the Gandra where it met the great sea. There they made a city, which was named then Freeman's Hold, but has now become known as Hallas. Two hundred and two was the number of the people that settled there, and that number grew to a thousand in the span of a dozen years. Hallas built himself a wooden palace made of timbers taken from the slopes of the Khin-Lo; his people built houses as well, and thus the city grew. But in the twenty-seventh year of this city, men from the south, warrior-priests, the dark ones from Al-Ashteroth, arrived at the mouth of the Gandra, and demanded tribute of the new town, and its people.

Hallas had knowledge of Al-Ashteroth, and those who ruled it, and he feared them. But he would not pay tribute to a people a thousand miles away, whose king he did not know, and so he sent away the priests empty-handed. Thus, there was war. This was in the forty-first year of his reign. Now Hallas was a great fighter, and he had trained his men well, and so they prepared for battle. In this, he had the help of two of his sons, Linn and Torg, who he had raised to chieftains. Many were the days they spent building fortifications around the settlement, and they raised walls and dug trenches to prepare for the coming of the warrior priests.

Hallas's son Ereog was no warrior. He was a man of peace; a man of learning. He had taken no wife, and devoted himself instead to the study of the world, and the things in it. And he was one of the first men of the world to discover that within all things, there was magic. There had been sorcerers before him, who had worked spells on men and on the things of the Earth, who had used those spells to gain themselves wealth, or fame, or women, but Ereog was the first to devote himself to learning how the magic worked.

This is the selfsame Ereog who cast the spell of Making and brought the Forge of Overlord into this world, and it is his book of spells, long lost to the men of this world, on which all knowledge of magic is based. But his father Hallas considered that Ereog should not waste his days with these things, which seemed to him unimportant, and he commanded Ereog to set down his books, and take up sword and shield. In this, Ereog refused his father, and was thus banished from the town of his father and brothers. This was in the year before the envoys from Al-Ashteroth came to their settlement.

Now I will tell you of the attack from Al-Ashteroth. This happened in the very month of the harvest, just as Hallas had foreseen it might, and so he had set the women and children to the fields to gather the grain and the vegetables of which their winter stores would be made,



leaving the men to guard against the warrior-priests. But as to the form of the attack itself, Hallas was surprised, for no army marched, no ships sailed, no weapons of steel or flint were brought to bear. What happened was this; the grain died in the field. The fruit rotted on the vine; the beasts

choked on their own bile, and lay down and died in the field, and their flesh was gray by morning, and not fit to consume. It was only when Az-Adoras, Prince of Al-Ashteroth came to Hallas and told him that he, the Prince, had caused by sorcery these things to happen that Hallas realized the truth.

In those days, Al-Ashteroth ruled all lands south of the Kandra, which we now call the Gandru, and was the wealthiest and most feared of all men in those lands. It was said that he had lived a thousand years already at this time, that he had a hundred wives and five hundred sons, and that these were the warrior-priests who made up his army, and fearsome fighters but that they were not only powerful magicians, that no sword could harm them, no poison kill them, and that blood relations to because they were never betray him. Az-Adoras they would A hundred warriors did accompany Az-Adoras

to the town of Freeman's Hold, and whether or not they were his sons, they stood guard over him, unmoving, unsleeping, when Az-Adoras demanded of Hallas his surrender.

Hallas asked for time to consider his response, and returned to the safety of the city walls where he did consult with his sons Linn and Torg. 'I have heard much of Az-Adoras. It is my thinking we should pay tribute to him,' Hallas said. 'But I would hear your thoughts.' Linn agreed with his father, but the youngest son, Torg stood and spoke then. 'Look,' said Torg. 'This Az-Adoras and his warriors are numerous and powerful, but we can deal with them shrewdly and carefully.' And so saying, Torg set forth a plan. They would send the women of the town to pay tribute to Az-Adoras, but among them would be several warriors in disguise. And when these warriors brought the tribute into the great tent of Az-Azdoras, they would reveal themselves, and attack and kill the dark Prince. To this plan Hallas and Linn agreed.

Thus on the very next day, a dozen of the town's women, or so it appeared, came forth from the city walls in a caravan to deliver unto Az-Azdoras the tribute he had demanded. Among these were youths who had proven themselves in battle, young men slim of form who could disguise themselves as women. And so they marched into the tent, past the gazes of Az-Azdoras's bodyguards, and delivered the tribute. As the Dark Prince bent to study his new-gained treasure, the warriors struck. They drew their blades from within the cloaks they had donned as disguise, and fell upon the Prince. But the blades struck him, and did no harm. Az-Azdoras's bodyguards rose up and slaughtered the women and those disguised as such so that the ground ran red with their blood. But one of those bodyguards, a son of the Prince's named Hemuel, was in the battle killed as well.

Az-Adoras was enraged at the death of his child, and he gathered the greatest of magics around him, and made the rocks and stones of the Khin-Lo to fly through the air, and strike down the palace that Hallas had constructed. Then too did all manner of creatures come forth from the Earth, and some of these were magic too, like the great worms of the burnt soil, and the droth who lived in burrows, and these and others like them fell upon Freeman's Hold and those who dwelt within and soon the dead littered the streets. Then among the dead was Hallas himself, and his two sons Linn and Torg, and those few who survived fled the city for the hills of the Khin-Lo.

It was the habit of Az-Adoras, the Dark Prince of Al-Ashteroth, to not only receive tribute, but to take from his subject peoples the youngest and

strongest of their boys, and the most beautiful of their girls, to bring with him back to the palace he had raised in Khaffar, in the heart of the jungle. But such was his anger at the death of Hemuel that Az-Adoras commanded his warriors to seek out and kill all those who had lived in Freeman's Hold. Thus the survivors who fled the city were hunted like dogs in the forests of the Khin-Lo, and many killed there as well till there were but a handful of them left alive. They traveled high in the Khin-Lo, seeking safety and shelter, and it was there, in the caves that dot the slopes of

Ereog had been gone from the sight of men for two full years. In that time, he had come to know the things of the forest, the animals and the trees, the

those mountains, that they found the last of Hallas's sons.

plants and the insects, the land itself. He had sensed the coming of his people, for with the death of his father and two brothers he regarded himself as their caretaker. He knew too that the warriors of Az-Adoras were upon their trail. He had, these last few hours, prayed often to the gods of the world to send him a sign how to combat the demons of Al-Ashteroth. There are those who live now who say that it was the Titans

themselves who spoke to Ereog in the hills that day, who showed him how to shape the spells...

The remainder of Chapter X is lost, as are Chapters XI-XXI, which told of

HOW Ereog became leader of Freeman's Hold, how he taught the way of magic to those who became his apprentices within the after the forests of Khin-Lo, of their attack on Az-Adoras, and their pursuit of the Dark Prince to the jungles of Khaffar)

...from within his sanctuary did send out emissaries to Ereog, demanding that he withdraw from Al-Ashteroth or all manner of sorceries would be brought down on him, and he would die and be damned for all time in the sight of the Gods. But the son of Hallas knew Az-Adoras's words for the lies they were, for much of the Dark Prince's power had come from the terror he instilled in those around him, and without the warrior-priests to spread that terror, Ereog knew that his power, great as it was, was now waning.

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Ereog sent away Kargas and Moriah, who alone had survived the great battle, and

approached the pyramid which Az-Adoras had made his sanctuary. 'Stand forth, Adoras,' Ereog commanded. 'And if you do, and if you go from this place to the islands in the East, I will not pursue you, and you may live the last of your days in peace.' To hear these words enraged the Dark Prince, and



he came forth and stood at the top of the pyramid, and raised his arms, and from them spewed red fire, lightning that cracked the very ground Ereog stood on, and made crevasses deep and wide enough to swallow a horse.

But Ereog was not frightened. He cast magic of his own, and a blue ring of fire at the height of his waist surrounded him, and none of Adoras's fire touched him. Then did Ereog summon all his own powers, and caused the pyramid itself to crack, and tumble to the ground. Az-Adoras tumbled to the ground as well, and was swallowed up by the world, and disappeared from the sight of men forever.

But in the book of Moriah a different story was told, that Az-Adoras lived past this day, and that he and the abominations he had created during his thousand year-reign, the creatures he had used to terrorize the peoples of Khaffar, and Malaya, the beasts Nugreesh and Drothanda, the women who walked...

...and made their home in the jungles that became Zabril. Whether or not this is true, I cannot say, but...

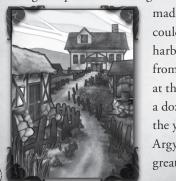
The REST of the book of Ereog is LOST.

Argynn: The Second Book Of The Magi

Chapters I-XX are lost. These told of Argynn's Childhood, and his coming to power, and the war between Malaya and the tribes of the Khulan, in which Argynn's wife and children were killed.

... for Sarenn had been his wife, and so he would not countenance the defilement of her grave, or the profanities cast upon her name.

His family lost to him, the Lord devoted himself to his people, and in these years was Malaya raised to the greatest of heights. Palaces of gleaming marble taken from the great quarries at Thonga were built; roads of brick and mortar



made on which the trading caravans could pass in ease and safety. The harbor was dug to a depth that ships from Bantree and Hallas could berth at the docks, and so was trade increased a dozen fold with these great states. By the year 1938 of the Old Reckoning, Argynn had made the city he ruled the greatest of its kind in all the world.

XXIII.

The wealthiest of all men in Malaya were the traders, of whom the richest were those of

the clan Yeldrick. Such was their wealth that they owned houses in

all quarters of the city; it was said that their servants were so many in number that a house was built to hold them too. Even the youngest male among the Yeldrick wore robes of finest sansill. To marry a daughter of the clan was the desire of sons of the noblest old families of the great city; to earn for their goods a place in the caravans of the Yeldrick was the wish of all the city's artisans.



XXIV.

Yet though the Yeldrick lacked for nothing, still they desired more. The chief among them went one day to the court of the Lord Argynn, and asked the Lord to use his powers to help them reach the Northern lands, the lands beyond Hallas and its empire, beyond the Khin-Lo and the Valgon. In those days Jorna was chief minister to Argynn, and it was he who spoke first. 'Why do you wish to journey to this wilderness?' Jorna spoke this way because the North in those days was thought by all to be a land of frozen wastes, and ice. It was said that traders from Hallas had tried on many occasions to reach the north and the peoples said to live there, but...

The remainder of Chapter XXIV is LOST; Chapters XXV-XXVIII are LOST)

This went on for ten days, and ten nights, the great storm • never lessening in intensity. It took all of Argynn's powers to keep the great trading ship from capsizing; the Lord was able to rest only for a few hours each eve, and even then his sleep was troubled, and filled with visions. In these visions, Argynn's powers always failed him, as they had within the Khulan, when his family had perished. The last few nights, he dreamt of those terrible days in the Khulan, and it was as if they came alive around him again, so vivid were these visions. The sights and sounds and smells of the jungle seemed as real to him as he lay in his bunk as they had all those years earlier. Yet there was a difference; in his dreams, the woman who rode at Argynn's side was not his wife Sarenn but a stranger. Light skinned where Sarenn had been dark; tall where she had been short; red-haired where his beloved had tresses of midnight black. In these dreams, the woman seemed always to be watching him, judging him; her constant gaze made Argynn anxious. But though he questioned her, in the dreams she said nothing.

On the tenth night of these visions, Argynn woke to a strange calm.

The ship no longer roiled; the winds no longer blew. He rose from his bunk and made his way to the top deck. There he found the men – sailors and traders alike – all

awake, all staring off the starboard side of the bow, into what seemed at first to the Lord a thick, formless mist. Then the mist parted, and beyond it Argynn saw a mountain of ice, looming high above. At the ice's base, there was a small group of stone buildings, and before those buildings stood men in cloaks of heavy fur; a hundred at least, all bearded, all carrying great axes in their belts, holding spears in their hands. Thus did the men of the south first come to the country of Nimmeria.

XXXI.

Though it was the Yeldrick who desired commerce with the North, Argynn was

Lord of Malaya, and so he was first to greet the Nimmerians. This was a practical thing too, for Argynn was versed in many tongues, including that of the Hallatians, and the language of the Nimmerians was close in many ways to that of Hallas. The Lord spoke first with Aedrir, who commanded the armies of the Nimmerians, and then to Volnagg, a trader, an immense man who wore around his neck a blue jewel the size of Argynn's fist. When Volnagg stepped forward to introduce himself, and the jewel caught the light, the traders of Malaya who stood behind the Lord moved as one, their own eyes, as Argynn saw when he turned, lit by a greedy fire. The sight made the Lord heartsick, for then he felt that, for all his strivings, for all his talk of exploration, in the end what had made the journey happen was simple, base emotion. And in that moment, the line of figures on the shore parted.

'Breon, our Queen,' Aedrir announced, and the newcomer stepped forward and shook off her cloak. Argynn could scarcely believe his eyes, for Breon was the woman from his dreams.

There are those who say that this Breon is the same as the Witch-Queen in the

Book of Moriah. I cannot say whether this is true, that it was she who discovered and first used the death magic spells in this world. What is certain is that Breon and the Lord Argynn spoke long into the night that first evening they met, and in time, of course, they came to know each other as man and woman. Argynn learned that Breon had sent him the visions he had witnessed at sea, and that she had used those visions to judge him, and the intentions of the Malayans. When he asked her how she had done this, she reached into her cloak and from it pulled an object the size and shape of a club, but made of stone, a smooth black stone that throbbed at his touch. It was this object, she told Argynn, that allowed her to focus the enchantment of the world, and to bend it to her own purposes.

Moriah says that it was at this moment that Argynn conceived of the Forge of Overlord, a thing that would allow the enchantment of the world to take physical shape, but...

The remainder of this book is lost; it tells of ARGNN'S travels with Breon, and their journey to Hallas to meet the lord Ereog, and how the three of them cast the Spell of Making, and built the Forge of Overlord.

Breon: The Third Book Of The Magi

This book is lost in its entirety. It is the story of Breon, and her days with Argynn, and her journey south to Malaya, and her death at the hands of the Brota.

Pariden: The First Book Of The Arnor

In the time of the beginning, ten, ten thousand years ago, in the age of dragons on this world, did the Titans dwell in the realm of the Gods. The Gods made them, one hundred and twenty in number, and these were the Dread Lords. The mightiest of the Dread was Lord Avalan, and the source of his strength a circlet of silver, which he wore into battle. When'ere did Lord Avalan vanquish a foe, that one's essence was absorbed into the circlet.

Across all creation did Avalan and the Dread battle, and subdue all those who opposed them. Then came a day when Avalan's hunger for power consumed him, and others of the Titans rose against him, Tylan and Pariden, Curgen and Tandis. They slew Avalan, but when the Lord died, the circlet fell from his head, and took the shape of an orb. And this orb was given unto the Gods, for it had grown too powerful for any Titan to handle.

But the power of the orb proved too great a temptation even for the Gods. Avalan's Bane, for this is how the orb had come to be known, was seized by one of the Gods for purposes lost to man, and a terrible catastrophe occurred. The Gods themselves died that day, and were reborn, and the Titans flung from the realm of the immortals. And ten thousand years passed, and they journeyed through the endless night of the void, until the first of them, Pariden, came to this world.

In those days Hallas was the greatest of cities in all mankind; and was ruled by Josryn IV, whose own great-great grandmother had been consort to Ereog the Younger. Josryn's palace was Verhallaem, and her daughters and sons were nine in number. The youngest and fairest of these was Ithuane. This Ithuane had suitors from all across the world, but she had turned them down, one by one, for Ithuane was the most powerful of magi, and she would not be ruled by any.

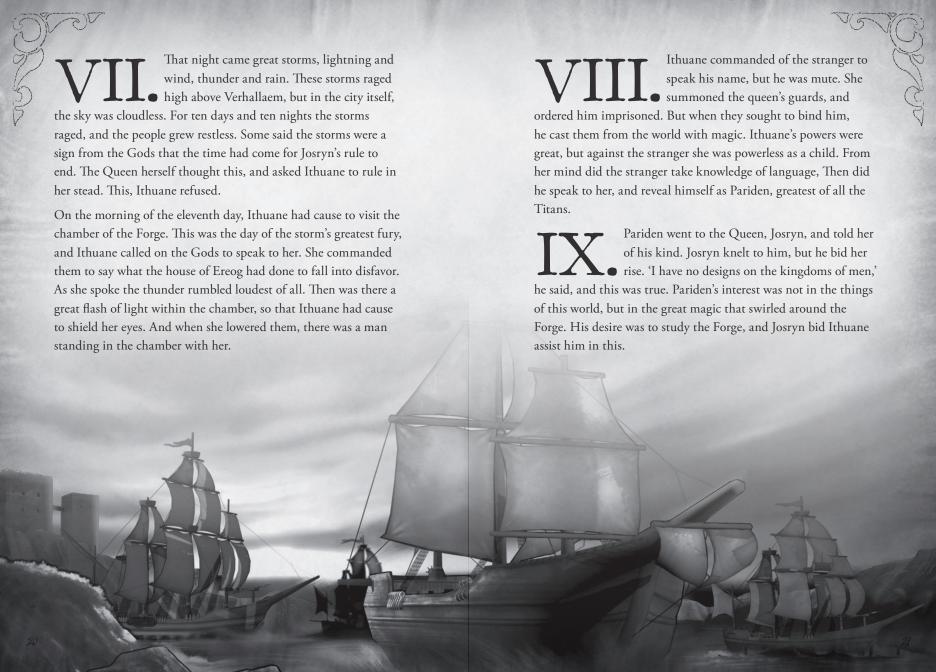
In the center of Verhallaem, in a chamber which only the Queen and Ithuane could open, was kept the Forge.

This was the very forge had been called to the world by Ereog himself, and Breon, and Lord Argynn. The knowledge of its

workings had been lost in the time of the Great Rebellion, and Ithuane's days were spent studying the Forge, and reading of its history.

Now I will tell you of Pariden's coming, which occurred in the 43rd year of Josryn's reign, the year from which all our days are now numbered. In her sleep, Ithuane had a vision of the Queen cast down, and Verhallaem thrown into the sea. She woke that morning and went to Josryn to speak of this omen. The queen then had stewards set at all corners of the kingdom to guard Hallas, for in these times Al-Ashteroth was ruled by Lord Ryss, who had spoken often of turning against Verhallaem.





Ithuane had sworn never to wed, but now did she look upon Pariden and find favor in him. Though he was as a Titan, they knew each other as man and woman. And Pariden bestowed upon Verhallaem and Josryn great knowledge of the ways of the sorcerer, and he and Ithuane did explore the world together for many years. But she was mortal, and soon grew weak and frail, and Pariden would travel with her no more. This caused Ithuane to cast herself from the cliffs by the Eastern sea, near the village which is now called Witchfell.

Ithuane's death caused the queen great sadness, and she too, soon perished. Her son Barmen ruled with distinction for a dozen years, but when Barmen passed, Pariden suggested that a council be formed to...

The remainder of Chapter X is lost. Chapters XI-XX are lost)

Curgen: The Second Book Of The Arnor



Know you that I am Rox Janeel, born in the year 428, the year 3994 by the Old Reckoning. I come from the village of Nev, in the west of the kingdom of Pariden. My father was Craid Janeel, who was smith to the village armorer. I was eldest of six children, the

youngest of whom was Kalin Janeel, whose shadow plays achieved great renown throughout the east. It was my father's desire that I become a smith as he was, as his father had been before him, and thus when I was sixteen years of age I became apprentice to Odray the Armorer at Pariden.

In these days was Pariden was home to thousands, the wealthiest merchants, the most skilled artisans in all the world, the most valiant soldiers, the most learned scribes, the greatest of leaders. From Verhallaem did the noble Titan rule, with the council of Elders, which at this time was led by Torg the Learned. Odray's furnace had been new-built in the shadow of Verhallaem itself not five years earlier. I was third apprentice to Odray in the year the Great Darkness fell.

Now I will tell you of those times, and my knowledge of them. For I was tasked to ride with Odray into the mountains of the Kinlo to bring forth metals and jewels for use in the forge. In the high month of the harvest time, as we did travel Ereog's Road from the valley peaks to the heart of great Pariden, we saw above the buildings of the city, and the Verhallaem itself, a great storm forming. Clouds black as night, thunder loud as the clap of the Destiny themselves, lightning as bright as the sun we saw, and even Odray himself trembled in fear.

Moz'al Arean was keeper of the Archives at Verhallaem, and I had known him as a youth because of my brother Kalin. I had cause to see him when the storms began, and he showed to me then the histories which had been written five hundred years earlier by the scribes of Pariden, which was then Hallas. In this history, which

has since become part of the one and true Hiergamenon, storms raged the ten days before Pariden came to this world, and Moz'al said these were the same storms, and the Lord agreed this was so on his return to Verhallaem.

At this time Pariden and his companions were in the West of the world. These included

Tylan and Tandis, Jakod and Letay, Talax and Oriane, who was Pariden's consort. They were all of them powerful beyond the greatest of sorcerers, and fearsome warriors as well. On the third day of the storms they did return to Verhallaem. Pariden

summoned the council to his chambers, and the other castle dwellers as well. And what he said to them was this. 'A time of great strife is now to come. Others of my kind seek to gain a foothold in this world. They are many, and we are few. They are cruel as we are forbearant, and they are unconcerned with the wishes of men, and the lives of them. We must slay them without mercy.'

At these words a great panic overtook the council, who behaved in ways that shame the name of men.

Many fled, as did the castle dwellers. It was at this time that Pariden came to Odray,

and asked him to make the weapons that would be needed in battle. This was the first time that I saw the Lord, and determined to perish myself in his service should the need arise. For five days and nights, without taking a full measure of rest, did we labor. And on the ninth day of the storms the weapons were ready, and myself and the Armorer brought them to the Lord. These were then enchanted by the Lord and his companions. Then did the six of them take up the weapons we had made, and enter the chamber of the Forge, and bar the door to all others.

From the time of Pariden's coming had Ereog's Forge been hid from the sight of man, lest the powers contained within it tempt..

The remainder of Chapter VII is lost) (Chapters VII and IX are lost)

... the six were now two. Tandis and Talax, who fought now back to back, with sword and then sorcery, as around them gathered their foes, the Titans Umber and Phaedra, Kir-Tion and Ardell. It was now, with Lord Pariden already dead and the first great battle of the Dark Days near its end, that Curgen at last appeared.

He strode forth from the maelstrom and the air itself seemed to give way at his passing. This Curgen was the very opposite of Lord Pariden in his manner and bearing; imperious, his body thick and wiry with muscle, his hair dark and...

... his sword which crackled with red fire; and a great shard...

(The remainder of this book is lost)

The Book of Ezmir

THE BREAKING OF THE WORLD, WHICH IS KNOWN NOW AS THE CATACLYSM

am Ezmir, son of Athalyir, himself noble councilman of Valgona, long cherished in my memory, and the memory of all those who knew him. My mother was Daina of the free city of Eldric; my brothers Garran and Amir lived and died with her in that city. I am the eldest of those who came from the East now living in this world, scribe to Queen Procipinee of the reborn kingdom of Pariden, as I was scribe to her father Amarian III, last Emperor of the Free Cities of the North. What I write in these pages is the tale of the end of that world, and the beginning of the next; the story of the long march from the gates of Imperium to the western coast, the sacrifice made by our noble companions, the men and women of the Azure Knights, and by the Emperor himself, who in the territory we now call The Henge, gave his life that we might cross over from East to the West, journey from death to life, from despair to hope.

It is my task in these pages to write of the great war that I witnessed, the battle that destroyed our world and put an end to the rule of the Titans and their creatures, and made this a world of men once more. The war began with the armies of the west, led by the Arnor Tandis, marching east from Coriopolis, intent on confronting the Dread Lord Curgen in his fortress at Imperium. Asterte, scribe to the Duke of Walderon and a man who I called friend, was sent forth by the Duke with his armies to join Tandis, and it is his account of this march, written in the second book of his History, remembered by myself but no longer in existence, which I have drawn upon to write the following.

This army, so Asterte wrote, was five years in the making, and assembled in its final strength outside the village of Ruvenna, where the Gandra and Galain rivers meet. Here were 100,000 fighting men gathered, with another 100,000 men in support, men from all the lands of the West. In the year 6998 of the Old Reckoning, this army did cross Engar's Steppe, and enter into the East's dominion. The army halted near Gemend, and an emissary was sent to the Lady Umber, most powerful of the Dread Lords of the East save for Curgen. Tandis sought free passage across the Lady's domain in order to reach Imperium; the emissary returned with a letter from Lady Umber, suggesting a meeting between her and Tandis to codify the terms of that passage.

At this suggestion, there was disagreement within the leadership councils of the West. Tandis, Asterte wrote, was ready to accept the Lady Umber's proposal; Tar-Thela the Arnor, who Asterte presumed to be Tandis's consort, called the Lord a fool to even consider such an action. The commander of the Athican army,

Lord Jasek of Coriopolis, suggested an escort of his most capable soldiers accompany Tandis. Eyrik, second to Tandis, proposed himself as this escort. All these Tar-Thela dismissed as foolish, greatly upsetting Lord Jasek. In the end, so Asterte tells us, Tandis set out alone, and journeyed into the hills outside Gemend to meet as the Lady Umber suggested. Asterte suggests that Tandis had hoped to sway the Lady Umber to his side. Whether this is true, I cannot say. Now it is well known that Tar-Thela's fears were proven correct; the sky lit with fire that night, as the Titans did battle, the Lady Umber and Tandis. When the dawn came, the hills themselves were covered with blackened, ruined ground. Of Tandis and Umber, nothing more was ever seen again.

Tandis, so Asterte writes, had held the Western armies together. With his death that alliance, which had endured for a year's marching, fell quickly apart. Jasek could not countenance Tar-

Thela's imperious manner; she considered him a less-than-capable officer. Eyrik, second to Tandis among the Azure knights, sought command of the armies in Tandis's stead. Caron, son to Duke of Ruvenna, sought command as well. In the end, Jasek and the army of Athica, composing fully half the great alliance of the West, withdrew from Gemend, and began the long march westward towards home. Caron and his army were set to follow

in his stead when a great storm arose, a whirlwind that pinned the Duke's army in its tents for nigh on a week. And when that week was past, Tar-Thela announced that she had received messengers from Valgona with favorable news. The armies of the North, under the command of the Emperor Amarian III, were marching south through the foothills

of Morrigan's Spine to join with the remaining armies of the West. And I, Ezmir, marched with them.

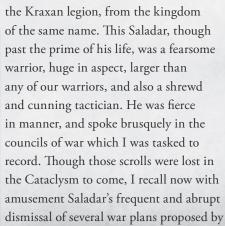
Though I had not been privy to the deliberations that swayed Emperor and Council to join with the West, as I rode many rumors came to regarding those talks. Curgen's army planned a march on the North, with the aim of overthrowing the Emperor, said some, and thus Amarian's act was one of self-defense. Others declared the alliance a self-serving one, that Amarian sought only the weakening of Curgen's forces, and would withdraw his forces once that end was achieved. Asterte, in the second book of his History which is lost, suggests that it was Tar-Thela herself who journeyed to Valgona, there to share with the Emperor secret knowledge Tandis had possessed regarding the Dread Lord's



intentions with regard to our world, and the things in it. No one now living knows which of these things may be true.

As Tandis's death had sundered the fellowship of the west, Lady Umber's death had caused the splintering of her own Empire. At the foot of Mount Taridor, in the southern regions of the Spine, we were joined by those warriors whose fear of the Dread Lord Curgen outweighed their instinctive, racial hatred for the armies of man. I speak of course, of the Fallen – those creatures made by the Dread Lord in the bowels of N'it'va'ganesh, those creatures cousin to man, like us in so many ways and yet ultimately unfathomable. Those days in Taridor's shadow were the first I had spent with these Fallen; though they camped together, far from the armies of Amarian, and the commanders of the West, still did I make it a point to observe them, and to speak to them, that I might judge for myself – and the Emperor – whether or not they were truly prepared to fight their own, to fight those Fallen who protected Curgen in his fortress at Imperium.

The greatest of these Fallen was Salma Saladar, who commanded





Caron, the Duke of Ruvenna, within those councils.

It was at the close of one of those councils that the Commander spoke to me for the first time. 'Manling,' he said as aides cleared away papers and writing instruments, goblets and trays of food. 'You write down what we say.' I acknowledged that I did. 'Make

sure you write the truth,' he commanded. I swore this to be the case, and held out the very scroll I had written on that day as proof. His eyes glanced at the paper, and then quickly away.

Something I cannot explain even now – perhaps a pride which I had not known until that moment existed - caused me to thrust it towards him even more firmly. 'I would have you read this,' I said, and at my words the Emperor, who was then engaged in conversation with the Knight Eyrik, looked up.

'Mind your place, scribe,' the Emperor declared, but even as he spoke, Saladar had snatched the paper from my hand and without a word, ripped it to shreds. He then strode off, his eyes lit with anger.

The Emperor castigated me further for my behavior, reminding me of the fragility of the alliance between man and Fallen, and how no action should be taken, particularly by someone such as myself, to undermine that alliance. I was flushed with embarrassment for myself and for the shame I had brought upon my family name, and did apologize most profusely. From that point onward, as we continued our march eastward towards Imperium, it was Asterte who acted as scribe to the councils.

On the third night following this incident, I had cause to speak with Saladar once more, in an instance whose details I have sworn to keep secret. In this conversation, the warrior, who revealed himself to me as of the Sion caste, did speak to me regarding his hatred of the Dread Lord, and how it was his wish, as it was the wish of many of the Fallen, to repay their creator for certain characteristics he had endowed their race with, and those that he had failed to give them. Of this, no more shall I write.

Two score and three days was the length of the march from Taridor to the shadow of Imperium. The last days there was fighting between the Fallen who had joined us, and those in the settlements surrounding the Dread Lord's castle, which slowed



our progress. And at last we reached the outskirts of the great city itself.

How can I describe the grandeur that was Imperium to those who live now, who know cities as collections of grass huts, and wood buildings? How to convey the feeling of utter insignificance that fell up on me as I first gazed at the city walls? Yet this is my task, and to begin

it, I will draw upon the words of those who came before me, who have written in the one and true Hiergamenon, in the book of Ithuane, of the palace that was built by Ereog the Younger, in the days when Imperium was known as Hallas.

'Ereog wished to show the grandeur of the kingdom for all to see.

Thus he did order the old palace torn down. This had been built with hardwoods culled from the high mountains in the Khin-Lo. Stone was now brought in from the eastern cliffs, marble and granite. Now a new palace was built. This measured a thousand feet from tower to tower in the front, and a thousand feet from tower to tower on the sides. In the front was an enormous gate of steel wraught in the forges of the King's armorer. The gold which

Ereog the Elder had reclaimed from Al-Ashteroth was now melted down. And this gold was used to gild the great gate. It was used to ornament the palace. The walls were raised up twice. First they were raised to a height of twenty-five feet. Then they were raised to a height of forty feet. This was done using huge blocks of stone which were quarried from the cliffs far to the north. These stones were polished by the workmen until they reflected the sun. From full



five miles away could the palace be seen. And Ereog did name this palace Verhallaem.'

The city had since grown up around the palace. Rox Janeel tells us it was the Titan Pariden who ordered the walls extended beyond Verhallaem to encompass much of the city itself. For a full mile in one direction, and near two miles in the other those fortifications had stretched. The Dread Lord Curgen had strengthened those walls, and raised them to a scale of such height and breadth it was nigh impossible to believe. The walls we saw that morning stretched as far as the eye could see, and rose to a full one hundred

and twenty feet high. The lowest of these were rough stone, but the rocks piled on top of those were immense blocks of obsidian, black as coal. Most fearsome of all, and thankfully visible only to those soldiers in the front ranks, the top of the wall was studded with the skulls, man and Fallen, of those who had dared resist the Dread Lord's rule.

Camp was made that night at what I judged to be a distance of



a quarter mile from the walls, directly opposite the gate which I have mentioned above. A guard was set, and plans reviewed for the attack

next morning. There were few who slept that night; I was in a tent with several of Amarian's officers, and they did not return from meetings with the Emperor until long past the setting of the sun.

On this night, I had occasion to speak with Salma Saladar one final time. It was then he conveyed to me the documents which I have drawn from to write the tale of Magnar, who was first among the Fallen.

On the next morning, the forces were arrayed as such: The apparent place of honor, directly before the Gate, fell to the Men of the North, under Amarian's command. To their right, were the Armies of the Western Kingdoms, led by Eyrik of the Azure Knights. To their left, those forces of Fallen who had joined us, led by Salma Saladar. Tar-Thela, the Emerald Sorceress, rode at

Amarian's side. Though I was not privy to the discussion of battle plans the evening before, I did learn later from the Emperor the attack strategy he and the other members of the Council had decided upon. This was a simple plan; though our forces were to attack against a considerable portion of the length of the fortress walls,

those at the center and right were intended as holding actions. The great force of the attack was to come from the left, from the Fallen armies led by Saladar, which were to be reinforced by a reserve force, under the command of the Duke of Ruvenna. This army was kept in waiting, strategically hidden behind the siege engines which formed the second line of attack.

The intent was to draw the fire of the archers and catapults along a line of such length that their effectiveness would be diminished, and to concentrate our own power against a relatively small area of the fortress. As I rode amongst the soldiers, I sensed a mood both grim and optimistic. Saladar had conveyed similar feelings to me the night before. He did not expect to survive the day, but he had confidence in the attack's ultimate success.

Both because of the strategy we were to employ and because of the vast numerical superiority our armies did enjoy. It was estimated that there were roughly 50,000 soldiers defending the fortress and the city within; Saladar further declared that should the battle turn our way

quickly, many of those 50,000 would abandon the Dread Lord, and join our cause.

As we were soon to find out, however, Curgen had plans of his own.

Even as our armies arrayed themselves that morning, we received our first hint that the battle would not unfold as expected. On the parapets above the gate, there was but a small force of Curgen's soldiers visible. This was puzzling, as the council of generals had expected a significant force of archers to slow the planned assault on the walls. This was explained to me by the scribe Asterte. The two of us had positioned ourselves at the rear of the Northern Armies, on a small rise which we felt would afford us a good view of the fighting. Gathered nearby were several councilors and many members of the Emperor's court, among whom was his daughter Procipinee, whose role in affairs to come would be of surpassing importance.

As Asterte and I discussed what this strategy of the Dread Lord's could mean, Amarian spurred on his horse, and rode out a hundred feet from the men. He then turned to face them, no doubt intending to rouse their passions with speech before battle was fully joined.

At that moment, the fortress gate swung wide, and from it emerged what looked to us to be a few dozen soldiers. Heavily armored soldiers, or so it first appeared. This puzzled all greatly, which was evident in the reaction of the Emperor and Caron, who was commanding the Army of the West. The Duke and two of his lieutenants rode out to join the Emperor, who was watching Curgen's soldiers as they continued their advance towards our lines.

It was only when Salador himself rode down the line, yelling at the top of his lungs something which we on the rise were unable to hear, that our armies were spurred into action. To the surprise of Asterte and myself, the soldiers in the front ranks stepped aside, and those bearing crossbows hurried forward.

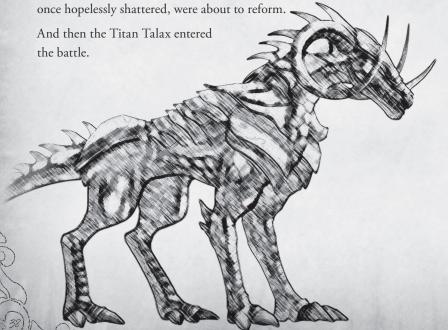
"The Destiny preserve us." This was the girl Procipinee who had spoken. When I asked her meaning, she pointed to the soldiers who had emerged from the fortress. "Those are not men, nor even Fallen. They are Al-dreet azma," she said, using the Avostan, which surprised me, given her youth. "Those who walk as men by sorcery's aid."

Asterte had a looking-glass, which I now borrowed. Looking through it, I saw that Procipinee was correct. These Al'dreet azma, or golems, moved stiffly, and I saw too that what I had taken to be armor was in fact the very stuff of which they were made. Metal. Flesh and blood, and swords swung by same, would be useless against them. This was why, I realized, Salador had called for crossbows. Some of these struck true, and slowed the creatures. But that was all they could do; slow them. Even as catapults were brought forward, the golems engaged our forces. Men fell by the dozens, and in the chaos of battle, the crossbows could be used only sparingly.

Even as our armies tried to slow the golems, other things emerged from the castle walls. In the haze of dirt, and smoke which rose now from mortars we were now employing, it was difficult for me to see these things clearly. It is certain, though, that they were

neither man nor Fallen, nor even golem, made in the image of man. These were things that must have been made within the Dread Lord's dungeons; experiments that melded beast with man. There were things with fur, and scales; some with several arms, others as tall as the elephant. In this battle now fell Eyrik, and his brother Paol. With my own eyes I saw Sengari, captain of the Duke's armies, and the Duke himself fall, never to rise again.

And now came the Fallen armies, who burst out from not just the gate but from the far sides of the fortress walls, thousands of them. Some of these, too, moved in ways that seemed miraculous, faster by far than even the swiftest among us, faster even than the eye could follow. Yet still our armies fought on; the Emperor somehow managed to stay on his horse, and time and time again, to rally the men. There came a moment when it seemed that our lines,



Asterte writes that Tandis, while he lived, had hoped to sway the Titan Talax from Lord Curgen's side, for it was said that the two of them, Tandis and Talax, had once been as brothers. Yet Nebucha, 41st scribe to the Library at Malaya, records that it was Talax, with his own hands, who slaughtered the sons and daughters of Hosten, and ripped the Emperor himself limb from limb for his act of rebellion, and calls him the blackest and most foul of all the Dread Lords, and irredeemable.

Whatever the truth of these statements, it is a fact that Talax was a fearsome warrior indeed. Where he strode, our soldiers perished by the dozens. He struck down Tar-Thela without mercy, and cut through our ranks like a field-knife through ripened wheat. Some of those with us on the rise began to gather their things, in preparation, I believe, to flee the field, and the retribution of the Dread Lord.

It was then that the first shudderings of cataclysm did occur: a quake in the ground, which I felt as a shifting in the dirt beneath me. I had thought it at first a reflection of the energies expended in battle, till I began to sway back and forth upon my feet.

Asterte, next to me, tumbled to the ground. He tried to rise, and then fell once more.

"What is this?" someone called out.
"What is happening?"

"It is Curgen's doing," Asterte said.
"Gods preserve us. The end of the world has come."

I had not time to ask Asterte what he meant by this. Before us now, the

armies on the field of battle became aware of the event themselves. The fighting ground to a halt as the ground began to shake even more violently. It was as if some great beast, long slumbering in the ground beneath our feet, had at last awakened, and begun to stir.

At once there was a great crack, and on the right side of our lines, where the Army of the West had been, the ground itself split.

One side rose up a full foot in the air. Horses and men alike made sounds of surprise, and terror. The ground cracked again, a line which grew as we watched, snaking its way from our lines to the walls of the fortress itself. Dust, and then pebbles, and then stones began to fall from the air, and then, to renewed shouts, cracks began to appear in the fortress walls themselves.

And with a great rumbling sound, the huge building blocks of Curgen's fortress started to shake themselves free.

Men and Fallen alike ran about in terror, seeking to escape from the rubble raining down from above. The shaking of the ground continued; most of those gathered alongside us on the rise fled. But there was nowhere safe to rup. The ground now split in many places; on the hillside next to me, it cracked open, and swallowed my friend Asterte who was gone in an instant.

No sooner had I absorbed this terrible blow than a second rumbling noise reached my ears. A noise that grew louder with each passing moment, whose source was finally revealed to me as a wall of water, rushing towards the fortress from the direction of the Eastern Sea. The sight of this was at first beyond my comprehension; a wave such as one sees on the sands near a port town, but this one as tall as the fortress walls had been, perhaps taller. I could not understand how such a thing could come to be.

That it was certain death moving towards us, I had little doubt. There was no room for the screams of men and women around me to grow louder, but added now to the noise were hideous wailings of sorrow; on the hill next to me, one woman fell to her knees and began sobbing.

Some tried to flee, and I was knocked to the ground more than once in the process. Managing to find my feet, I helped the girl, Procipinee, regain hers.

We watched together as the wave crashed down upon Imperium's walls, and stood side by side as the rushing sea water enveloped us.

I cannot write intelligently of what came next; whether it was hours, or even days before the waters ebbed, and I found myself somehow, miraculously still alive. Before the few survivors of our once great army came together once more. Before we found

the Emperor, who alone among our leaders had survived the terrible cataclysm that had shattered our world, and blotted out the sun itself.

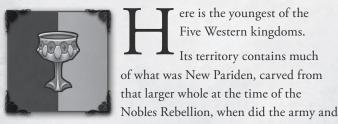
Here ends my account of the battle at Imperium. Next I shall write of our long journey westward, and the dangers our company overcame to reach the safety of New Pariden.





Kingdoms of the West

ALTAR



aristocracy of New Pariden rise up against Queen Procipinee. This rebellion, led by the Lord Relias, did announce the end of New Pariden's rule of the kingdoms of men.

After months of battle, the mountain range known as the Skarps was set as the boundary between the two countries.

The great majority of Altar's people live near to that border, in the valleys to the west of the mountains, along the shores of the river Gandru. Here is the kingdom's richest farmland; as one does travels west, towards the coast, the terrain does grow harder, and is less hospitable.

Though no natural harbor now exists along the western shoreline, here may be found Polis – what remains of fabled Athica's Coriopolis, the greatest city of all the ages of man. To the north, there may be found ports in great number, of which the most important is Binor. Many do say this, apart from the Capitaran port of Calder, is the single most important seaport in the western kingdoms.

In the interior of this land is the weather temperate; in the northern half may be found rich farmland; in the south, much is wasteland. Between the sea and the border with Gilden is now desert, which had been farmland as well.

Altar's capital is Athica, which has been named for the greatest kingdom of man, which perished to the last building in the great cataclysm. It is a young town, whose greatest days are to come. Thus it is a relatively lawless town, with few established laws. Its people are self-reliant, and do

consider that they – not the citizens of New Pariden – are the true inheritors of the Athican Empire's legacy.

CAPITAR



ere is the most prosperous of all the kingdoms of the West, a land whose wealth derives from the vast riches controlled by the legendary traders of Serrane. It was one of those great traders, Duke Walderon I, and

then his son Walderon II, who in the years which followed the cataclysm helped maintained the rule of law and order in the city of Ruvenna and surrounding areas. To do so were they forced to hire mercenaries in ever-increasing numbers to keep their borders secure, and their citizens safe.

In the year 136, one of the generals in that mercenary army, a man named Carrodus, overthrew the reigning council of Lords, and did establish the republic of Capitar. This was a republic in name only, as all important decisions were made by Carrodus and his officers.

Yet Carrodus was soon corrupted by power himself; those who refused to obey his commands were enslaved. Many were forced to fight in the Games at the port city of Calder; among their number was one of Carrodus's former generals, Tarth. In the year 153, this Tarth led a rebellion of slaves that seized control of the southern portion of Capitar, leading to the creation of the republic of Tarth in that portion of the continent.

The interior of this kingdom, bordering the central wastes, remains dead and dying plains. Whole cities there – formerly important stops along the great trade routes of the Serrane merchant caravans – are deserted. Deserted too, are the great iron mines in the Skarps along the northwest border of the country, though General Carrodus has now declared reopening those

mines – and resuming production of iron ore, and the weaponry that can be generated from same – a matter of great urgency.

The army of Capitar, once the most feared fighting force on the continent, is no longer as highly regarded as it once was, though given its overwhelming numbers, no match for it currently exists on the continent.

Capitar's wealthiest cities remain Ruvenna, in the interior of the continent, along the Galain river, and the port city of Calder, on the bay of Capacea, between the two halves of the continent. The leading merchants make their home in one (if not both) of those cities, and do live like lords.

GILDEN



his kingdom occupies the southern portion of the Western continent; that portion which before the cataclysm did call itself Zabril, and before that, Bantree, which is said to be the oldest of all the Kingdoms of Men in the West.

To the west and north are the Lesser Skarps, which form the boundaries of this land. Tan-takreet, in the north, on the shores of Lake Zabril, is the kingdom's capital, and the center of commerce. In the south, along the Sulassi river, is the restored city of ancient Bantree, now grown to be the country's largest port. In the east is found the Lombard Desert, which grows a dozen miles every year in size. South of Lake Zabril is jungle which cannot be crossed, as it is occupied by race of warriors known as the Drota.

The wealth of the country is found in the mines to the north of Lake Zabril; metals and precious ores that are sold to all of the Kingdoms of the West. It has come to my ear, my queen, that these ores are sold sometimes to the East as well, to the shame of mankind everywhere.

As in the oldest days, this is a land of jungles and deserts; of exotic tribes, and dark secrets. A place of sorcery and primitive cultures, some of which survived the cataclysm. Order was brought out of chaos here by forces of the miners' guild, who came down



from the mountains in search of arable farmland, and water, which they found, so it was told to me, in the cities surrounding Lake Zabril, in the western portion of the country. By the year 100 A.C., the Guild had united the cities around Lake Zabril into Confederation. That very year, a ship captained by Enil Markinn, a trader from Tan-takreet, was the first to reach the city of Zad-Zabril, capital of that kingdom, at the southern edge of the lake.

The city was largely intact, but completely uninhabited. Markinn led a search party into the rain forests to the south of the lake. From that moment on was he gone from the sight of man; for eight long years there was no word of him. Then one day did Markinn return to Tan-takreet, with exotic goods that made his fortune.

Markinn did also return with a companion, a woman of exotic beauty named Sanjo, who was said to be Zad-Zabril's sole survivor. She became then his second, and it was with her help, so say many, that he did ascend to a position of prominence within the Confederation. In the year 121 did Markinn create and assume the throne of the Confederation, which now he renamed the Kingdom of Gilden.

NEW PARIDEN



ew Pariden was founded by the Queen Procipinee, adopted daughter of Amarian III, ruler of the free cities of the North, following her journey west and escape from the great Cataclysm. First was a city founded, on the

western shore of the continent, north of the ruins of Coriopolis. In

short course was the country of the same name was formally established.

Soon did its borders grow five-fold; city and surrounding countryside provided refuge to those made homeless by the cataclysm, and to those whose homes were no longer safe to occupy. Yet though borders were drawn, not all of New Pariden was under firm control by the queen's armies. Indeed, it may be said that many of those villages that managed to survive the cataclysm regarded the Queen and her allies as strangers come to their land. They did call them 'Westernlings,' in the common tongue, and did consider that they had no more right to rule them than the barbarians of the interior.

These tensions continued to grow throughout the country during its first hundred years of existence; it was said by many that Queen Procipinee's manner grew imperious, and autocratic, and won her few friends among the leaders of these towns.

When Relias did return from the East, and attempted to warn the Queen of the growing threat of the Fallen Empires he did



find there, he was summarily dismissed by the Queen. Then was The tallest of the Greater Skarps is Thela's Peak. It is 15,000 feet he imprisoned for daring to publicly question her judgment. high – its summit has never been reached by any man. There is a Then was the country was ripe for rebellion. Then did the Nobles myth associated with the mountain; the top is said to have been revolt, and there was war. And Relias and the Nobles did win where the Emerald Sorceress, Tar-Thela, rested during her escape that war, and then was formed Altar, and New Pariden was much from the Dread Lord Kir-Tion's influence. According to this myth, diminished in size. she had secreted within a cavern at the top of this mountain a small shard of power; this cavern is said to be guarded by fearsome This kingdom's eastern boundary with Capitar is defined by the creatures who she charged with the safety of her prize. Skarps. There is a split in the range – a natural gap, through which the remnants of both the Lord Protectors' road and the Gandru The desolate forests and wastes in the country's interior are also River runs. The range to the north of that gap is much taller, said to be home to a tribe of barbarians, who prey on travelers higher – these are the Greater Skarps. To the south, the mountains journeying to or from the coast along what remains of the Lord fall off into foothills which end at the border with Tarth. These are Protectors' road. the Lesser Skarps.

A thriving business in furniture carved from the hardwoods of the dead forest provides the engine for the country's economy. Most of this furniture transits from New Pariden seaward, and then to the various kingdoms of man. There have been those who seek to dredge the old Gandru river and establish trade eastward directly across the continent with Capitar; they have yet to succeed.

New Pariden is known also for its library, where Queen Procipinee secreted away the treasures of the old Empire. These are guarded by the Queen's Librarians, who give up their secrets reluctantly.

New Pariden is home to many of the most noble families from the old Empire, those who made the Eternal March with the Queen. They are wealthy but have achieved little in these new days. The port also does a thriving trade in pre-cataclysmic jewelry, and objects d'art.

TARTH



ere is a land thought to be worthless, swampland and rock plains along the Capacean Bay which has now found value. Once was this part of great Capitar, but when the slaves did revolt and demand freedom, this was

the land given to them by Carrodus. But now has been discovered fields of kinakrul, a grain which has a variety of uses, which has been farmed throughout this land. Now the country's wealth has grown, though many say the Lady Irane, who rules Tarth, has yet to distribute that wealth to her people.

It was Irane's father, himself named Tarth, who led the revolt against General Carrodus and the Lords of Capitar. He perished

in the second year of his reign, and it is Irane – herself a veteran of Carrodus's arena – who has ruled since then. My queen, though she is a masterful warrior, she is also insensitive to the needs of her people, driven as she has been since childhood by her father's ideals, and the need to rescue him from the arena, she finds herself a little at sea when it comes to dealing with issues concerning day-to-day governance.

The most important (and by far the largest) town in Tarth is the port city of Hope.

The army of Tarth is second to none in terms of its capabilities, and prowess in battle. Even the women and children are fearsome fighters. They are a highly-trained, highly disciplined fighting force, whose resolve is near superman. Were there more of them, they would constitute the greatest army upon the continent.



The Sovereigns of the West

the land:

known

LORD RELIAS

Queen Procipinee.

ere is the fabled adventurer in whose exploits and travels are to all peoples of the Western kingdoms. He is renowned for his skill with a sword and for his mastery of hand-to-hand combat techniques which were learned from the Great General Carrodus of Capitar. He is now a channeler of great ability as well, though not within the highest ranks of the more powerful sorcerers of the Third Era such as Magesta, and the

Born in the city of New Pariden, third son of Lord and Lady Tice, as a youth Relias demonstrated little interest in much of anything save for sport, and the girls at Procipinee's court. His fledgling magical capabilities he ignored; his duties to his parents and his estate he neglected as well. At the age of 25, he was deputized by Queen Procipinee to journey forth in

her name and catalog the countries and geography of the post-Cataclysmic world. The mission was intended to occupy no more than a year of two of the young man's time. Yet Relias, so long accustomed to the decadent life of the new Pariden nobility, found purpose in this assignment. He assembled a company of the West's most skilled warriors and learned scholars, and spent the next several years exploring the world. He crossed the mountains into the rain forests of ancient Zabril, and befriended there the Miner's Guild, the powers behind the new kingdom of Gilden; he journeyed north, into the Central Wastes, and fought there the creature known as the Cro-ag; he journeyed south along the Galain River to Ruvenna, and from there made his way to the new kingdom of Capitar, where he met that country's leader, General Carrodus. It has been said to me that during this time did Relias's disillusionment with the Queen began, as he learned from Irane of Procipinee's refusal to wield the spell of restoration on some of the more desolate lands within the new kingdom of Tarth.

After three years exploring the west, Relias set sail from the port of Calder, in Capitar, bound for the eastern continent. Eight of his company – seven men and one woman, Shirayn, daughter of Shandar, chief of the great library at New Pariden –



Seven years later did Lord Relias return. Alone.

He told no stories of what befell him on arrival at the Eastern continent. What happened to Shirayn, or his companions. I have heard rumors over the years; the entire company had been captured by Fallen, and taken to Imperium, where they were separated, and sold as slaves. Relias made a pact with the channeler Karavox, ruler of Kraxis, a pact in which he sold his companions to Kul-al-Kulan for use in dark experiments which may not be named. None of these things has been proven to me true. What is fact is Relias's return to New Pariden, and his subsequent falling-out with the Queen. He was imprisoned, and then freed, and then war did come to New Pariden. At the end of it, Relias was Lord of the New Kingdom of Altar.

QUEEN PROCIPINEE

aughter of Amarian III, Queen Procipinee I remains the greatest channeler of the New Age. Her powers have been instrumental in restoring life to the shattered lands surrounding New Pariden, and in keeping her subjects safe.

Born in the Free City of Valgona in the eighth year before Cataclysm, eldest daughter and second in line to the throne of the East, Procipinee became her father's heir with the death of her brother Prodnander in the battle at Imperium. When, in the wake of that battle, the world fell, she was forced to flee alongside her father and his companions as they sought a place of refuge and safety from the Fallen Armies pursuing them.

Their journey, as chronicled by Ezmir the Scribe, himself a

participant in its events, became known as the Eternal March. For more than fifteen years, Procipinee, Amarian, and a few thousand survivors of the Army of Man – the forces of East and West, joined together to confront the Dread Lord Curgen – made their way west, in search of civilization. She endured the horrors of Grazna and N'itvaganesh; the death of her father at the Henge, and a rebellion - soldiers who had no interest

in obeying the orders

of a child – that stripped away all but a hundred of her companions, to found the kingdom of New Pariden.

She has ruled now for nigh on two hundred years; it is possible she will rule for two hundred more, though her appearance – that of a woman of middling years

 belies her true age, thanks to her abilities as a channeler.

She has been married a handful of times; over the last fifty years, however, it has been her habit to take companions, rather than establish any long-lasting relationships. She has had two children: a

son, Amarian Prodnander, named for her father and brother, who died under mysterious circumstances, and a daughter, Magesta, born of an unknown father, whose own abilities as a channeler allow her to appear considerably younger as well.

Though Procipinee is advised by many – merchants, councilors, ministers, family members and friends – she holds all power, and the ability to make all decisions of import – in her own hands. There are many who take offense to her manner, and her method of ruling; it is clear she cares little for their concerns. In my theory, this is due to the formative experiences she endured during the Eternal March, when strength and iron will was necessary for survival. As has been said, it is only the strongest of rulers who can inspire the loyalty and obedience necessary for civilization to persevere in dark times such as these.

GENERAL CARRODUS

ere, my queen, is what I have learned of this man.

Born somewhere in the Central

Wastelands, on a day he never knew, of parents he no longer remembers, Carrodus – huge even as a boy, a giant of a man when full grown – made his way to the city of Ruvenna as a youth and survived there, working as a thief and pickpocket, until he was old enough to be trained as a soldier by the mercenaries who served the Merchant-Lords of Surrane and Calder. A natural fighter, by the time he was shaving he was in charge of his own regiment; by the time he had been with the army for a half-dozen years he commanded a thousand men;

another half-dozen years, and he had been made general of the entire army.

It was soon after this that, dissatisfied with the policies of the Merchant Lords towards the barbarians of the interior, tired of losing his men in senseless battles designed to preserve a status quo he did not subscribe to, Carrodus marched into a meeting those Lords were holding in Calder, and demanded a say in the policies he was charged with enforcing. Elmloch, then-duke of Calder, told him to, in effect, be quiet and follow orders.

Carrodus drew his sword and beheaded the Duke.

Over the span of the next dozen years, Carrodus consolidated his power, forming a new country – Capitar – which encompassed not only the cities of Ruvenna and Calder and territory along the Galain river connecting them, but the nearer portions of the

Central Wastes as well... the very place where Carrodus had been born.

As his power grew, however, so did dissension among the men he commanded. Many of them wanted a share not just of power, but the wealth of the traders. Carrodus – who himself disdained, by and large, the trappings of wealth, refused. Others under his command were appalled by the brutal techniques he used to subdue the peoples of the

Wastes; one of those thus horrified, a lieutenant named Tarth, was himself sold into slavery for his refusal to obey Carrodus's orders.

A dozen years later, Tarth led a revolt among his fellow slaves; a bloody uprising in the lands south of Calder which led to Carrodus granting freedom to the rebels, as well as a tract of land along the coast thought worthless swamp at the time. Events have since proven that land supplies the perfect growing conditions for the grain kinakrul, which is in the process of turning Tarth into a country with wealth of its own – a fact Carrodus greatly resents.

Nearing his seventh decade of life, his fourth decade in power, Carrodus shows no signs of slowing down. He still takes to the saddle to fight alongside his men when necessary, and retains the skills to make that combat no empty display of valor.

Though he has several wives, and multiple offspring, none have shown themselves capable of succeeding him; as he grows older, the search for an heir is ever on his mind.

If Carrodus has one regret, my queen,
it is that not all his power can do
what the channelers of lands
such as Altar and Pariden can;
restore life to those regions
of Capitar that nearly two
hundred years after
the Cataclysm, remain
desolate wasteland.

LORD ENIL MARKINN

ord Markinn was responsible for the rebirth of the Miners Guild, and the first among their number to actively seek out trade for their ore in the cities surrounding Lake Zabril. Raised by miners turned farmers in the time after the cataclysm, by the time he was twenty, he had helped establish a market for the Guild's ore with the blacksmiths and craftsman of Tan-ta-kreet, at the northwestern edge of Lake Zabril. Soon did he purchase two of the half-dozen remaining sailing ships built in the time before this one by the Lords of Zabril to encourage trade along the lake. It was in one of these ships, the *Century*, that Markinn – who though not trained as a sailor, often served as captain on his vessels, making decisions on course, destination, and length of stay – discovered the ruins of the legendary city of Zad-Zabril.



This altered his destiny, and that of many others. Before this, Markinn was, for all his achievements, a simple man. He had met and married a woman named Gertran, herself a daughter of miners, even before he had turned eighteen. By the time he was in his thirties, they had eight children, and an impressive home in a small town called Krayben's Leap, halfway between Tan-ta-kreet and the mountains where Markinn was born. Though he had accumulated great personal wealth, he spent his money modestly.

Markinn and the *Century* discovered the ruins of Zad-Zabril while surveying the southern tip of Lake Zabril; the former capital of the

pre-cataclysmic kingdom of Zabril – had long

been presumed destroyed. Surprisingly, though, Markinn and his men found many of its buildings intact – though they also discovered hundreds of skeletons scattered across the city plazas, which themselves were stained with blood and gore nearly a century old.

Many of Markinn's men, who knew Zabril's reputation as a place of dark magic, of death-magic, wished to leave immediately. Such was their respect for Markinn, though, that when he declared his wish to form expeditionary parties to seek out any survivors, they did stay, and enter the jungle.

Those parties were formed. Those explorers entered the jungle.

Eight years later, Markinn returned, accompanied by only half the men he had gone out with.

By that point, of course, his family and friends, his companions and colleagues in the Miners Guild, had all assumed him long dead. The *Century's* return to Tan-ta-Kreet, nearly a decade after its departure, was the cause of much concern. Particularly when Markinn debarked his vessel accompanied by a beautiful young woman named Sanjo, who he introduced to the leaders of the Guild as a channeler of 'uncommon ability.'



Within a year, she had moved in with him, as his consort. They constructed a great estate on the outskirts of Tan-takreet; Markinn cut off all contact with his wife, and children.

His wealth grew, as did his influence on the council, as rivals to his interests either ceded advantage to him or disappeared – and died – mysteriously.

In the year 121 A.C., Markinn abolished the Guild council that had ruled the city, and put forth a charter for the kingdom of Gilden, with Tan-ta-Kreet as its capital, and himself – and Sanjo – as its rulers.

Physically, Markinn, despite his advanced age, maintains the vigorous appearance of a man in his early fifties. He is tall, and solidly built, with graying dark hair.

THE LADY IRANE

his woman is the only child of the great Gladiator Tarth, for whom the country she now leads was named. Irane is, in many ways, her father's physical twin. She has the same features, though at six feet and a hundred seventy pounds in full armor is nowhere near the same size. Still, she is as much warrior as queen.

It is my opinion, my queen, that as her entire life has been spent living in her father's shadow: his presence – and absence – has shaped her every action. When she was a child, Tarth – then an officer in the mercenary army of Capitar, led by General



Carrodus - was always away at battle, and so to impress him when she came home, Irane practiced the arts of battle with the boys, eschewing the more ladylike pursuits of other female children. When Tarth denounced General Carrodus's barbaric actions in the Central Wastes, and was then stripped of rank and enslaved, she refused to be packed off with

her mother to the general's household in Calder, and instead disguised herself as a slave and made her way to her father's side.

She was there when Tarth led a revolt of slaves in the Games; she stood at his side as the rebellion grew, and eventually led to all out war against Carrodus's armies. Irane was there as well, when the free republic of Tarth was established in the swamplands to the south of Calder.

She became one of her father's closest advisers; the two of them spent more time together than ever before. Yet it is my observation that it was in these years that Irane's devotion turned to resentment, and occasionally to anger.

This may have been due to the

This may have been due to the fact that her parents remained apart; that her father had a series of romantic relationships with girls barely older than she was.

There were, or so I have been told, conflicts over policy; or rather, Irane's lack of involvement in policy. Though she had a seat on the council, it is clear

Tarth expected her to be little more than a rubber-stamp



for his own orders, never allowing for the possibility that she might have opinions of her own. He treated her like the child she had been; they began to fight for the first time in their lives. One particularly bitter conflict came over the wealth the first year of kinakrul cultivation brought into the republic's coffers. Tarth wanted to share it with the citizens; Irane wanted to set it aside as a surplus to draw on. The argument grew so intense she actually left a banquet being given in her father's honor by some of his former officers, who

a rapprochement between Carrodus and Tarth.

Thus, Irane was not at Tarth's side when he died later than night, under what she regarded as suspicious circumstances.

had journeyed all the way from Calder in the hopes of affecting

To this day, she believes Carrodus was behind her father's death; she refuses, despite pleas from her associates, to make any sort of trade agreement with the General's representatives, or even merchants from Calder who have shown themselves to be independent from Carrodus.

She prefers instead to build up her country's own infrastructure, at the port of Hope, on the Bay of Calder. To date, she has had little success.

There are other problems within the republic as well. While gladiators make – and in many cases, were already – good soldiers, many had a hard time adjusting to the life of a farmer, and performing the kind of patient, painstaking work that successful cultivation of kinakul requires.



Irane has few close friends; one of those is a young channeler, a girl named Arriana from New Pariden. She is not yet entirely trusted by her people; her rule continues – as she is well aware of – because of her association with, and resemblance to, her father.

The Empires of the East

KRAXIS



ere, my queen, is a land of traitors. Many men – most descendants of those soldiers who comprised the great army of Mankind that marched on the Dread Lord Curgen's fortress at Imperium in the time before this

one, soldiers from Ruvenna in the West, from the Free Cities in the North – have made their home here, and make their living dealing with the very Fallen who slaughtered their ancestors. The majority of these are settled in the west, in the port town of Tanacabra, on the bay of Capacea, and the villages surrounding this town. These men must make their living through trade, for the land here which is not desolate is worthless sea marsh and swamp.

There are Fallen who dwell in this territory as well; they are of the lower caste of that race, and not regarded well by others of their kind. They have settled to the east in this territory, in the foothills of the Spine, and are brutish and foul-tempered creatures. It must be said, though, that they are fierce warriors, and should not be approached by any party which does not have sword and tribute to parley with.

The northern border of Kraxis is the river Kandra, which I believe to be the remnants of the Gandru, which flowed once through this part of the world to Imperium. Though the water here is but a stream compared to the mighty river of the west, and is not fit for trading vessels of any size to navigate.

To the south, in the interior of this territory, is the city of Goyarh Hedigah, which is two days ride from the beginnings of the Fist, and the borders of Yithril. I can find no soul who is aware of the history of this place from the time before this one, and yet within Goyarh Hedigah are structures more magnificent than any even in New Pariden, buildings which are not rubble but newly constructed.

In the center of this city is found the Emperor Karavox's palace. This is a building of black onyx, a shining black stone which is found only in the Jinjun, deep in the heart of Yithril, a rock of great strength and beauty. The fortresses raised by the

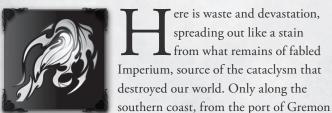


Patricide within the underground world of Calebethon, Grazna and N'it'va'ganesh, these were made of onyx as well. The rock must be quarried with especial care, for despite its strength it is quick to shatter, and so this task was, in the time before this one, in the charge of a Guild of Stonemasons who dwelt in Ascana, none of whom survived the great destruction.

This is the greatest mystery I have found on the Eastern continent, one which I hope to explore within the library at New Pariden upon my return.

Tribute from all corners of the land is paid to the emperor, who has two full legions of soldiers with which to enforce his will.

MAGNAR



ranging east, is there life. Those mountains previously known as the Spine of the Empire, or Morrigan's Spine, which are now called the Spine, enter this land like tentacles, their foothills and peaks spreading east to the ruined coast of the Great Sea, and south to the plains of Balbalona, the once fertile crescent of land that fed the Dread Lord's Empire.

We entered from the west, coming through the Spine, which forms the western border with Kraxis. Soon we reached the high steppes. Here the land itself retains the smell of sulphur, and death. We rode these steppes on a week before encountering a living soul of any kind, when we did descend to the dead and dry riverbed of the Kandra, which I have since learned is considered to form the northern border of this territory. Here we fought and slew some half-dozen Fallen brigands who intended to do the same to us. The rocks along the Kandra's edge we found burned black, as if by a great fire. We rode this way for days, and on many

occasions, found clustered groups of skeletons – men, women, children, Fallen, all with various bones cracked and scratched, all huddled together for safety against what nameless horrors I cannot imagine.

In the center of the country we came across a great lake, which was composed of water foul and brackish, which stank faintly of death itself. There was life within these waters, however, and dangerous life, which was responsible for the deaths of two of our party, my Queen, as we attempted to cross the lake in a boat we had constructed. After this incident, we resolved to journey around the lake by foot once more.

On the twenty-first day of our travels, we came upon the remnants of the Lord Protector's Road, which we did follow south. Now at last we found signs of life, hints of grass and shrub, running water, and a scattering of small settlements which we carefully avoided, as the Fallen here bear animus towards man that will never be settled.

On the thirtieth day of our travels, we came within sight of fabled Imperium's walls. But though we had letters of passage from Karavox, we were not permitted within the ruins of the city. At the lady Shirayn's encouragement, I did under cover of night pass beyond the walls. Within though, the streets were unnaturally quiet, and I found no living creatures on which to spy, though more than once, I did note the flicker of candlelight from a window, or catch a shadow of movement within a building. I had the sense, my queen, that the streets were not only quiet, but unsafe, though nothing was said to me to indicate thus.

After a brief meeting with the Emperor, we were escorted from the shadow of Imperium to the Lord Protector's Road once more, and from there to the port of Gremon, which sits at the very southern tip of this territory. There were men there – traitors from Kraxis, I have no doubt – merchants selling the goods of the West to the abominations of the East. This distressed all of us greatly.

RESOLN



ere is a land of rock and crag, of earth and stone, and Fallen warriors as harsh and unforgiving as the territory they occupy. In the west, along the bay, the coasts are sheer cliffs, a thousand feet high where the continent itself

split. The Fallen who live here congregate around a single town – Hagudst - hewn from the rock itself over the course of a hundred years.

To the east, abutting the Spine, which here is barren and coated with ice for much of the year, are isolated tribes of Fallen creatures



who eke out sustenance from the Kandra. Much of the land along this river, as in the interior, is a rich clay, which holds the promise of life, but the Fallen here, as elsewhere, show no interest in raising crops, or animals.

In the north of Resoln, a week's ride from the Kandra, is the Keep, which stands fast and strong as the day the Emperor raised it. A village which is known variously as Amarian's Outpost, or simply Outpost, has grown to the south of the Keep, within sight of the fortress's walls. Should any dare attack, the villagers will find it easy to reach safety within.

In the south, bordering Kraxis, is the Kandra, as I have said.

In Hagudst to the west has been built an arena for training, and it is here that warriors from all tribes in this territory and elsewhere in the East are brought to learn the arts of combat. It is required of all male Fallen to attend this training, upon penalty of excommunication from the tribe. There are females who train here as well, right alongside the male, and they seem to me equally fierce warriors. Many are hired by the merchants of Kraxis to the south.

UMBER



ere lie the remnants of the great Empire once ruled by the most cunning of all Titans, the Lady Umber. Here is the greatest of the devastation wrought by the cataclysm. Here has a mountain range risen from the

land, some two hundred miles to the east of the Spine, to split the Lady's Empire in two. These mountains, which are called variously the Voylin and the Herdara, are as wide as the Spine, though barely half the height of those great peaks.

To the west of the Voylin, for hundreds of miles between Spine and these new mountains, the land is barren waste. Steppes that once were home to the free cities of men – Valgona, Eldric, and the like - are now lifeless. East of the Voylin, vicious, lawless tribes of Fallen roam, desperate creatures all; they are as likely to turn on each other as any who intrude on their territory. The northern part of this territory is frozen wasteland; a trading post called Rigalnor has arisen in the center of the new mountain steppes. Herds of wild horses and donthrali roam the great plateau that has been named Keenala Bon; a skilled horseman can capture and tame some of these creatures.

On the coast, the port of Cyndrum, once the largest of all cities ruled by the Fallen, home to thirty thousand of their kind, is reduced to rubble, though the outskirts are still inhabited. There is no safe port on this coast for trading vessels of any size; the sea here is ruled by waves approaching forty feet in height.

In Cyndrum lives, it is rumored, the last of the living Titans, the Dread Lord Talax, though none I spoke with have ever seen him.

YITHRIL



ere only has life survived the destruction of the world that was. In Yithril remains jungle and swamp, grassland and forest, filled with creatures I thought myth until crossing the Fist to reach this land. Ape, and great cat;

bamru and beaked owl. I am no artist, but I have done my best to capture these in the sketches I have sent.

Here is the geography of this land; all along the north is desert, which is called the Fist, which makes the border between Yithril and Kraxis. This desert spans the width of the country, and the length of fifty miles, two evenings ride, as it cannot be crossed during the day because of the heat and sun.

At the edge of the Fist, sand rises to grassland for the span of a few miles, and then becomes jungle. I think this growth new, since the time of the cataclysm, as beneath fern and tree my companions and I did often spy road, and remnants of city. The age of these ruins I could not date, but they seemed to me new.

In the very heart of Yithril is found a great lake within a mountain. This lake is called Kalmar, and it is the source of life for the first of the Fallen tribes we did encounter in this territory. From Kalmar we struck west for the coast, and found in the port town of Ahilga Fallen in greater numbers.

In Ahilga we heard rumors of a much greater civilization, in the remnants of Malaya, to the south. This land, I was unable to reach.

The Sovereigns of the East

THE EMPEROR KARAVOX

aravox claims descent from the warlord Kraxis, whose name is forever damned in the annals of man, who the Hiergamenon tells us slew the Emperor Amarian at the Henge after the raising of the great bridge. Yet though I have had audience with Karavox, I cannot be sure of which race - man, or Fallen - he was truly born. The throne on which he sat was many feet from me, and the candles that lit the chamber burned down to near their last. Yet I am certain of one thing: he is no ordinary being, but a channeler of surpassing abilities. It is my suspicion, though I have no proof, that it is with his magics he has both raised the great palace at Goyarh Hedigah, and restored a semblance of life to the land immediately surrounding the city, which was unnaturally green and lush when I did visit there.

It is rumored that Karavox seeks to expand the boundaries of his empire through alliance with Magnar in the East, and perhaps others as well.

MAGNAR III

is is the blackest, most twisted heart of all I encountered in the East, my queen. He is Fallen, ancient beyond reckoning, whose skin is thin as paper, and beneath it his veins may be seen to pulse, and his bones to move. This Magnar - who is said to be descended of the first Magnar, who was said to be the first of the Fallen created by the Dread Lord, thousands of years in the past, in the time that was – is small of stature, and whip-thin. He has but a croak for a voice, one that I often had to strain to hear as we met outside the walls of great Imperium, in the tent his guards constructed for that purpose. He bade myself and the lady Shirayne to be his guests within the city, and assured us that the others would be safe outside the walls of Imperium, but this assurance I did not trust, and did refuse his invitation. At this, his mood turned black. He left us, and my companions and I were escorted from the vicinity of Imperium immediately thereafter.

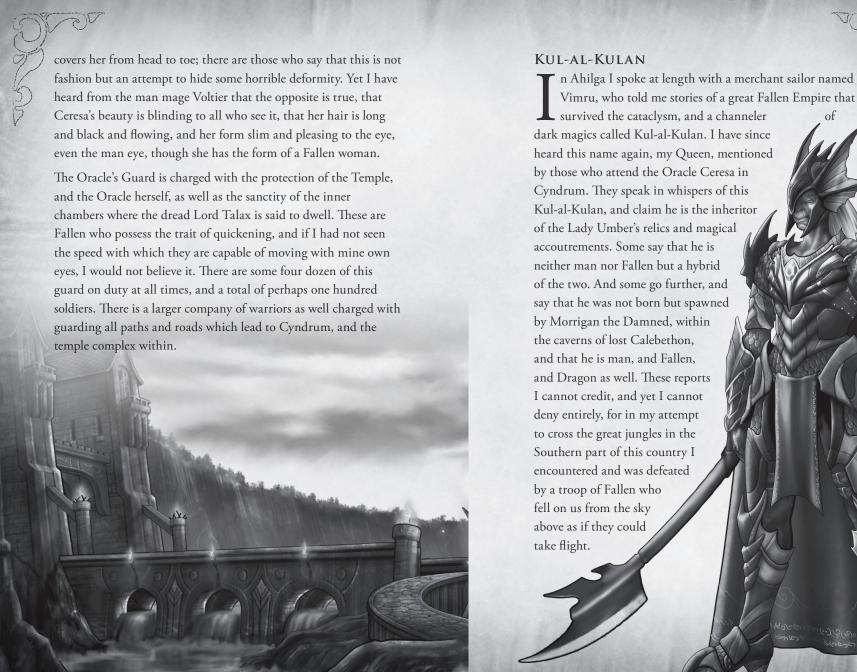
Lord

It was told to me that before the Dread perished, he bestowed upon Magnar all the secrets he had learned in his time upon our world, the darkest of magics, the knowledge of life and death that enabled Curgen to shape the Fallen to his own purposes. It was also told that Magnar, in the century that had passed since the great Cataclysm, had begun experiments of his own, experiments which surpassed

the Dread Lord's in cruelty and dark imagination, and that he used the living as the fodder for these experiments. These things, my queen, were firm in my mind as the Emperor and I spoke, and I saw the truth of them reflected in his eyes, which regarded me in such a way as to put fear into my heart.

THE WARLORD VERGA ost fearsome of all Fallen fighters I did encounter during my sojourn in the East. He stood as a freak of nature, full ten feet high, and holding an axe with which he cut through the neck of a horse with a single blow. His might is prodigious, as is his skill with weaponry. His fighters are trained as well, and obey his orders without question. Verga and his tribe are nomadic; they carry all they own with them, plundering and pillaging from the smaller settlements in the interior, and sometimes waging war upon the larger cities as well. Here must I note that the Warlord has an abiding hatred for all men, and it was only through a stroke of fortune we were able to escape being slaughtered.

THE ORACLE CERESA In the temple of the Destiny, in the center of once-great Cyndrum, is now found the Oracle Ceresa, whose favor and pronouncements the leaders among the Fallen tribes seek. She claims to speak for the last of the Titans, the Dread Lord Talax, who is said to dwell within the great maze at the heart of the Temple. This, I can neither confirm nor deny. But I have, with my own eyes, seen the Oracle perform magics of the highest difficulty, and I have, with my own ears, heard the pronouncements she has made for some of those chieftains come to see her, and later witnessed the truth of those pronouncements. For myself, the Oracle did foresee that one day I would be king, and that has come true as well. Ceresa wears a cloak of midnight black that



The Testimony of Guketh

Being tales of the Dread Lords Curgen, and Kir-Tion; the Arnor Tar-Thela, who is known also as the Emerald Sorceress; Hosten I, called the Nemesis of the Gods, and his son the Patricide, also called Morrigan the mad, and the labyrinth known as Calebethon, which was built in the time before this one; of the Fallen, and of Dragons, who are gone from this world)

Now follows the testimony of Guketh of Yithril, as recorded by Relias during his travels in the East. The Lord did speak with this creature, who is both Fallen and Sion, who claimed immortality akin to that of the Titans, on three separate occasions. Here now, as written in the hand of Relias's scribe Shirayn, are the tales Guketh told regarding his past, and the past of our world.

So signed: Janusk, Scribe to the King at Athic

OF THE DREAD LORDS CURGEN & KIR-TION

RELIAS: Speak your name.

GUKETH: I am Guketh, of Yithril.

RELIAS: You are Fallen.

GUKETH: I am Sion.

RELIAS: You claim to be a thousand years old.

GUKETH: It is truth, Relias, son of man. I was born in the shadow of great Imperium, in the time before this one. In the world that was.

RELIAS: You are immortal.

GUKETH: Perhaps. We shall see.

RELIAS: You have spoken to me of these times. Will you tell these tales once more, so that my scribe may write them?

GUKETH: I will. Who shall I speak of first?

RELIAS: The Dread Lord Curgen.

GUKETH: Ah. But his story, I cannot tell without telling that of Kir-Tion, who was his brother.

RELIAS: Then...

GUKETH: I shall tell both. For their names are bound together now, for all time, in death.

RELIAS: As in life. They came to this world together, did they not?

GUKETH: Shall I tell the story, man, or you?

RELIAS: You.



GUKETH: A wise choice. This is the tale as it was given to me by Magnar himself, who was the very first of our kind. In those times did Curgen rule in Imperium, and Kir-Tion in the south, in the lands that had been Al-Ashteroth. There was war between the two of them, constant strife, and great destruction, and one day I asked Magnar the source of the enmity. And this is what he said.

Once Curgen and Kir-Tion were comrades, and had many brave and strange adventures together, before they came to this world. They fought together, side by side, until the day that Kir-Tion was wounded in battle, and fell dying. Curgen would not allow death to steal his friend, though, and bestowed some of his essence on Kir-Tion, that he might regain his strength and live. And this is what happened. But what neither realized was that the part of Curgen now in Kir-Tion not only bound the two together, closer than ever before, but gave Curgen a measure of control over Kir-Tion. His will, he could impose on his brother. And little by little, this came to pass.

Thus it was that when the Dread Lords came to our world, it was Curgen who led, and Kir-Tion who followed. This was no small source of friction and enmity between the two.

For a thousand years Kir-Tion did as he was bid, gathering the enchantment of the world at Curgen's direction. Then came a time when Kir-Tion's travels took him to the ruins of ancient Al-Ashteroth, far in

the south of the continent. There did he discover secrets that the great Magi of this world had gathered, the books of Az-Adoras –

RELIAS: This is so? Az-Adoras himself?

GUKETH: It is.

RELIAS: You have seen these books?

GUKETH: I have. But they are long lost in the cataclysm, man.

But in them, there were spells written down, magics that allowed Kir-Tion to free himself of Curgen's influence. Thus it was that he raised himself up as king in the south, and did plot and scheme a way to have his revenge on the Dread Lord Curgen, who had mastered him against his will. And then –

RELIAS: Tar-Thela.

GUKETH: Yes. Who is telling this story, man? You or I?

RELIAS: You. Forgive me.

GUKETH: No matter. I would rest a moment.

OF TAR-THELA, THE EMERALD SORCERESS

RELIAS: You are ready to proceed?

GUKETH: I am.

RELIAS: You were speaking of Kir-Tion, and his downfall. And Tar-Thela.

GUKETH: Yes. I will speak of her now. The Emerald Sorceress.

RELIAS: Go on.





GUKETH: Your scribe is beautiful, Relias.

RELIAS: She is.

GUKETH: Yet her beauty is as nothing beside that of Tar-Thela, whose appearance captivated all who beheld her, Titan and man.

RELIAS: And Fallen?

GUKETH: That word. Do not use it. I am Sion. But yes. Yes, when first I saw her, I desired Tar-Thela as well. She was bound then to Kir-Tion. This was in Al-Ashteroth, when first I was captured.

RELIAS: Curgen sent you.

GUKETH: Yes. There were eight of us. A war party, but our capture was fully intended by the Dread Lord, who saw it as the only way for us to enter Kir-Tion's house.

And so I did. First as slave, then servant, and finally councillor. Near one hundred years I was there.

RELIAS: With Tar-Thela.

GUKETH: On occasion. This was long after she had journeyed the length and breadth of the land for Kir-Tion, and had obtained the power of the shards for him. She was rarely seen.

RELIAS: She was queen, though? Was she not? Or -

GUKETH: Queen, but not a willing one. You see, Relias, she was bound to that Dread Lord, in the same way he had been bound to Curgen aeons earlier. Kir-Tion's essence lived in her, and thus she was compelled to obey his commands. She never fought for him, not when the

armies of Imperium laid siege to Al-Ashteroth, not when Curgen himself entered the throne room of Az-Adoras. Many who considered themselves her friends were slaughtered that day, and she stood by. She did nothing.

RELIAS: You did not kill her, though.

GUKETH: No. We brought her back to Imperium.

RELIAS: A trophy.

GUKETH: Have a care, Relias. Do not speak of Tar-Thela in that manner.

RELIAS: Do not speak to me in that voice, creature. You forget where you are.

GUKETH: I forget nothing. I will repay you for these indignities one day.

RELIAS: You are paying me now. With your knowledge.

GUKETH: Perhaps I will stop, then.

RELIAS: I will do as I promised, Guketh. I will set you free. Continue with your story, of Tar-Thela.

GUKETH: What else is there to say? Lord Curgen found a use for her soon enough. As you know.

RELIAS: Yes. Yes I suppose he did.

OF HOSTEN I, EMPEROR OF MAN

GUKETH: I was counsel to Magnar. When the rulers of Valgona fell, this was when we became aware of the danger.

RELIAS: Go on.

GUKETH: Hosten had styled himself Emperor. Ha. He was but a boy then. Younger even than you, Relias. A fledgling, in his physique and mind. I went to him as emissary from the Dread Lord. It is the Dread Lord's pleasure, I told him, that you should rule here in Valgona. But you must not cross the borders of those lands to which Imperium has laid claim. He was impudent and rude. He would not allow the guards who had been sent with me into his chamber. Tell your Dread Lord, he said to me, that I lay claim not only to Valgona, but all the lands of this world. Tell him that man has served Titan for too long, and that now it is our turn to rule. Tell Curgen I give him a month to remove himself from Verhallaem. He would not even listen to me when he had finished. He had the guard remove me. Insolent.

RELIAS: But powerful.

GUKETH: Yes. And that was his weakness, of course.

RELIAS: What?

GUKETH: His power. He thought himself beyond harm. He grew arrogant, and careless.

RELIAS: This is not what I have heard.

GUKETH: You have heard only second-hand tales. I was there.

In Imperium when it fell, and later, when he tore down the palace Curgen had built and reopened the old portions of Verhallaem. When he restored the palace to its glories, under Pariden.

RELIAS: When Morrigan was born.

GUKETH: Yes. Yes I was there then.

RELIAS: Why do you laugh?

GUKETH: Because that one was easy pickings from the start.

RELIAS: Morrigan.

GUKETH: Yes. He was fat and spoiled and lazy. And all too easy to wean from his father's side.

OF HIS SON, MORRIGAN THE MAD

GUKETH: I was not in the room. I could not say who it was who killed him.

RELIAS: All the stories say –

GUKETH: None who wrote those stories were there, Relias.

Hosten perished behind a closed door. That Morrigan was in the room is true. So were others, as I say.

RELIAS: And then the son became Emperor.

GUKETH: It was the Dread Lord Curgen's pleasure. He allowed it.

And Morrigan did serve his needs. A man reigned in Imperium, and thus men were satisfied. For a time.

RELIAS: Tell me of Morrigan. Was he mad, as they say?

GUKETH: Mad? No. He was driven. He hungered for knowledge.

The things of the Titans, he was obsessed by them. He collected them. Stories of who they were, where they had come from, the objects of power they possessed –

RELIAS: The shards.

GUKETH: Yes. The shards. But others, as well. He left the ruling of things to others. The council. Talax. Magnar.

The Empress, for a time. Morrigan had little interest in the affairs of this world. Always he sought the greater truths.

RELIAS: He sought eternal life.

GUKETH: Yes. But only because it was his desire to learn all that could be learned. I will tell you a story. There came a time when despite all the magics he had learned, Morrigan's body began to betray him. When he could no longer ride, or walk, as he had grown accustomed to. The healers of Imperium, who were then the greatest in all the known world, joined together and devised a regimen that would restore his body's strengths. Potions, and treatments. But he refused these, for it meant that he would have to remain in the Verahallaem. In Imperium. And this he would not do. The learning that came to him in his laboratories, he continued until the end.

RELIAS: He died in N'it'vaganesh.

GUKETH: So they say.

RELIAS: What do you mean?

GUKETH: I saw no body. No grave was dug for Morrigan. There were those who said he remains in N'it'Vaganesh to this day, and that his experiments there do continue.

OF CALEBETHON

RELIAS: There are those that say N'it'vaganesh is but a myth. That Calebethon itself does not exist.

GUKETH: Who says this?

RELIAS: Some.

GUKETH: You will not say. Very will. But does not your queen herself describe the underground realm?

RELIAS: The second book of Ezmir. Yes. You have read this?

GUKETH: No. But I know of it. Listen, man, it is true. The old ways, the old paths which led to Calebethon in the time before this one, they are gone now. The tunnels collapsed on themselves, the doorways blocked by rockfall. I have seen so myself, for when the Cataclysm came, I sought refuge in the underground realm, and could not gain access. And yet Calebethon remains. It is huge, Relias. Beyond your understanding.

OF DRAGONS

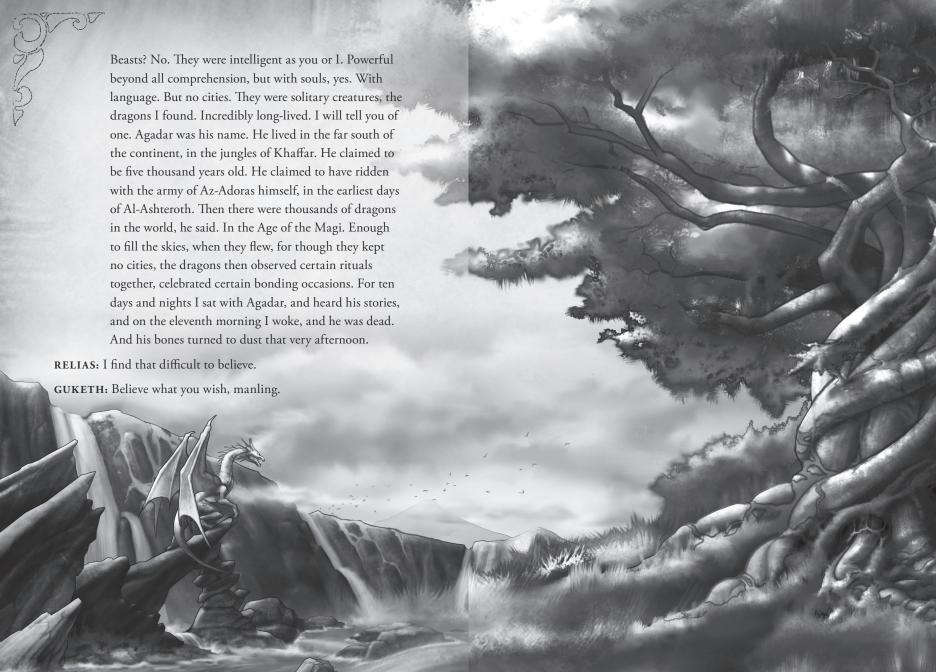
RELIAS: It is said that within Calebethon there are dragons. Whole cities of dragons.

GUKETH: I never saw these things.

RELIAS: Do you think them real?

GUKETH: You misunderstand me, man. Dragons I have seen.

Dozens, in my time. Yet none within the underground world. And none since the cataclysm. That was the end of them, I believe.



Of Men, and The Fallen 8 The War Between Them

Now will I, Janusk of Altar, write of the races of men, and Fallen, and the differences between the Empires and Kingdoms who my Lord Relias has described to me.

The first thing I must say is this; that the Kingdoms are ruled by laws, which no man, noble or commoner, may break. And the greatest of these laws is that which has been handed down from the Destiny, thou shalt not kill, or incite to kill, thy fellow man. Lord Relias leads, but he does so with the consent of the nobility, and the council, and yes, even the commoners of Altar, and the Western Kingdoms.

Whereas in the East, it is now as it has ever been. It is the strong who rule, and the weak who suffer. Then, it was the

Dread Lord Curgen, who did slaughter not just his own kind, but men and Fallen alike. Now it is Kul-al-Kulan and Ceresa, Verga and Magnar (who is third of that name), who hold power, who the weak-willed warriors of the Empires follow.

And there is this difference between the Empires and the Kingdoms as well; that the channelers of the East have no scruples about making use of the 'death magic'. For death, they say, is inevitable. Thus to make use of the power which may be harvested during the transition from life to death is less wasteful than to steal the life force of living things, which magic is called "life" magic.

Yet the stone landscapes - rock formations of blackest obsidian - which do cover the East put the lie to this belief, for all there is dark and desolate. Whereas here, in the West, where the land is healed, it is covered with that greenery that all men do love, which does not (as the Eastern channelers claim) represent the stealing of life, but instead the return of the land to its natural state.

THE RACES OF MEN

It is men who dominate the Kingdoms of the West. They are all of one race, but with the differences I have noted below.

Ironeers

These are from Gilden. They are typically men short in stature, who may be dark or light-haired.

Their hair is always worn long. They wear shirts, and surcoats, in the tones of the Earth, but wear no robes.

When old enough, the men all grow beards, and this is to hide the coal dust which stains their skin, which dust comes from the mines they work.

Mancers

These are from Capitar. They are light of skin, and yellow-haired, and smooth-complected. Never are they bearded, or mustached, and they keep their hair short, save for the women, who wear their tresses in all manner of fashionable styles. They are of typical stature, and wear shirts and coats of bright colors. They wear no robes, or surcoats, or cloaks of any kind in this time.

Altarians

The people of Relias's kingdom are of all different physiques, for it has been the Lord's desire to open the borders of Altar to any law-abiding citizens who wish to enter. There is no typical Altarian, then, though it is noted that rarely indeed is any Altarian seen in a surcoat, or with facial hair.

Amarians

These are the descendants of the Free Cities of the East, of Valgona and Eldric, many of whom were relatives of the Emperor Amarian. Now they are found in New Pariden. They are a tall people, with darker, olive -shade skin and hair of black, or sometimes white. They will not grow beards, and will typically wear robes, not shirts or surcoats, or even trousers of the kind favored by the men of Capitar. Their robes are usually of the deeper hues - the blues, reds, and purples associated with royalty.



These are those people who dwell in the kingdom of Tarth. Many of these were slaves, in the arena of General Carrodus. Thus they

have varied physiques as well, though
the typical Tarthan is of normal
height with brown hair, and
darker-skinned. It is the custom
in this country to dress as in
Capitar, in shirt and pants, never
robes or coats, which are considered
an affectation.

THE RACES OF THE EAST

Save for the men of Kraxis, these are all Fallen, which is the name given to those beings that were created by the Dread Lord or brought to this world by others of his kind. Of those beings, though, there are several kinds, which I have detailed below.

Krax (Men)

These are the blood traitors, who have betrayed the race of man they descended from. They resemble the Amarians, and this is because they too came from the Free Cities. Thus they are taller than average, with <code>olive-complected skin</code> and <code>black hair</code>. They do not dress in shirts, or surcoats, or pants, but instead favor robes styled in the manner of the Amarians, though in the color grey, or black.



Trog

These are great warriors, ruthless in battle, larger and stronger than men, who are largely settled in Yithril. Their skin is darkest gray, and their hair snow white, and they wear no facial hair.

Urxen

These Fallen do come from Umber. They resemble Trogs, though they are smaller, and their *skin, which is a light gray, is coated with dark hair*. They are the army's foot soldiers, treated poorly by their brethren, with little value assigned to their lives.

Wraiths

These Fallen are found in Resoln, and of all the races of these creatures, are shaped most like men. They are tall, and thin, with faces which seem stretched or elongated at times. Their hair is black as night, and worn long always. Among them are found the lore-masters of the Fallen race, who are said to use the knowledge they possess in ways cruel beyond measure.

Quendar

These are the Fallen found in Magnar. It was the Lord Relias's opinion that they were closely related to those Fallen of Yithril, who were called Trogs, because of the physical similarities between the two. There are these differences: the Quendar have always white hair, and their skin is a light shade of gray, with sometimes a touch of blue. Their ears are pointed, and their faces thin.

A Note on Languages

Now it is true that all men, save for those in the jungles north of Lake Zabril, speak what is called the common tongue, which is a version of Aravenese, which is said to have come from the traders of Ruvenna, in the days of the Magi. In the Queen's library at New Pariden, there are numerous books scribed in Hallasi, which is the

language of old Hallas,
and remained so,
according to
Ezmir, even in
the early days
of the Titans,
when Pariden

ruled from Verhallaem. Then it became the language of that land's nobility, and remained, ever, until the cataclysm itself, the language of the great scholars.

The languages of Al-Ashteroth are lost to us, save for the remnants of certain magical incantations said to have been written by Az-Adoras.

From Malaya we have the lexicon of Salgodu Madas, which contains most of what remains of the languages of that most ancient people.

Malaya was a great

trading empire, and this lexicon was used, according to many, as reference by the merchants of that empire. The most common tongue was called Karesh,

which has great similarities to Aravenese, not just in the words, but the grammar thereof, and the declension of verbs.

When the Dread Lord Curgen came to this world, Avostan was made the language of Imperium, and all the lands it controlled. And this was spoken, and written, up through the cataclysm. And to this day, save for within Kraxis, Avostan is the language of all the Fallen kingdoms, though the common tongue is used as well, and more and more frequently.

Of The War of Magic

Now will I, Relias, born of New Pariden but now and forever of the kingdom of Altar, write of the war to come between Man and Fallen, between Empires and Kingdoms, between the forces of order, and those of chaos. You who read this must understand that the war will not be one of conquest; the Fallen do not desire our lands. Much of what we value, they do not desire at all. Jewels, metals, exotic foodstuffs and the luxuries of this world mean little to them. What they, and their leaders desire, is power. The power which is gained through magic; the enchantments embodied in the sacred places, and things, which are said to have existed in the time before this one, before the great cataclysm which shattered our world.

In my travels undertaken for Procipinee of New Pariden, when she was Queen of all kingdoms, I gathered knowledge of these things, and places. In the East, and in the West. Some of this knowledge came to me from the Sion Guketh, who was Viceroy to the Dread Lord Curgen at Imperium, who I did capture on my journeys and interrogate in the dungeons of Passava. Some came to me from the great scribe Shirayne, whose memory is forever cherished. Much, I will confess, is apocryphal, and it is you who read this now who must determine, and report, of the truth of these legends.

IN POLIS, WHICH WAS CORIOPOLIS

Here stood the Temple of The Dragon, which was the last of those places on our world where these creatures, which themselves are but legend, were worshipped. Within this structure, whose location is now lost to us, was kept the scroll of Tan'La'Ur, who was said to be able to speak with dragons, whose language was composed of words which themselves were great spells of power.

IN THE WASTELANDS OF MAGNAR, WHICH WERE ONCE KHAFFAR, AND JUNGLE

In ages long past, when Al-Ashteroth was the greatest of the kingdoms of man, the palace of Az' Hagomil, who was the son to the greatest of all the sorcerers of the East, Az-Adoras, was built upon a stone of blackest obsidian. This stone was called Ma'de'grama, which in the language of Az-Hagomil's people is midnight. It was said that if a channeler stood on this stone, his power was multiplied a hundredfold, and that if a shard could be carved from this great rock and carried with one, the same effect was felt.

IN IMPERIUM, WHICH WAS PARIDEN

In the days when Pariden the Titan did rule this world, his palace was called Verhaellem. And in Verhaellem was kept the Forge of Overlord, which was made by Ereog the Elder. Now when the Dread Lord Curgen came to this world, he seized control of the Forge, which we know was destroyed in the cataclysm. But also Curgen brought with him artifacts of great power, things made by the Titans for use in war, and these things

are said to still exist in the catacombs beneath Imperium, which some say lead to N'it'va'ganesh itself.

IN THE MOUNTAINS KNOWN AS THE GREATER SKARPS, IN THE WEST

Before the cataclysm, which toppled the tallest of these peaks and caused great devastation in the land, there was a village called Kativa, which lay in the shadow of these mountains. Guketh did swear to me that it was to this village that Tar-Thela first came when she passed from East to West, under the sway of Kir-Tion, and that it was here, after being wounded in a great battle, that she stayed for a dozen years to recuperate. Guketh did swear further that Tar-Thela did foster a young channeler, a girl named Chana, and that she did reveal to Chana secrets related to the great shards of power she had discovered, of which even then there were only a handful left in the world. And the lady Shirayne revealed to me that Chana in turn fostered a young wizard, whose name is lost to history, but who also lived in Kativa, and that she revealed those same secrets to this person.

IN RUVENNA, WHICH SURVIVED THE CATACLYSM

From Shirayne I learned that the merchant Lords of this city, who all but ruled the West in the time before this one, kept a great store of weapons in the armory in the heart of this city. And that within this building, which was built strong as a fortress, there was a hidden chamber, and within that chamber, there were weapons which had been stolen from Talax the Arnor, when he passed through Ruvenna a thousand years earlier.

IN GRAZNA, A FORTRESS BUILT BY MORRIGAN THE MAD BENEATH THE GROUND, IN THE CITY OF CALEBETHON

In this great palace, which was built as a twin of that at N'it'va'ganesh, Morrigan, so it was said, lived the last years of his life. It was at this time that he constructed a great army from the stones and mud of the earth itself, and it is in Grazna that this army, which cannot be defeated by magic or struck down by swords, is said to reside still, waiting only for the word of Morrigan to be wakened once more.

IN YITHRIL, OR YTHRIL, WHICH WAS ONCE THE LADY UMBER'S SEAT OF POWER

Be it the whim of history, or the hand of fate, all those who knew the Lady Umber, once the most powerful ruler in the East, did perish in the cataclysm. In Yithril was her capital, built on the ruins of old Malaya. Here are entombed the great kings and queens of that land, and it is said that when the Lady Umber raised her palace, whose name is lost to history, she built it on the graves of these rulers. This was done so that all who came to Yithril would know that she cared nothing for the things of the past, or the rule of Man, and that her word was supreme in the Land, and the Fallen would have first place in her Empire.



Creatures and Monsters



BEARS

These are omnivores, which because of their great size and strength, can be dangerous when disturbed. They are tied to no one specific territory, and roam freely throughout the world, in all manner of climes.

GIANT SPIDERS

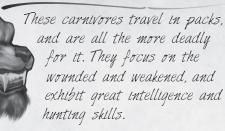
These are found in many different varieties, of varying aspects and agilities, differing landscapes.

Yet all these enormous insects are deadly.



These are rare and confined to the Southern coasts. Yet there are few more dangerous creatures; because of their stealth and ability to swallow prey - including man - whole.

WOLVES



CROCODILES

Many a traveler has fallen prey to these creatures for assuming a tranquil-looking body of water was safe. These frequent the tropical climes, and are expert at attack from ambush.

SKATHS

These are amphibious creatures, and do not stray far from water, for within it they raise their young. They draw upon the water for food, as

well, and frequent the high ranges of the Gandru in the west.

Yet it has been said that they will attack a solitary fisherman or traveler.



TROLLS

These are primitive creatures, born,
so it is said, within the
dungeons of Morrigan the
mad. They prey on the
weak, and the unwary, and

are quick to anger. They form tribes, which are led by the oldest and most cunning of these kind, who

are sometimes called shamans, which is a word for magician, though there is no evidence I have seen that they have the capabilities of channelers.

GOLEMS

These are creatures of magic, things of stone or metal or wood given life by an enchanter. They are creatured to serve as soldiers in war, or quardians in times of peace. It is said that once their creator dies, these creatures die as well, though some that are given life by absorbing the soul of a living thing will perish only on complete destruction.



ROCK GIANTS

These too are creatures of enchantment, animated beings of stone which can vary greatly in size. In the book of Moriah appear the Twins of Brossard, towers of rock over one hundred feet tall.

DRAKE

These too are related to dragons. They are drawn to magical things, and do make their homes near shards and ancient ruins, though some are said to prefer the darkness of the temperate forests.

There are also Pack Dragons, which are smaller in size, and seem less intelligent.

BOARS

Though their flesh is a delicacy, these creatures are fierce fighters, and must be approached with caution. Their speed is deceptive, and their tusks deadly.



DEMONS

It is said that these
were among the first
beings created by the
Dread Lord Curgen,
in the bowels of
what would become
N'it'va'ganesh, and
that they were made for
one purpose and one purpose

alone; to slaughter all they came contact with. It is also said

that though these creatures may be mastered, never may they be tamed, and that a demon is apt to attack anyone or anything given the chance, including its own kind or a putative master. These creatures are also said to feed on the very essence of living creatures. A demon who breaks free of its master is known as a Lurk.

SAND CRAWLERS

The Lord Relias has observed these to be cousin to the Barklings. They are a violent, nomadic people who inhabit the edges of deserts, and the arid regions of this world.



Most famous of all living things, most powerful of all creatures said to have walked the surface of our world, these majestic, winged beasts, which legend has it were once common across all the continents, are believed to have vanished in the cataclysm. Yet this has been said of these beings before. Highly intelligent, they possess a terrifying

intelligent, they possess a terrifying range of weaponry, including the ability to breathe fire.

DARKLINGS

These are a primitive and crude people, who are often cave dwellers, short of stature, violent in nature. In Amarian's journey west, as told by Ezmir, these are called by the scribe a sub-race of Fallen, which may or may not be true.

DREDLONS

DRE

These are rare beings indeed, giants in the form of men capable of standing up to a Dragon's Assault. These were mentioned in Ezmir as well.

SWAMP LORDS

Cuketh did name these to

Shirayn as quardians of
magical places, giant in
size, who do resemble
the very marshes and
hills of our world. They
are drawn to place
of enchantment, and
enchanters. They are
said to hoard powerful
objects and valuables.

SIONS

These are a type of Fallen creature, who are gifted with a singular magical ability. In the battle of Imperium, there were many Sions who fought with great speed. Others fought with great strength, but never are such abilities combined in these. Thus can these abilities be accounted for, and countered.

OGRES

These are giants, who are feeble of wit. They have great strength, but are driven by the most basic of needs; hunger, shelter, lust. It is foolish to engage these in combat, for they fight only to the death.

ELEMENTALS

These are creatures magical in construct, and are said to be composed of a singular Element of this world.

From this element they derive their powers, and from this element their weaknesses may be deduced.

LEVIATHAN

These giant aquatic serpents, first mentioned in the Book of Breon, which is lost, inhabit the deepest waters of the seas. They are a threat to any ships who cross their path.

UMBERDROTH

These were bred by the Lady Umber, in the time before this one, for use in those battles now known as the Umbran Wars. It was said by Cuketh that some of these survived the cataclysm, and have now been captured and tamed by the great channelers of the East.

SLAGS

These are related, so it is said, to the most famous of all legendary creatures, dragons. Yet

unlike those
legends, they

lack the ability to perform

magic. They possess great cunning and intelligence. They can live in water or on land, and favor places such as swamps and rivers.

HERGONS

These creatures may be found in the swamplands of Tarth, and other marsh areas.

They are reptilian, with bony shells and pointed snouts.

They are also masters of camouflage techniques, making them difficult to find.

MONTRONS

These are rare creatures as well, which are named by the Lady Shirayne in the last of the correspondence she did write to the library at New Pariden. They are called 'walking mountains' in this letter, and it is suggested that they are drawn to areas and artifacts of great power.

Let this be known to all:

In times past were there four books of the Magi, but no longer is the Book of Moriah considered a source of knowledge of our world.

In times past also was Ezmir's Book of The Eternal March treated as part of the Hiergamenon; now this is no longer so.

Those who believe otherwise commit heresy in the sight of the Destiny and the Kingdom, and shall be punished for doing so.

By order of Relias, the one true Sovereign of the West;

By the hand of Janusk of Altar, loyal companion and scribe to the King at Athica;

Be it known that now ends the one and true Hiergamenon.

Based on a World Created by Bradley Wardell

CREDITS

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