





Canticles Mythos Series

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Volume I

the AGE of ORIGIN

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Accounts Recollected

by

Everon XIII

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Histories Penned

by

Matthew R.R. Dorrese

---

Illustrations Brought to Life

by

Maxwell Aston

To my friends:  
Kyle Fox,  
Adam Schwind,  
Matthew Hilden,  
Mary Christensen,  
and Mom.

I ran away for all of you.  
And you'll be the reason I come home.

First Edition.





*~ Foreveron ~*

*Which life was yesterday's  
I couldn't tell you if I tried;  
The road that we're all on today,  
Goes forever and wherever on ...*

*Which life was yesterday's?  
I would lie to call it easy;  
The road that we're all on today,  
Begins again at the end of dawn.  
And the road goes forever on ...*


*Which life told us to stay?  
Adventures are not meant to last;  
But, the road we take today,  
Sings of a journey just begun.  
And the road goes forever on ...*

*Which life told us to stay?  
Myr and lo! All must fade away!  
But, the road we take today,  
High and low, bow not to Aeon.  
And the road goes forever on ...*

*Oh! The heroes of our day,  
Were not so when we all began;  
Ever a long and winding way,  
They're always the most unlikely ones.  
And the road goes forever on ...*

*So! The heroes of our day –  
A daughter's told to do the impossible;  
And the words of a life of yesterday  
Are a father's wisdom for his son.*

*And the road goes forever and wherever on ...*





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**Concerning Mythnotes:** Consideration is due to the many peoples of Aegis. Most of this Mythos Volume centers around beings of god-like nature, following the accounts of the Eldûn; however, this in turn lacks the proper thought given or time shared to that of mortal man. These races of man were nurtured by Aegis, and their roles, not as individuals, but as cultures and settlers and civilizations, gave Aegis her meaning and purpose during the Age of Origin. As it is, mortal lives are infinitely more valuable than that of immortals, for they understand Time like no other. Some of these peoples would see extinction, or fall to Shadow at the end of the age; in fact, very few survived the War of Shattering and the First Collapse, but all are recalled to the best of our knowledge, describing their culture or civilization, in intermissive paragraphs called Mythnotes.



## Volume I: the AGE of ORIGIN

*consider this a history of our beginning ...*

### Before the Beginning.



The Endless, or in the tongue of the El'arria, the Aeonar – Ildûr and Mardûm – existed outside spatial conform and far from Time's grasp. Children of a celestial nothing, the two “star dragons” warred over stygian voids. Ildûr spit fire, as was her namesake, while Mardûm repelled with void-frost. Strike after strike scored the expanse, until the nothing ruptured. A molten Aegis solidified, alive and aware.

Ildûr and Mardûm fell to the world as one, a tenement torn. They crashed into the crystalized sphere, and fused with an igneous Aegis. The Spine of the World rose from the Aeonar's back, their wings a storm-riddled Cascade, and their maw the Realms' lifeblood. Before the Beginning, Aegis bore the loss of bone to rock, sinew to sanguine, and the Worldvein wove beneath the flesh of her, concealed by depth and Shadow.

Before the Beginning, there were few places of name, of power, for all names instill the illusion or grant the wielding of power. Of these places, the mighty crags of Dûn'raeor rose and fell and pierced the Vein's end.

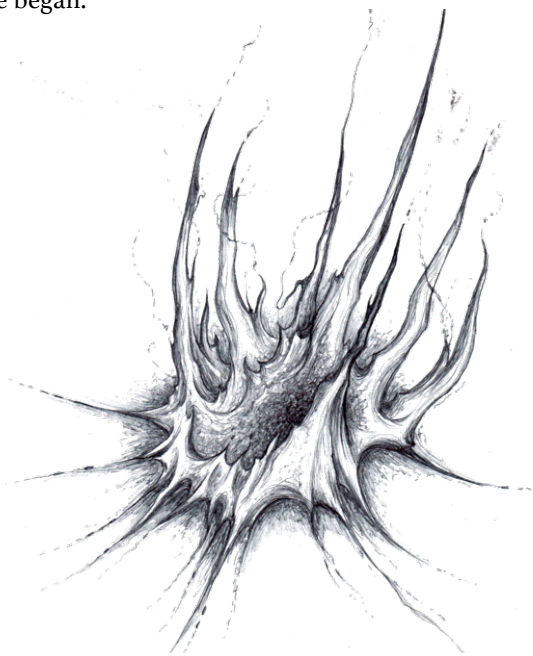
*Or was it the Beginning?*

Here, at Vein's End, through and within the Endless Minds' Eyes, their *evari* still burned with rancor. It was here that the womb of Aegis sired tantulum chains to bind and stay the Aeonar's madness. She confined their hunger and shackled their ire, stone-cold steel entombing both rage and wonder.

Once the Endless were laid to rest, and calm lay over the lands above Shadow, Aegis bore for the Realms the great Evar'nûm, the Worldtree – the very life essence of Aegis broke through the Dûn'raeor and spiraled toward the Evar'tûm. It was life from death incarnate along the Zhrizûr Divide.

Soon after, three races were born afore all others – the Astar, the Ildraeor and the Elzhri. As one, they were the Eldûn (the Old Blood), immortals conceived of Aegis herself, as she syphoned the very essence of her ever-imprisoned Endless into her children's veins, weaving their fatestreams with more command over the world than any mortal womb could bear them.

Thus, Time began.



## The Astar.



The first of the Eldûn were the Astar, a race of conscious and discerning glass. They reflected the soul of Aegis, and the hearts of the Aeonar. They rose from the earth along the borders of what were nameless Realms, banding the world in a single, collective shawl of introspection.

However, they found Aegis wanting, unable to speak beyond thought, able to breathe life, but without the ability to understand concept or meaning. Thus, they searched her understanding and extracted Aegis' voice – in which, they gave to her the El'arria (the Old Rite), a gift of language and liturgy, and the Realms began to whisper. The whisper rose in measure, then rumbled, pitched and blossomed into the Worldspeech, as well as the written word under illumination.

The Astar proudly watched as the three races of Eldûn grew in togetherness, under a single read, written and orally passed down communication. When the First Sires took their place across the Realms, the mortal peoples learned the rite of this language as well, and the El'arria was kept by all and revered.

Throughout the Beginning, the Astar acted as mediators and providers, mystics and processors. They can be found between the lines of each and every tale and mythos across all of Aegis, for as they forged the El'arria, so they embodied it.

Some say the Astar can even be found in the Spirit Kingdoms and the Ætherlands, but no one constrained by mortality's bonds can cross either threshold and return whole to prove this transcendence.

Then, nearing the end of the Age of Origin, there was a schism under one of Aegis' children, which changed all and saw the El'arria broken. It would crumble to dust and fade into history. Few now have heard the magic in those words, and fewer still can read, write or speak them.

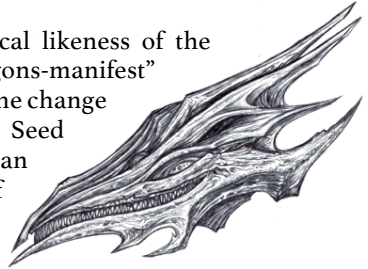
This Mythos will come back to that end, and the Astar, when the time is right. We will follow them through the Shattering and the First Collapse, to their evolution in the Second Age.

Until then, we must account for the rest of creation ...



## The Ildraeor.

The Ildraeor were made in the physical likeness of the Aeonar. However, these “dragons-manifest” numbered five, instead of two, spitting the change of Realms with Fire, Frost, Lightning, Seed and Shadow. In their time, they kept an equilibrium between the necessity of life, the search for death, and the miracle of rebirth.



In the Beginning, the Ildraeor circled Aegis without rest, skyborne evermore. Their wings stretched for miles, and their shadow warned the lands below – *change is coming*.

Death erupted from their hulking maw, but rebirth flourished in their wake. Thus, Aegis saw her landscape shaped to a vision – a world in balance.

Ilûr'draeor was She of Fire, the mother of the Ritûm, the Breaker of Stone and Breather of Ash. She cut the passes of the Cascades and sculpted the rise of the Spine to her desire. She saw the first stone roll and the first flame spark. She was a goddess to Cinderstride, and the bane of the Marches.

When she sang to Aegis, it was low and thrumming:

*May her peaks pierce the sky,  
Reach my wings upon high;  
May her mountains run strong to the Deep.*

Tyr'draeor was He of Ice, the father of the Rill, the Way of the Courses and Reaper of Cloud. He shed the tear for the first drop of rain, swept the first current and saw to mist's first mantle – the rivers ran to his devise. Neither could his waters be dammed, nor diverted; all of the *vitûm* was its conduit. The world felt a calm wash over it when he wept.

When he sang to Aegis, it was clear and rushing:

*May her rivers run courses,  
Wild pursuing forces;  
May the banks of her tears see the Deep.*

Lûm'draeor was He of Lightning, the father of the Eventyr, the Splitter of Night and Immolator of Heath, Hearth and Field. He spewed light in voltaic wizardry, brewed the first storm, heard the first thunder roll, and shaped the roils that tamed the first dells. He was the one to light the way for the Pioneers of Sire during the Age of Shadow.

They followed his song, sharp and booming:

*May her field sow the sires,  
The moors and the mires;  
May what's born of the storms reach the Deep.*

Tûm'draeor was She of the Seed, the mother of the Vitûm, the Womb of Heart and Root of Wilds. She planted the forests with flora and fauna – growth – and cultivated the Realms with vine and vegetation. She sowed the first seed, bore the first tree, and raised the first living things to awareness. All creatures saw her as mother, and honored her.

Aegis heard her song in every blossom, every branch, trilling and dulcet:

*May her forests bear fruit,  
Watch the weaver sow root;  
Branching her womb through the Deep.*

Lastly, Fyr'draeor differed from his brothers and sisters. Fyr'draeor was He of the Shadow, the Watcher of Dûn'raeor, the Keeper of Darkness and Shade of Worldsgrove. He saw nothing of life, for he was blind to all but evil, arresting its plans and impeding its schemes.



He watched over the Chains of Aegis from on high. If anyone dared venture close enough to heed his song, they heard a languished voice, afflicted by immortal sadness and suffering:

*May her sorrows be free,  
Pass these lands, take no heed;  
Of the Shadow, the cries, the lament of the Deep.*

~

Concerning the Ildraeor's end in their order of recession ...

The first to fall was Fyr'draeor himself, but this we will return to nearing the end of Volume I during the War of Shattering.

Soon after, Lûm'draeor abandoned Aegis and her mortal shell in grief, withdrawing to the Evar'tûm forevermore.

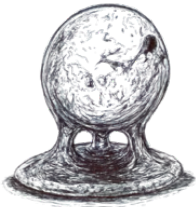
After the Collapse, and when the Age of Shadow was new, Tyr'draeor's wings were cut by malevolence, near the foundry at Reignloch, where a wicked hunter, Graystar of Barkbreach, saw his prey a call to fame and fortune. The Reaper of Cloud fell to the Silent Sea, rumored to dwell there still, and every hundred years sends his roils crashing over the loch, razing the city to its stone basin. Prophecy states that if ever the Ildraeor's wings are returned to him, the waters of calamity may finally rest, but Graystar's vault was lost during the First Great Wave, and the wings were never found.

Long after this, amidst the Age of Shadow, Tûm'draeor watched the evolving wilds, saw the changes in the world and peoples of Aegis, and knew the time had come to stay her power. She landed gently within a glade of the Mistwood and, with the help of a band of wandering Shards out of the Willow-waters, metamorphosed into a godly Oak, whose roots reached through the Womb of Aegis and embraced her in Shadow. She continued to seed the many woodlands and vales of the Realms from below.

Then, at last, nearing the end of the Age of Shadow, Ilsûr'draeor grew weary – she laid atop Mt. Ûrodûn, wrapping herself around its precipice. She looked across the vale to the bones of Fyr'draeor at Ûrowar, and sadly closed her

eyes to sleep. This slumber would be eternal, as her bloodsires Endless. Prophecy claims she will wake again, but only once, as she awaits a champion worthy – a mortal pure of heart, with unflinching courage and unwavering conviction.

The Ildraeor would pass from memory to legend, legend to myth, and myth to Shadow, ever forgotten, but very much alive and watching ...



## The Elzhri.

After the Astar and Ildraeor, but long before the time of mortals – the First Sires – came the nine of twelve Elzhri. The final three were conceived during the Age, instead of at its Beginning, by mistake.

The Elzhri were each a growing manifestation of nature's aspects. Furthermore, as they were Aegis-born, they were as an extension of her will. They were one with her, a vessel for her need and vassal for her bidding.

They heard her voice on the wind, a lullaby in a gentle breeze or the scolding of a tempest's gale. They felt her breath through the bark on her back, in the swells of valley and brook. They knew her love when she trembled, her anger when she quaked, and her satisfaction by exhalation through growth and evolution.

So coupled to her were the Elzhri that, giving her allowance, they could manipulate the very substance of her vitality. Everything she was, she gave freely to them to control with noble purpose.

Immortal instruments in mortal visage, many saw the Elzhri as gods.

At times, the Nine communed with the younger races, or sought council with the Shards, for this was allowed; however, there was an unwritten, orally passed down creed amongst them that acted as a ruling body to keep in check their immeasurable power:

*Interference with those beneath us is strictly forbidden, as well is any engagement or hindrance to the flight of the Ildraeor who control the physical change of our land.*

*We are to never invoke change ourselves in the hearts or minds of mortals; neither are we to enact or give material or physical aid to, nor encumber, disrupt or prevent change in their civilizations.*

*It is to be left for the lives and ventures of mortals to walk their own path, and forge their own rite. It is man's world, and we are to have no claim in its future.*

They walked the world, watched over the Realms, and every thousand years called council to decide their place in Aegis. Some did not ...

All twelve are accounted for:

## AEGINSYR, the FIRST.

Aeginsyr, born the oldest and from the womb of Dûn'raeor, grew a beard untamed, ever uncut, its end miles from his crown. Many say it grows on to this day, so many Ages from the Beginning. The Elzhri of Fate, Aeginsyr saw mortality's fatestreams clear as day, the future a current he rode; he lived a flash forward in time, and he forgot all the moment it passed into history. This was his gift. This was his curse. Some would say in sorrow; *the dear old man has no present!* as present is only that ever fleeting instant before it greets antiquity.

Aeginsyr roamed from the Elderlands to the Aeon'tûm, neither friend nor foe to any creature or spirit, living or dead. However, mortals kept their distance, for it was known: If a man touched the First, they would see their last, their moment of death, and thus seek it.

Only one mortal ever cheated this fate.

During the Age of Shadow, a master thief and herald Reignman bard named Everon XIII (as there were many Everons with better claim to his bloodsire than he) challenged fate.

*Mythnote: The Reignmen were the peoples of Aegis who settled the River Reignway, from the Spine of the World to the Talons. They were fisherman and farmers, rafters and draftsman, and possibly the brightest developed civilization across Aegis.*

This particular Reignman snuck up to the Elzhri, a blur of futures about him, and plucked a strand of Aeginsyr's hair from the root of the Eldûn's scalp.



Everon latched it round his cuff before bounding away, a tune on his woodwind, and a song on his lips.

The strand continued to grow, a lock, a bushel and more! Each dawn it showed the thirteenth of that namesake the manner in which he would die that day; and by each sunset, the knave had safely taken a path away from his untimely demise.

Whilst among friends, Everon XIII mocks the old man's visions; contrariwise, when alone, he drinks to the Eldûn's health, praying for Aeginsyr's forgiveness. He wonders if the First remembers him at all, or just continues to see his face and thread return to the fatestreams at dawn, when it should have long ago withered, frayed or snapped.

It is said the only future Aeginsyr doesn't know, cannot see, is this Everon's end. However, while the First cannot foretell the man's death, he is still witness to Everon's life – and he knows Aegis has her own plans for the false immortal ...

## MIMYR, the SECOND.

Mimyr was given by the Evar'nûm to follow Aeginsyr wherever his visions walked him. She was the keeper of memories, all things past and present. She went arm in arm with her brother through the Beginning and recorded all; however, she found even she could not carry the weight of such history.

Mimyr left Aeginsyr nearing the end of the Age of Origin, before the War of Shattering, and settled for a time with a circle of Astar in a place later christened Mimyr's Pass. She confided in the Glass all her fears if ever she perished - *what would happen to all that came before if I cannot bear this burden alone?* The first of the Eldûn races advised her to ascend the mountain that overshadowed the valley, keeping to the river, and if ever she doubted, to look into its waters, into herself, to reach higher.

Upon the mountain's precipice, she found a fallen star, calling itself Myrkûr, waiting somber and soothing. The climb was a test of the Second's perseverance, and it rewarded the immortal with a tall, strong, beautiful people - the Myrmen.

*Mythnote: The Myrmen were beings of prodigious strength and wonder before they passed into Shadow. They were wide bodied, but with limbs of great length, strong and durable, for lifting weights five times their own. Larger than most mortal men, but kinder and gentler as well, they enjoyed their peace, and unbeknownst to most, were also incredibly intelligent and all-too-well read.*



Upon their birth, the Myrmen helped Mimyr raise the first and greatest library of Aegis at the mouth of the River Myr. In the following Age, disciples of Mimyr, being the descendants of the Myrmen, much changed as evolution changes all, would erect a city around the athenaeum and call it Myrhaven. 13

Mimyr completed her archival stronghold after the Council deemed the First Age had fallen, and locked herself within its mirrored halls of muraled walls for many years to come. She studied her records for mistake, read and wrote additional literature to tell the histories of the First Age, and recounted memory more precise to detail than the scribbles she'd scratched during her travels.

During the Age of Shadow, she ventured forth again unafraid of loss or misplace, as her athenaeum was protected by her disciples.

A thousand years passed, and insight, observation and philosophy were collected from all corners of Aegis. She returned it to her library, and it was catalogued. However, in all her journeys, a single hope drove her now – she wanted to find the brother she'd lost at the birth of this new Age. Sadly, she passed through the Age of Shadow alone, and she finally understood what true loss was, not of knowledge, but of love.

There is a prophecy foretelling Aeginsyr and Mimyr's reunion; however, the Second will only find the First at another Age's End, distraught and dying ...



## ISAR, the THIRD.

Isar, Elzhri of Wisdom, was born to Aegis from the womb of the Spine, and she was indeed the wisest of them all. If decision was needed, it would take Isar years to pass judgment; however, the well-wisher would wait, and whatever the verdict, the sentence was adhered to. Her command was decree.

In the Beginning, she wandered the Realms of Aegis willing to sit and bestow direction to any and all who waited patiently to hear it, whether bird or elk, man or child.

One day, during this Age of Origin, walking along the banks of the River Well in the Shimmerwood, she met an Eleaos'i named Tûries'i, a trickster as so many of his kind are notoriously charged.

*Mythnote: The Eleaos'i, the children of the Fourth, were known as the Tree-folk, or Root-stalkers. They were short, lanky, with long pointed ears and fingers, much resembling the twiggid branches of their elm at conception. They were jesters by nature and curious to a fault.*

The creature revealed his all to her, then asked for her guidance in his many walks of life. Thus, she closed her eyes to confer with her thoughts. While she sat in silent speculation, Tûries'i could not wait - he crafted a scarecrow that near-perfectly resembled him and placed it in the Shadows. He called from there to Isar, who was in all but a trance, and lied: *My eyes are too sensitive in this light, I will wait here until your reflection is done.*



Then, as you may guess, Tûries'i came and went as he pleased, about his normal dishonest antics for three years, until one night he came back to find Isar muttering to herself - his answer was at hand!

He now only had to wait through dawn to receive the Eldûn's immortal advice. *"Take that which you are, need naught what you devise, or the trick you become,"* she said.

Tûries'i laughed and disregarded her words immediately, unaware that in his time away, the old Aeginsyr found Isar pondering and foretold the trickster's offense.

Not long after, Tûries'i attempted the same ruse on another.

While guards of a Templeton manor watched his crow-form, Tûries'i snuck through a high window to the estate's treasury. However, within were the manor's true guards, as the ones outside were scarecrows themselves! The Lord had used an identical trick, as he was not so rich as to afford so many; after all, his most priceless treasure was a simple library.

The Eleaos'i was caught and hung in the Lord's cornfields by a steel pole. He was forced to scare the crows, not from the food growing about him, but from feasting on his own sunburnt flesh.

Nearing the end of the Age of Shadow, Isar found her way to Mt. Myrkûr and her sister's athenaeum. Though the Second had gone, the Third stayed and kept close to the library. Many cycles later, the disciples of Mimir built Isar her own humble temple just below the level of the library to serve anyone who called for caution or foresight.

Few travel the distance to the Oracle at Myrhaven, but those who do will reap the rewards of pure truth and honest wisdom. The only time Isar's seat is empty is when the Elzhri Council is called every thousand years.

## KYRKSOS, the FOURTH.

But, let's go back. During Isar's wandering in the Beginning, before her dealings with Tûries'i, and even before the Time of the First Sires, she found herself in a predicament.

With the knowledge that every decision needs a perfect answer, and answers come from perfect forethought, the Third found one question without answer - "*if wisdom fails, what then do we look to?*" She pondered this for six days and six nights, and on the seventh came to a conclusion: Aegis could not balance true wisdom without the falter of curiosity. A logical answer may not lead to a healthy heart.

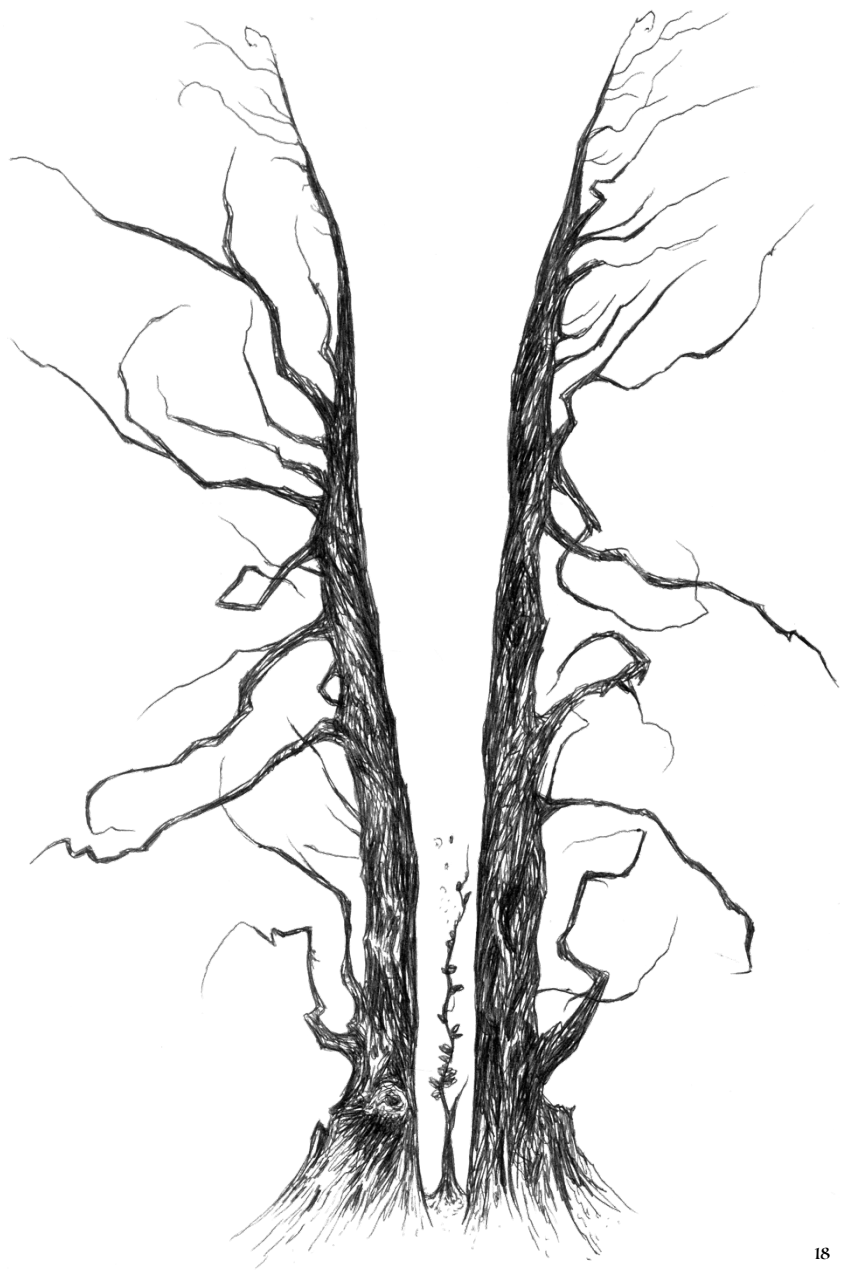
Thus, from the banks of the River Myr, Aegis bore the realms Kyrksos, both a son and brother to Isar. From the first sight of his reflection in the waters, the fourth Elzhri grew curious, ready to start his journey. He would always be the youngest of the Eldûn, and the most foolish, but he spread his ingenuity and wonder across the realms, and it blossomed amongst the First Sires in their most vital thoughts.

One night, early in his journeys, he found himself in the Shimmerwood, which at the time had very minimal inhabitants other than its trees, which by no means shall we discredit as beings of dwelling or consciousness; however, the El'arria itself they cannot speak. In fact, the language of the Astar was not uttered by any such creature of the wood - fox or squirrel or lark - who all greeted Kyrksos on his path, and it saddened him.

Then again, it was not lost on him the immortal power he possessed.

Yet, what of the creed!? Like a child, he cried: *What harm could be done in giving birth to a new, beautiful race akin to my own wonder and merriment?*

He came to a confounded rest on a stump, surrounded by tall elms. One he spotted was split in two, and a sapling grew at its roots.



Kyrksos was drawn to this oddity, and knelt before it, studying the new life – *I must create my own*, he exclaimed!

He raided the soil and uprooted the sapling against the silent fury of the split Elm, and he crafted a pipe from the scion's bark.

In mourning of the sapling's death, he played the pipes into twilight, and on through the night, but when dawn broke, he wove his wizardry and tie to nature into a song of life. Through the day he played, and when the sun set again, the womb of the split Elm was his to control, and from it sprang forth the very first of the First Sires – the Eleaos'i.

He seeded into them his own *tûmzûr*, but under the punitive strength of mortal mind, so he knew they would be safe. It eased their growth to their rightful place on Aegis until their woodland civilization flourished. Unbeknownst to Kyrksos, as the Elm was split, deep down too were his children's minds.

Throughout the Age of Origin, the Eleaos'i's tricks and pranks on passerbys commanded their curiosity and were nothing, but harmless. However, when the War of Shattering saw the Eleaos'i flee from the fight, instead of stand against it, the Tree-folk locked themselves away beneath the very roots of their homes to avoid the conflict and escape the evil.

They never saw the Shadow follow, but it did, and a rift in the Worldvein caused a break in their mind, cracking their curiosity into madness.

Passerbys were now trespassers, and friendly games turned into deadly traps; friendly tricks grew to gruesome heights of torture, as the Eleaos'i became ever curious to seek a reason to mortality's frailty.

The Eleaos'i's corruption was unbeknownst to Kyrksos; for to him, no consequence of his actions ever graced his conscience - it was not in his nature.

After this, Kyrksos' journeys are many and more; however, we will return to him and his children following the Battle of the Bloodwash, for his part to play in the First Great War was crucial, as it was urgent, and so too was his children's role in the birth of the Age of Shadow.

## NÛMARRIA, the FIFTH.

Nûmarria was born to the Greenwood in the South, along the banks of the Willow-waters. From her birth, she sang. There was no utterance from her lips that wasn't prose or rhyme, and each line was like a silver strand of starlight, or a summer's blossom wilting in winter.

She knew it at once! Song was needed to sow love into life and meaning into death. It is song that strengthens a heartbeat, and that which ends every living creature's story. It saves the souls of all that pass Beyond, recounting the tales of yesteryears and futuresires in the form of ballad and lay, canticle and carol.

While the sorrows of Nûmarria were many, it was the Fifth Elzhri's nature to cheerily keep the spirit of goodness about all she encountered.

The most difficult were the Mountain Clans, who ruled heavy handedly across the Spine of the World, from the borders of Mt. Myrkûr to the southern tips of the Sheathe; they did not take kindly to outsiders.

*Mythnote: The Clans were not a people as one, but many. Each clan had their own Chieftan, their own law. Most were husky and dark-skinned, wearing furs upon furs for warmth. Their status in their clan was based on the accumulation of the wealth they carried with them in garment and jewelry. If it could not be carried, it was left. They were quick to anger and quicker to war; their brutality may have been manifest of the Ildraeor's endless shaping of their peaks, feeding hostility by constantly uprooting their homes and families, or it could have just been their nature by evolution.*

Few crossed the hazardous Spine in this Age of Origin, so little notice was given to the Clans by any others until the First Great War. Those that did were branded the enemy by the tribes and killed on sight. Adversely, Nûmarria walked among them by joining their march, enchanting them with song to quell their superstitious nature.

One of her favorites is translated below:

*Oh, ho! the valley-o!*

*Where the waters of the Myrmen flow,*

*Oh, ho! the valley-o!*

*Follow me down to the banks, let's go!*

*Oh, ho! the valley-o!*

*Where the dreams of the streams meet the Ritûm snow,*

*Oh, ho! the valley-o!*

*Follow the hawk to hunt the doe!*

*Oh, ho! the valley-o!*

*Where the dog hides when to the fox he owes,*

*Oh, ho! the valley-o!*

*Where the rivers really run nobody knows!*

*Oh, ho! the valley-o!*

*Where the hills rill round the tiller's hoe,*

*Oh, ho! the valley-o!*

*Follow the moors till the dead eat crow!*

*Oh, ho! the valley-o!*

*Where the Willows weep silver between their toes,*

*Oh, ho! the valley-o!*

*When the rain drops gold it's a good ol' show!*





*Oh, ho! the valley-o!  
Where the bark and the lark sing the tales of old,  
Oh, ho! the valley-o!  
Follow me - spark a light upon the ring o' the wold!*

*Oh, ho! the valley-o!  
Where the waters of the Myrmen flow!  
Oh, ho! the valley-o!  
Follow me down to the banks, let's go!*

An immortal abassador of non-existent borders, Nûmarria even stopped a war before it could begin.

One night, by the light of Aegis' twin moons, Nûmarria came across a dike looking out across a mighty gorge, in which three Mountain Clans had come to a crossroads. If battle were to fall upon them, their blood would stain the rocks there forevermore.

Therefore, she stood on high, an arbiter of titans upon the precipice whose shadow enshrouded their mistrust, and she sang an enthralling lullaby, in which soothed their seething enmity.

She leapt down, dividing them, and called forth their three Chieftans.

Through persuasion akin to enchantment, Nûmarria convinced the enemies to build a tower of parley where feuds could be mediated and stopped before they began. It would be an arena for negotiation; allow woes to be heard, arguments to be had, and only after, if war was necessary, would they turn to it.

The Chieftains resigned to her wisdom. The three Clans marched south together, mile after countless and exhaustive mile.

When they arrived at a site all recognized as a proper setting for this pillar of treatise, they had reached the end of the Spine's Sheathe.

They built quite a monolith, a rugged conglomeration of stake and stone, and called it the Morwar, and one could see far and wide from its summit. A table round was carved out of the mountainside and its convention placed at the fortification's capital floor.

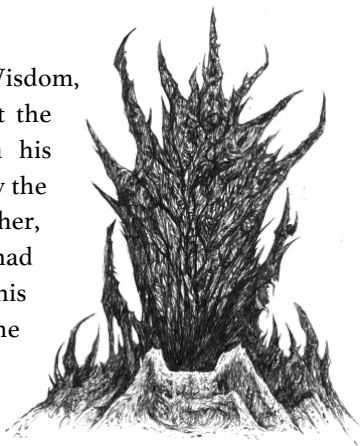
The Morwar is one of the few structures erected during the Age of Origin that still exists today, but with different masters, a different name and a different use.

There is no volume in this land or the next in which could account every verse Nûmarria ever wrote or sung, for the pages would be innumerable, and stanzas change over time, but the collections of arias rest in Mimir's Athenaeum on countless shelves for anyone to copy, read, and sing freely.

## AMAREDI, the SIXTH.

In the canopies of the Wildwood, the sixth Elzhri, Amaredi, emerged from a cocoon of iridescent silk. She was the Elzhri of desire, of love, and she traveled the Realms ever-wanting, never satisfied. Amaredi had countless lovers, being the Elzhri with the most contact with mortal man. Though they were all of them seduced, she loved and hated all as one with an unparalleled passion. Thus, Amaredi was vain, ill-tempered, and easily offended.

In one particular story, during the Age of Wisdom, it is said she enamored a fisherman about the Courseway, who bedded her at once in his Westmarch homestead. As they lay there by the light of dawn, he told her of his younger brother, the renowned Lord of Eastmarch, who had accomplished more than any his age or of his family's legacy. If there was one thing the fisherman desired above her, it was his younger brother's golden seat.



Uncaring for the troubles of man or the petty material gains of mortal power, Amaredi instead found the brother a curious notion, and went to him at Eastmarch. As was her nature, she instantly needed for him as well, and he was quick to show her all the carnal pleasures of his riches.

When she left, following yet another quarry to covet and pursue, it wasn't long before her exploits over each brother were made known.

Both disavowed the other, wanting sole claim of bedding the immortal beauty - the elder fisherman for pride, to best his younger; and the Lord, for simple necessity of conquering anything and anyone he put his mind and hand to.

This feud started the First Marcher's War, which led to twelve more, and a millennia of bad blood between Eastmarch and Westmarch.

In this way, Amaredi's passions lit fires and started wars across all of Aegis, but none were so dark or unfortunate as the seduction of her brother, Solûsin, during the Age of Origin. We will return to this tale of despair in a few pages.

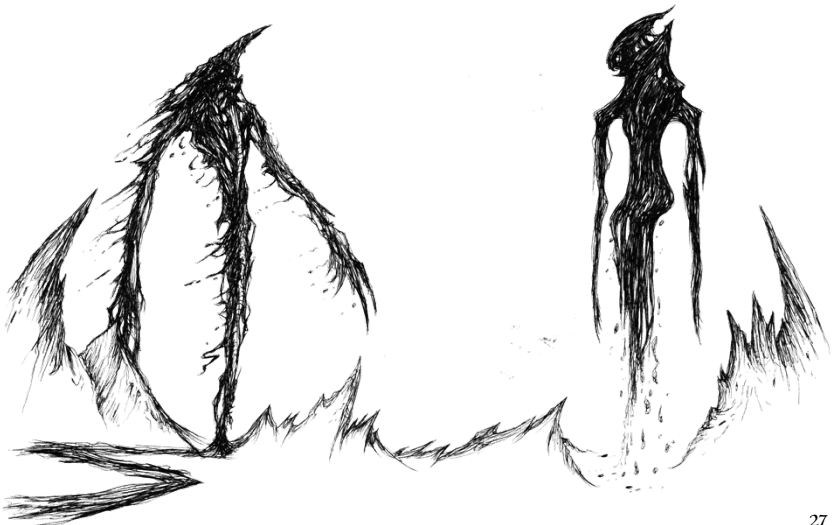
## SOLÛSIN, the SEVENTH.

Solûsin was born in the depths of the Stormstone Cascade. He dwelt there alone; light hurt him; company brought him despair.

He found a somber welcome in the dark, a comfort, as if only in Shadow did Aegis truly embrace him. There, he could listen to her quiet tidings, feel her cool caress and muse with her beyond any distraction of man or beast.

Away from the hustle and hassle of civilization and beneath the roar of weather and war, the only peoples he spoke to or walked astride were the ghostly Evendaïn.

*Mythnote: The Evendaïn were borne to the mountain Shadow, deep in the bellows of the Stormstones. They fashioned jewels and gems of ancient power, but kept all to themselves, ornamenting their calcific halls with wonders of marble and gold. One man would call them angels of the Deep, another would call them demons of the Shadow.*



Solûsin and the Evendaïn kept many secrets beneath the Cascade in the Shadow of the mountain, many secrets I could not tell you. Objects of power seemed to find their way to the dark places of those pearlescent halls, but that is for another volume, another Age in which the presence of such powers carried the change of Realms in their grasp, and long after the Ildraeor released themselves of such responsibility.

For now, we carry on to the Eighth, but will return to the Seventh at a time when his part on Aegis sparked a great change in the Realms and the birth of dream and nightmare.

## VYRLOS, the EIGHTH.

Vyrlos was born to the Wreatheland's fields of plenty. He walked amongst the Tûrväini, guiding their simple ways, as he himself was unassuming. He was the Elzhri of faith and valor, decency and honesty forevermore.

*Mythnote: The Tûrväini were the tillers and farmers and cattle-herders who civilized and thrived across the Wreatheland. They settled from what is now the borders of the Mistwood to the shores of Marbor Bay. Their greatest city was a glorified village set upon the conflux where the North and South Wreathe Rivers clashed. They were a peaceful people, reflected much of Vyrlos himself, until the fires of the First Great War engulfed them.*

Humble beyond measure, Vyrlos' worn armor and tattered cloak were his trademark. The Eighth rode no beast, unless the beast first offered, and slept in the wild, unless a bed was granted.

One stormy night nearing the end of the Age of Origin, the god found a boy unconscious along the Vesper Shores, a shipwreck nearby. He checked for survivors, but there were none, save the child.

This boy was unlike the Tûrväini, and was more like a son of a Nithûr, lost to the Highland Crusades.

*Mythnote: The Nithûr were the people of the Cascade Highlands, rolling hills that descended from the Stormstones all the way to the Northern Sea. A nomadic folk, many thought the Hill-watchers were vagabond necromancers or wandering wizards. Truly, some could do tricks or cast illusions, but very few new genuine spells of lightning or fire; to manipulate Aegis, her earth or her sky, one must be born of her, as the Elzhri were, or as the Eleaos'i were gifted by Kyrksos. The Nithûr were thoroughly identifiable by their cloaks of brown and gray, tall and peaking hats, and leathery skin, taugth and lined by the weathering heathers.*

If not one of the Nithûr, the boy may have hailed from a far off place across the seas unsettled and unkown; however, regardless of his origins, Vyrlos saw him as something new and good and true, and recognized immediately that Aegis had a plan for him beyond abandonment.

Therefore, Vyrlos built a fire, sat at the boy's side, and waited ...

It's said that the boy dreamt of eleven trees. The boughs of each reached to the next, and they forged a ring of the strongest wood.

Then, a storm of fire rained down upon the walls, but the boughs held firm, supporting each other as eleven brothers. A shadow loomed over the trees and engulfed his vision, but a single star shone from beneath the exposed roots when the sky was lost. This shining light rose from the roots and strengthened the boughs with its brilliance.

Sounds of destruction and chaos permeated the darkness and the pounding pressed in on the perimeter. Cries of torment penetrated the walls and blood seeped in through the spaces between roots.

The flood of iron-rich sanguine washed over the Raeordûmn, bathing it with a thick lacquer, but the Heartstone shone through, glowing red as if beating in the night. It sparked and lashed out of the mirk into a sapling of the Evar'nûm that erupted through the center, the twelfth of eleven trees. It raised a trunk so high that it breached the Shadow, and one could see from its paramount the Spine of the World, and all the way to a mysterious stone hall at Cascade's End.

The boy, Thane, awoke to the sound of his beating heart, warm by the fire the ragged knight had built. Although he was young, the boy seemed to release a sense of calm about him. Thane turned to the wreck – he was not fool enough to believe there were survivors when he saw the confirmation in the knight's somber eyes.



Thane did not cry, nor grieve as it were, but was in the moment acutely aware. He asked the man, *who are you?*

Vyrlos said nothing.

The boy asked, *where have you come from?*

Vyrlos said nothing.

Hope fading, the little Thane asked then, *what do you want?*

*Ah*, the knight said and stood, and offered his hand down to the child, for as all Elzhri, he could not directly change the course of history by his own hand, only through others could he fulfill his desires to see the world improve.

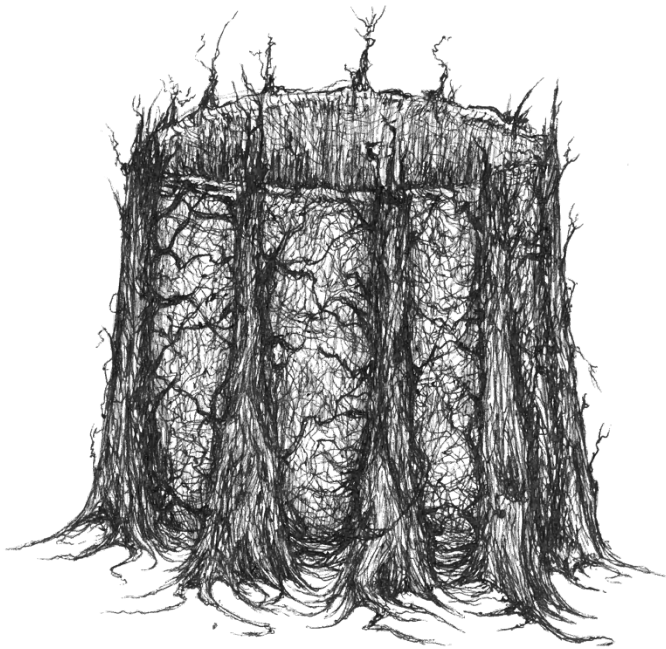
After all, it was not he who invaded the boy's mind in sleep, but Aegis herself who planted this seed of change.

Thane gazed past Vyrlos, and his eyes fell on a river which branched around a small isle. Upon the isle was a glen that could be seen from the Vesper Shores. He knew at once – his task! This Eye of Wreathe supported his vision.

Thane took the knight's hand and rose. When he began to drag the wreckage of his past downriver toward the Eye of Wreathe, Vyrlos leant his hand silently.

It took them sixty days and sixty nights, before the towers could be seen from the Vesper Shores, but it was then that the first fires beckoned the lost or marooned. People came whether by necessity or curiosity, and a town within the wooded dell, with boughs threading its walls, flourished with life and love.

And it was called Nûmundor.



*Mythnote: These people became known as the Nûmunyr, a separate however geographically close civilization to the Tûrvaini. They came from all walks of life, but settled in this single great city to live as one. The city's main export was clocks for the thirteen-hour day, and toys for children that they distributed across all the Wreatheland. As the thrush was a common bird amongst the branches of the stronghold, it's said the King spoke to them, sat in council with them, and that the immortal Elzhri themselves sent advice to him through through the tiny bird. While this was only partially true, the Nûmunyr followed their King for his kindness, bravery, levity, and temperance in judgment.*

When Vyrlos finally left, the boy was a man – Thane, the Thrush King – and the city was secure. When Chaos broached the horizon, the city's fate would align to Thane's dream, but not quite as expected.

After Vyrlos' departure, he continued to be the vision of perfect chivalry, a knight immortal. However, at the same time Aegis birthed her Eighth, far away, the Ninth was born...

## DÛNKRATH, the NINTH.

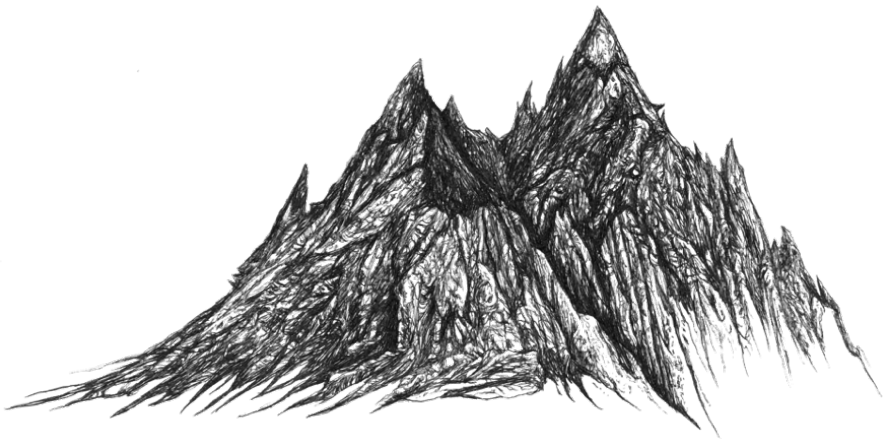
Born atop Mt. Dûn-evare, Dûnkrath was the Elzhri of anger, wrath, blood and sacrifice. He dwelled upon the mountain, looking out across the Realms for those needing a push to retribution or heavy-handed justice.

Mortals would climb to the top of Mt. Dûn-evare to sacrifice goat or sheep, even their first born son, so that the immortal would bless them with his might and glory.

He was a god of war in many mortal eyes, as many mortals saw the Elzhri as gods, but the Eldûn saw it differently. Dûnkrath knew he was the manifestation of order by ordeal, trial by fire, nothing more.

However, cast upon Dûnkrath was an unfortunate fate, for his nature was quick to lash out at those he saw as unworthy. If the Ninth lost his temper, he would fall into a rage, soothed neither by word, nor stopped by steel.

Because of this, he would change the face of Aegis forever when the mortal fault of man was revealed to him ...





## The Seduction of Solûsin.

The Seduction of Solûsin is a horrifying, sacrilegious tale. When the Seventh was absent from the First Council near the birth of the Age of Origin – when first the Elzhri communed to decree their place in Aegis amongst her mortal Sires – Amaredi took notice and was immediately taken with his defiance. She sought him out, and found the Seventh instead at council with his own Shadow.

Amaredi could feel the power emanating from her brother, but why he did nothing with it, she couldn't understand. Indeed, he may have been the most powerful of them all. Thus, as was her nature, she had to have him for her own. Her guile and charm ensnared Solûsin, and he confided in her his darkest secrets:

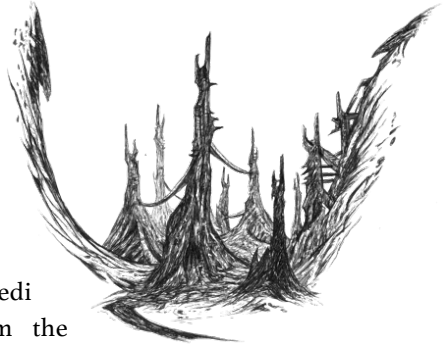
Solûsin was adamantly opposed to their unwritten creed, and if ever he left his Cascade, he knew he would forsake it and betray the Eldûn. After all, his only desire was to create, and amongst such vibrant life now who wouldn't have such ambition? However, unlike Kyrksos, he was neither brash, nor foolish.

His desires laid out for Amaredi, and her desire only him, no matter how forbidden, she tempted the Seventh and quickly found his bed warm and wanting.

That night, Amaredi conceived two children. Born of Eldûn instead of Aegis, the world refused their birth to mortal realms.

Instead, their souls were castigated; they lived in haunting grace amongst the Spirit Kingdoms, a branch of Aegis for the damned, the forsaken, or the unwise caster of false spells.

Those who dwelt in these Kingdoms, which some claim to be even larger than the rock of Aegis herself, are neither living nor dead, forevermore surviving amongst the crags of rebirth, but never rising from their cracks.



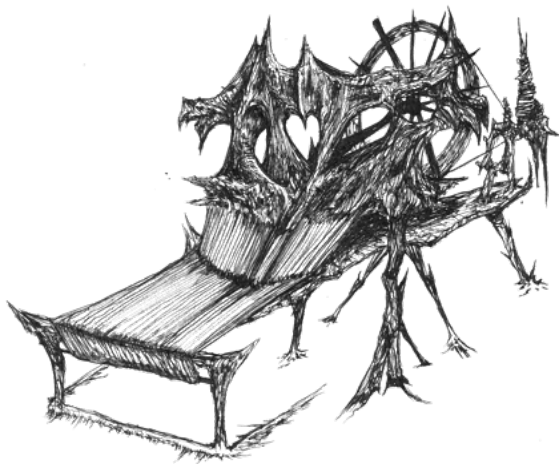
Solûsin, feeling betrayed, cast Amaredi out of his bed, exiling her from the Stormstones; as she was scorned, she never returned, and his fury left a scar across her left breast, which to this day she keeps hidden from all.

The Seventh then called upon the Fyrzhor of Seerhold.

*Mythnote: The Fyrzhor, meaning blacksmith in the El'arria, had a thirst for gold like no other, and drank the blood of gods, or so the legends recorded to a fault. However, it wasn't gold, but all metals these black elves sought. The steel they forged of the arcane powers they wove into their designs held stronger than the very rocks of the Ritûm, and their blades sharper than Elvar eyes. Their appetites, much akin to their thirst, was insatiable as well; what they lacked in height, as one-meter short dredgers, they made up for in stock, stout and thick of gut with thicker faces, beards as black and dense as the pitch they delved. They were also a private people, and kept to their mountain halls. Only the Black Pilgrims, few and far between, ventured into the daylight for the business that inundated their master's entombed coffers with such prosperity. These vicars were women born in the Shadow of Cinderstride; they were tall and dark-skinned, astonishingly beautiful compared to their male counterparts. This was the Fyrzhoric contact to the outside world, for the melodic, soothing trills of the Cinder Daughters were better for barter than the coarse whispers from the lips of the demon smiths.*

The Fyrdûr of Seerhold graciously sent the one-eyed Syrboritûmdor, the finest smith of all the Ildûm'tyr, to the Elzhri's aid. Solûsin explained his dilemma: He loved his children dearly, but he could never speak with them, cradle them, see them learn and grow, nor could he simply share his love for them, or even name them whilst he stayed amongst the living.

Cunning as he was, Syrboritûmdor crafted Solûsin a special golden loom.



With this loom, Solûsin went to work, weaving celestial cloaks that allowed the wearer to cross from the realms of the living, past the dead and into the domain that could only affect mortal kind in omen and dream...

## SOMNYR, the TENTH and NOXUKÛR, the ELEVENTH.

Solûsin spent years weaving his three cloaks, until one happy night the final thread was placed. Fighting off exhaustion, Solûsin donned one of the three, with the other two draped over his arm, and was immediately drawn away from the world he knew.

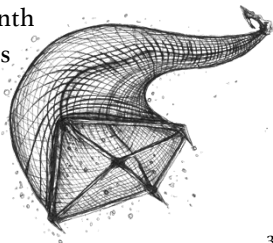
For the first time, he saw the faces of his children, and the Tenth and Eleventh Elzhri were manifest in full, and he caressed them.

Solûsin named his son, the Tenth, Somnyr, who would hold the magic of mortal dream and weave its wonder through his fingers. He was a solemn lad, but enjoyed the intricacies of mortal fantasy, doing his best to allow his sleepers to wake with a smile on their lips and hope in their hearts.

Solûsin named his daughter, the Eleventh, Noxukûr, to cast and dwell with the demons of nightmares. She was fascinated by what tortured mortal existence and was ever playful with the dark. She teased and tested the limits of mortal strain through mentality and memory. If her victims woke fearful, haunted, or even screaming, she was satisfied.

The Seventh loved both his children equally, and knew, in the end, mortal kind needed both to balance their slumbers. He knew if all that was seen in sleeping was Shadow, the mind's release would come out in warfare.

Each Elzhri eidolon kept with Solûsin, but to their side of the celestial barrier. His children bore the spirits of Aegis to her sleeping, and when the mortal realm woke, the Tenth and Eleventh Elzhri would cast golden nets of Syrboritûmdor's loom over their creations and draw them back to the depths of the Cascade.



And for a time, Solusin found peace.



## the BATTLE of the BLOODWASH.

The Battle of the Bloodwash is a tragic tale of a man's fault, an immortal's rage, and a people's death. It is considered the first battle that marked the end of the Age of Origin, though none, but Aeginsyr himself, realized – the scars of the Bloodwash bled through Age's end, dwelt where it lay beneath Shadow, and would poison Aegis for thousands of years to come.

The catalyst of the Battle of the Bloodwash was an Orsain named Farrow, an evil man unhappy with his lot in life.

*Mythnote: The Orsain were Horse Lords who inhabited the Fields of Eurymyr. When the capital of Oisin was new, purebloods of the city declared they alone had rights to property and sanction; all bastards were hunted down and sent north to the mines beneath Thorncrest. Eventually, there was an uprising. The rebels erected Orphaeon against the crags of Thorncrest, and a war between the Orsain sister cities raged for six years. One night, the entire Oisin Hierarchy was seen poisoned at banquet, and the war was finally recognized as futile. Thereafter, all was put to rest, and a truce was signed. A lasting peace reigned, and the Horse Lords flourished through to the Age of Origin's end.*

The night after his wedding, Farrow brought his lovely new bride up to the peak of Mt. Dûn-evare. *We shall watch the sunset from the temple*, he cooed. Unfortunately for his bride, no matter her beauty, her kindness or fondness for her husband, she lacked the lineage of a wealthy family. To Farrow, their marriage settled a long overdue debt, nothing more.



Farrow took his newlywed to Dûnkrath's shrine and held her tight, whispered romances in her ear as he wrapped his fingers around her throat. He slit it lengthways, and her innocent blood washed over the mountainside. In the hopes that his sacrifice pleased Dûnkrath, the greedy man begged the Ninth to grant him a wife of wealth and land and title.

Instead, the Eldûn was furious. The killing of such innocence and beauty could never be condoned. How this mortal thought this sacrifice fitting was absurd, and the very nature of man became Dûnkrath's enemy.

He cast Farrow down from the mountainside, and leapt from the peak, leaving a crater in his wake. The Ninth believed if one man could commit such a crime, so too could all men; thus, all men were evil ...

Atop Farrow's broken bones, Dûnkrath saw about him the savage land of mortals with clouded eyes, a veil of vengeance cast over them that could only be sated with blood. As was his nature, instead of accepting one man's evil as wiped from the world, the Ninth raged against the many.

Dûnkrath found himself on the boundaries of the city Oisin, and the immortal was far from subtle. He brought the very peak of Mt. Dun-evare rumbling down in a violent quake that decimated the western gates of the city in seconds. The Ninth stepped into the town, and, in all his glory, rose his arms and commanded them: *The transgression of mortal man shall not be tolerated, your evil nay ignored; each husband nigh will now sacrifice himself to me on his wife's behalf!*

A group of six came forth, but it was the wives protecting their husbands, foolishly challenging the god. When Dûnkrath saw this, he was aghast: *If the innocent defends the guilty, so too are you culpable, and all mortal kind is faulted.*



Dûnkrath bore into the six's veins with Ageless power, and their blood ran cold. The wives fell, but the Ninth refused the Spirit Kingdoms its claim. Alas! Dûnkrath would not let the women simply die. Instead, he seared into their minds a single purpose – *all must perish*. And they became as wraiths, the first six of their kind, the *ghasdûr*.

They turned on the town by Dûnkrath's command, and Oisín was razed to the ground. Man, woman and child attempted to flee Dûnkrath's wrath, but to no avail. With each mortal killed by wraith, Dûnkrath would again rip their fatestreams from death's grasp, and sew their thread into flesh and phantom.

Amongst the destruction, there were two who stood against the hopeless onslaught:

The first was a child, a girl, the Rookman's daughter, who ascended the watchtower of Oisín, all the while threatening to collapse beneath her. Its scaffolding quaked as she reached the tower's rookery. She scribbled a letter, quick as she could, and tied it to the nearest bird, a speckled jackdaw. It fled under the daughter's duress and on mortal man's behalf.

The tower collapsed, burying the girl alive.

The second was a stableboy, a Horse-tamer's squire, a youth pure of heart and soul of steel, who was beneath the Falls of Hallowing aside the Fields of Eurymyr at the time. When he saw the pyres of Oisín alit from afar, he returned to his home to find the butchery in progress.

Even now, we know not the stableboy's true name, but he entered the massacre willingly and cut the head from the first of the six *ghasdûr* before he ran to his master's aid. He found the Horse-tamer dead among the many, and the stables asunder.

The horses were trapped; he had no choice. Sprinting into the blaze, the boy cut the steeds free.

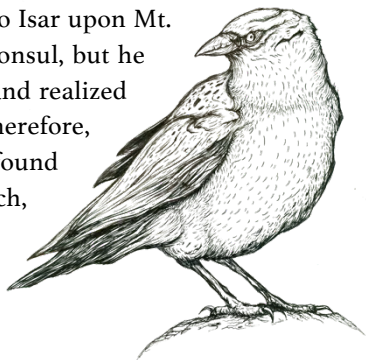
In return, a black stallion galloped past him, drooping its head and lifting him over its back. He came-to mounted, and escaped through Oisín's crumbling northern allowance.

The stableboy looked back to the splinters and cinders of the place he once called home. He rode in all haste across the Fields of Eurymyr to warn Oisín's sister city.

It was a three-day ride to Orphaeon, but neither man nor beast took rest – the stableboy knew the god's gaze would fall on the northern stronghold shortly. The Elzhri of Wrath would not be satisfied with a city, would not be sated until all men were punished.

When Oisín was nothing, but ruins, Dúnkrath stalked across the Fields of Eurymyr, tearing it asunder and leaving scars of bloodstained mire in his wake. His army of deathly vassals marched behind him.

What of the jackdaw, you ask? The little bird, who's name later was found to be Pyp, flew in haste to Isar upon Mt. Myrkûr to deliver its message and seek consul, but he feared for the people of the Elderlands, and realized her pondering would take far too long. Therefore, Pyp dashed down from the Spine and found Aeginsyr, the First wandering the Stretch, who in turn foretold a future of deliverance: *Wrath and Valor will see the world perish beneath their sire – a battle, a scar, the first great change in Shadow.*



Pyp deduced, at least in part, the prophecy, and sped on weary rushing wings to the Wreatheland, where he found Valor, Vyrlos, the Eighth tending to a farmer caught beneath a broken plow.

So it was that Vyrlos answered Orsain's plea.

As it was his own twin, he would stop this tragedy from reaching further heights, already a treachery against their unwritten creed. Knowing not the strength of his brother's ghastly forces, he gathered the men of the Wreathe from their scattering across the conflux and marched north.

Meanwhile, the stableboy reached Orphaeon before his enemy, and in time to marshal a semblance of an army – small, but well armed and better armored. Their forges were stoked, taxed beyond despair now deep within the belly of the Thorncrest. They barred the gates, chained them shut, and waited at the boy's command.

*Mythnote: Histories refer to this stableboy as the Nameless King, for his renown grew great. However, make no mistake, the boy bore no title, even when peons and captains both swore their blades. Whether by choice of privacy, a sense of humility, or for a past in pursuit of a better future, he did this. Nevertheless, for now, we will refer to him as history did.*

When Dûnkrath arrived at the gates of Orphaeon, he was not alone – the *ghasdûr* were behind him, and their own phantom servants followed. It was an army of wrath, unadulterated malice against mortal man.

The Nameless King defended the city for six days and six nights, until the wall was breached and Dûnkrath pressed inward. Then, the jackdaw, Pyp, came to rest on the stableboy's shoulder amidst the chaos. Fluttering in the hero's ear, it turned his head.

There, across the Scars of Eurymyr, was Vyrlos and his army.

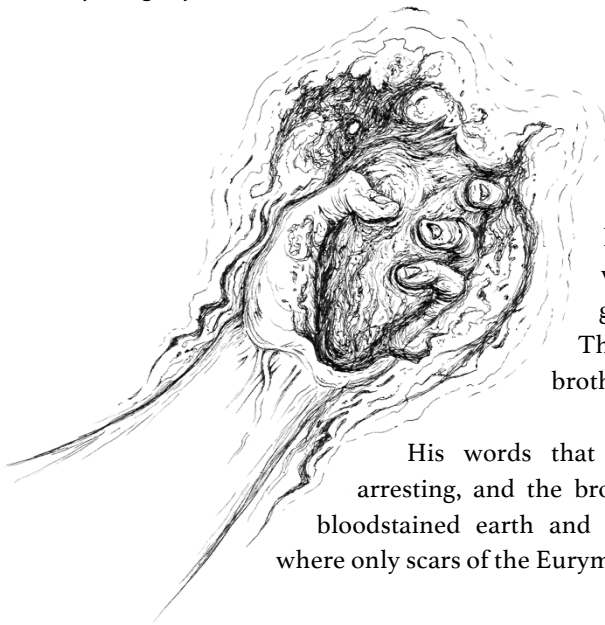
Aeginsyr, Mimyr, Isar, Kyrksos, Nûmarria and Amaredi all watched as they could from the peaks of Mt. Myrkûr far away. Even Solûsin dared the light of day to watch from a distant cave cut from his Cascade, while his children, Somnyr and Noxukûr, could see the displace of Shadow in their Kingdoms, and watched the army caught between their realms and the living – specters of lingering death marching on the innocent.

The Elzhri would not interfere and hardly condoned Vyrlos for his decision to protect the Orsain people, but they knew his decision was made and would not be altered.

The battle was long and terrible, and the armies well-matched, but the *ghasdûr* were something new, unlike all else, unborn of Aegis, reborn of damnation. The Nameless King watched in horror as the city burned and the people of Orphaeon were slaughtered no different than her sister city. While his strongest knights apprehended the grisly vassals, he decided to charge Dûnkrath himself.

Dûnkrath was already in a struggle against his twin, but stronger in wrath than Vyrlos was in valor, Dûnkrath loomed over his brother, ready to let fall the final blow. However, the Nameless King intercepted Dûnkrath's strike and cut into the god's heart.

Dûnkrath sheared away the Nameless King's swordarm, and the King's cry of agony bolstered the immortal; he would not be defeated!



Vyrlos found his feet in the distraction, and, as Dûnkrath turned to address him again, thrust his hand into Dûnkrath's wounded cavity, gripping his very heart. The Eighth wrenched his brother toward him.

His words that day were quiet, but arresting, and the brothers' tears fell to the bloodstained earth and seeped into the fields where only scars of the Eurymyr remained.

To this day, only one knows the words the gods spoke to each other in those seconds of volatile disquiet; unfortunately, I am not he. However, it is known that Dûnkrath fell to his knees and saw the error in his ways.

The Wraith paused in their assault, as their cerebral push was halted, and the Knights of the Nameless burned them to ash and marrow. Their remains melted into the earth like soft steel in the mightiest furnace.

*Mythnote: It should be noted that the ghasdûr were not themselves destroyed; nay, the six survived the turn of tides, fled west and dwelt forevermore in the ghostly halls of Dûnror, a place we will return to later in this volume.*

Dûnkrath, the Ninth was then cast into exile, accepted this sentence willingly.

Wrath ventured south and east to Ash's End. He settled with the Fyrzhor between Seerhold and Ilsûr'aeon along the Cinderstride, deep in the belly of the Ildûm'tyr Ritûm.

The nine observing Elzhri perceived the conflict resolved and removed themselves; they acknowledged the judgment over Wrath as the only amenable resolution.

While the Elzhri were disheartened, even grieved for mortal kind, destroying what Aegis herself bore to the Realms before life and death was significant would inevitably lead the undying astray – they knew this. The breaking of so many families, the loss of so many lives, was a consequence Wrath would atone for in Time, and by the fatestreams' devise alone.

Immortal kind did not kill their own.

At last, this calamity was done, but as such, the Elzhri's guiding light diminished that day, their name and order stained. And the doubt of man on god had begun.

What was left on the Bloodwash, as it was thereafter called, no longer the Fields of Eurymyr, were the scars of Wrath and Valor, and all ties to the sane along the tract were severed. Deliverance and consequence would follow, and the Twelfth of the twelve immortal Elzhri was born in the wake of this Chaos ...



## SYRSEVAR, the TWELFTH.

The Twelfth was a creature conceived by Chaos, the only Elzhri born after and amongst the Time of the First Sires. He slithered his first footsteps through the carnage of battle and beneath the Scars of Eurymyr, now the Bloodwash. He stole away in secret, deep into the fresh wounds of Aegis.

Kyrksos, the Fourth, having watched the battle between Wrath and Valor from afar, curious to the end, saw the Shadow of this new Eldûn slink into the cracks of the mire and followed.

The deformed immortal, as of yet unnamed, crept beneath earthen surface, along the world's darkest most sacred and clandestine steps. The creature's hands felt the Worldvein, caressed it and tracked it, and was led further into its marrow. No sunlight broached this place; all were blind to his wandering. While madness drove him, it was an innocence of the world that lit his way. He knew not the troubles of man, the wonder of life or loss of death; he knew only the discord that wrought him, and he was wroth with increasing hunger and a rising mental anguish. His crooking talons ripped through the rock of the earth as a knife through flesh. He heard Aegis' cry and reveled in it, for this sound alone was familiar to him.

Such agony fueled his course and the pitch gave way to a glow at the end of the Worldvein. Miserable voices of a language long dead echoed through his torn mind. He couldn't make sense of them, and it infuriated him. His anger gave him strength in return and he thought, *there is ancient enmity beyond – I must understand it, I must conquer it.*

When he reached Vein's End, he knew not what he saw, nor the ruin his discovery would cause. The Twelfth had reached the Chains of Aegis.

Kyrksos, fumbling yet silent, had followed the abomination through the womb of Aegis, calming, but unable to take the time to mend, the disturbed rock. As was his nature, he was far too curious.

This thing, Elzhri born, thus immortal, yet a teeming manifest of evil had found that which was never to be uncovered – Kyrksos knew – that which the great Fyr'draeor protected from the skies above the Evar'nûm; unbeknownst to the Ildraeor were the dark and damning tunnels that led to his charge from below.

Kyrksos found himself looking upon the Chain of Aegis, and the Minds' Eye of the Aeonar beneath. He felt its nightmare heart beating with each step he took. He sensed the ground shudder with anticipation as Aegis herself tried to warn the bizarre creature away.

The Twelfth Elzhri caressed the tantalum construct in wonder. The fetters breathed with some keeper's life, some spirit from before the Beginning, but the abomination felt only the surge of starlight and supremacy.

The Endless called to the creature and named him: *Syrsevar, release us!* They never expected an execution of madness ...

Syrsevar was drawn, but had no sense of what the Endless spoke, only what the imprisoned felt, an influence enslaved, a command his craze-shorn mind must steal for his own, possess and use.

He grabbed the Chain and, with all the strength born to him of the Eighth and Ninth, broke the tantalum in two.

Before Ildûr could escape, for Mardûm was not such a fool as to try, Syrsevar bound the Chain to the Endless' mind.

As Ildûr screamed a roar of torment that echoed through the Worldvein, shuddering Aegis' womb, Syrsevar fused the iron from his wrist to the spirit's temple. And the Aeonar's soul became one with his.



If you recall the Endless, don't underestimate what years of imprisonment can do to even the strongest god. Ildûr was weakened, and it was Syrsevar's mind that won dominance over the lecherous body he bore; the Chain of Aegis bound to both Aeonar and Eldûn.

Then, the Chain itself cried out a warning, which spun Syrsevar to greet a mortified Kyrksos behind him.

Fear immobilized the Elzhri of curiosity, and Syrsevar took the remaining half of Aegis' fetter and shackled Kyrksos to the spires of the Worldgrave, leaving him there to eternity's design. Syrsevar was as afraid of this creature as Kyrksos was of him, yet had no calling or reason for killing the Fourth, so left him to his despair. As of yet to see a world beyond the Shadow, Syrsevar desired to know more and ventured forth.

He climbed upward through the Worldgrave and out of a fissure in the Dûn'raeor. Light of a sun he'd never witnessed reflected off the leaves of the Evar'nûm and blinded him, agonized him; thus, the first command of his limitless power was released: *Burn!* He shed fire from the Chain's lash, but found the brilliant tree would not ignite.

Infuriated, Syrsevar, thereupon the Zhrizûr Divide, brought a darkness that engulfed the Ritûm and stretched out across the Elderlands.

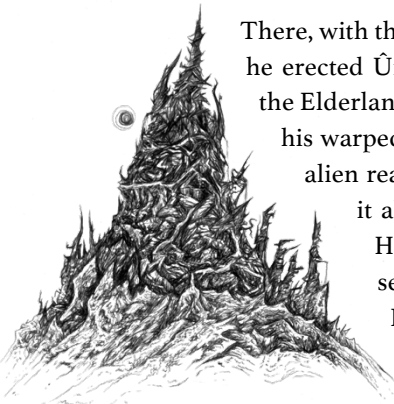
It's said the Eleaos'i of the Shimmerwood saw this, and at once fell from their canopies. The rivermen of Templeton saw it, and at once crafted boats to sail swiftly down the Reignway to shelter. The people of Ildûron saw it, and at once knew their fate was decided, a side chosen. Even the Fyrzhor in their far off delvings, saw the Shadow from the watchtowers of Seerhold, and at once lit their forges, fanned the fuel, and hammer on anvil rang out across the land – they knew war was coming.

Dûnkrath was among them; he stood on Seerhold's spire, looked out at the darkening horizon, understood and wept ...

## the WAR of SHATTERING.

Syrsevar saw the world of Aegis from the Fyr-aeor Ritûm, and the voices of Ildûr and Chain channeled to scour his way. Nature's ties to sanity severed from his profane birth, the Twelfth saw his path clear and simple. It was to be Chaos – bright and beautiful.

In his wake, the ground tore open and scarred, much akin to his own mind and possibly even a reflection of it. The rivers were poisoned, and lakes dried. The creatures fled, and Syrsevar rested along the northwestern ridges of the Blackrock.



There, with the blood and body of Aegis' flesh and bone, he erected Ūrokas, his first and greatest stronghold in the Elderlands. He seethed in madness, contemplating his warped existence in distress. The torment of his alien reality drew him into exhaustive solitude, as it also facilitated and amplified his curiosity. However, to venture from the borders of secrecy was to turn the mighty eye of Fyr'draeor upon him and possibly incur the Ildraeor's volition.

Then, one starless night, walking and searching through a tormented sleep to find meaning in the depth of dream, Syrsevar was found out by Noxukûr, who immediately set upon the Twelfth the demons of her playful nightmares. They penetrated the dreams of Chaos, burnishing them vivid and terrible.

However, before the Eleventh could fathom what creature she'd welcomed into her haunted circus, Syrsevar assaulted Noxukûr, and laid waste to her children in a frenzy of innocent confusion. Even broken, the Twelfth's mind was still ever stronger than the seed of Solûsin. Syrsevar's innocence quickly faded into perverse interest, and with the power of the Aeonar he pulled the shade from her Shadow and saw Noxukûr chained, much like Kyrksos, but to a slab of stone set into the tallest tower of Ûrokas looking over the Embers.

Unlike the stranger in the depths of the Dûn'raeor, this time Syrsevar felt attacked, betrayed by Aegis – he thought, *who would desire such horrific visions while they slept* – and Noxukûr would be the first victim of his bedlam, the first prisoner in what would be called the War of Shattering.

When Noxukûr never returned to the loom of Syrboritûmdor with Somnyr in the Stormstones, their father went searching for his daughter.

Years passed, and Noxukûr's torture lasted, relentless. Syrsevar reaped her mind, bled her body, and found her ability to weave nightmare ultimately both fascinating and satisfying. He used it to touch the minds of all the peoples of Aegis, to learn of them, seed fear and sow doubt. Noxukûr's blood drained down the mountainside in rivulet and waterfall; thus, the River Fyr'dûn took shape, and its flow was fierce, cruel, and black as the starless night that stole her away from the Spirit Kingdoms.

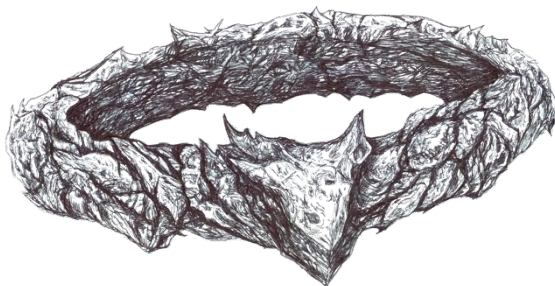
Whilst the Shadow over the Evar'nûm billowed ever darker, Syrsevar hid from Fyr'draeor's skyborne patrol over the Worldsgrave. The Ildraeor searched for a reason the stars could no longer be seen from the Zhrizûr Divide, but Syrsevar's power blinded him. Some say the Twelfth did it by evil dream, manipulating Noxukûr's streams; some say it was the proud foolishness of the Ildraeor himself; however, the smart attributed it to a simple shroud of enigmatic darkness, one that kept many of the Twelfth's doings in Shadowed wizardry from the world, a wizardry passed down through the cursed Chain infused with his body, the malice of the Aeonar splitting his tormented soul.

Meanwhile, below the rocks of the Dûn'raeor, Kyrksos dwelt with the whispers of Aegis guiding his hand. Using the fires of the Endless Minds' Eye that seared his immortal hands to the bone, he forged a hammer from the spires of tantalum that rose surmounting through the hellish abyss.

As the Fourth pounded his fist in the final drum to his hammer, his hands in burnt ruin, and let one final scream of agony echo from his charred lips, the spires rebounded its cry through a shaft upward and to the surface. A Rosefinch of the Czir-aeor Ritûm heard it and, as was the manifest of the echo, its curiosity led the Rosefinch down into the Worldgrave.

When Kyrksos saw this little bird, he knew his savior had come. The creature could send a message out to the Realms of Syrsevar's innocent, yet destructive betrayal of his birthright. But, alas! What to send? What could a bird such as this carry for endless leagues to civilization.

It was then, and only then, that the renounced and remaining imprisoned Endless spoke to him. Mardûm claimed the Chain's power could be used for good, even a single link could change the face and fate of Aegis, and Kyrksos saw twelve of them scattered across the bedrock from Syrsevar's shearing of it. The omen was grim, and possibly damning, but the Fourth saw it as prophecy in the making. The Eldûn believed in prophecies, and Kyrksos could feel the power still emanating from the severed chain's life. He took a single link in his calloused, sinewy hands and hammered it into a ring. In this, he poured his sweat, his blood, and his power; thus, the first Ring of Manifest was born.



Within this Ring, Kyrksos wove a curiosity that would act as a guide, leading the bearer to the most urgent of tasks. If the Rosefinch could find one of his brethren, that task would commit to the welfare of Aegis, nothing more, and its pull would lead them to Kyrksos. The Rosefinch took the Ring and flew as fast as his resolute wings could carry him – the beasts of both land and air without prompt could feel the change of Aegis upon them; her urgency was dire indeed.

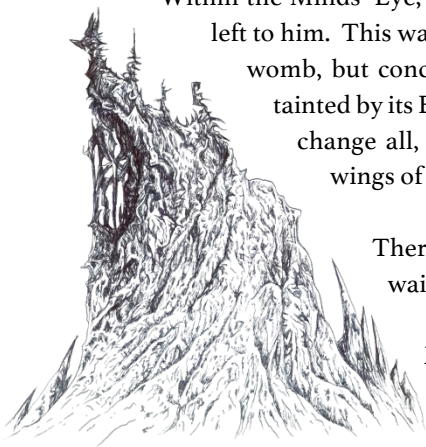
Be it fate or happenstance, the Rosefinch, heading south toward the Wreatheland in the hopes to find the Eighth, was hit by the gales of a horrendous storm and flew off his course eastward. The messenger ran aground against the Stormstone Cascade with a broken wing. Here, he was found by Solûsin, who'd been searching for his daughter for nigh a decade. When the Ring tightened around Solûsin's finger, instead of showing him the Minds' Eye as intended, it showed the Elzhri his own personal desperation – a vision of the fortress  $\hat{U}$ rokas at  $\hat{U}$ rodûn – for the welfare of Aegis was far from Solûsin's first concern. Noxukûr was all that mattered.

The Seventh immediately set off for the Fyr-aeor Ritûm; it was the first, and possibly the only, time he'd left his Cascade bastille willingly.

Within the Minds' Eye, Kyrksos thought upon the eleven links left to him. This was power beyond Aegis, fashioned in her womb, but conceived against the will of the Void and tainted by its Endless. Whatever his decision, it would change all, and it would no doubt carry death on wings of fire and steel to the First Age.

Therefore, he thought, calculated, and waited to be found.

Meanwhile, Syrsevar silently erected  $\hat{U}$ rowar at the southern tip of the Maw.





When the Baymen of the Embers felt his presence, they bowed before him silently, for they knew power when they saw it, and could see the end of men at hand. Their greatest city, Ildûron, fell at a whispered, brutal command to obey.

*Mythnote: The Baymen were the peoples of the Embers, whose banks to the Eventyr Bight enriched the cities of Ildûron, Fyrzain, and Ilstair. However, the Eventyr Bight was also true to its namesake – deadly storms lashed across its capes and flooded the Embers constantly. Only the strong survived, and to their end, the Baymen were a people of stouter stature, with principles that lay in practicality. What was, was, and there was no room for foolishness or ignorance. They followed the mighty, and were one of very few peoples during the Age of Origin who followed a true King – the strongest who would take each century’s throne by force ... and keep it*

The Bighters crowned Syrsevar with submission, and showed him hidden coves to secret ways through the womb of Aegis they rarely dared to comb themselves. The Twelfth challenged their use against her. These roads led him beneath the Czir-aeor Ritûm and up to the peaks of Dûn-evare, looking down on what was left of Oisín. The city knelt, for they could not afford another war, but their Horse Lords sent word and warning to Orphaeon, so their Nameless King could once again for war prepare.

Here at the Bloodwash, the Scars of Eurymyr, was the only place familiar to Syrsevar. It soothed him, and his sights turned to Oisín’s sister city. He would take Orphaeon from this Nameless King, even if it meant ultimately revealing himself to the world.

However, when his force of abominations arrived, the Nameless King had gone, abandoned Orphaeon to their own collapsing fate. They were led by a steward, no more, and this steward was no leader of men.

The battle was swift, and no songs remember it well, but Syrsevar corrupted the smith’s hold openly for all to see, hear and feel.

The Elderlands erupted from below, splitting Aegis' womb asunder, and fissures of fire bellowed from their depths; the Twelfth's thunderous cackle was heard by all.

The Elderlands were his. And the War of Shattering finally began.

His force of will and scarring power drew out Fyr'draeor from his enigmatic myopia. He left the skies above the Evar'nûm, and found Syrsevar waiting for him on the Bloodwash. When the Ildraeor dove, Syrsevar stayed his hand. The sire of the stars clenched the Twelfth between his teeth and raised him up above the world. The Ildraeor was about to snap the tainted creature in two, ready to eliminate this evil once and for all, when Syrsevar smiled.

He cast the Chain from his arm and slung it around the Eldûn's neck. It pierced the creature's eye and bore into his mind. Fyr'draeor roared, and dropped the Elzhri of Chaos. As the Chain was now a part of him and working its way into the beast's consciousness, Syrsevar rebounded and saddled the immortal winged monstrosity. Through the tantalum, Fyr'draeor's mind was his to control.

The agony in the Ildraeor's roar was heard across all of Aegis, and the eyes of all man and beast turned to the Elderlands as one. They saw the Shadow there, and fear clutched their hearts as a tremor rippled through the earth beneath their feet.

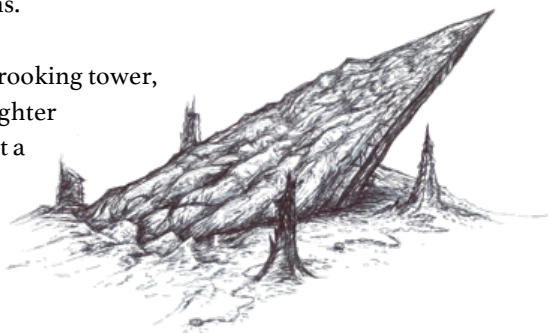
On dragonback, Syrsevar flew across the Western seas. A year passed before he was seen again; he would land on the eastern side of the known world.

In this year, Solûsin found himself at Ûrodûn, looking up at the fortress of the Twelfth's abominations. Indeed, what Syrsevar left there were horrors in every Shadow, experiments of nightmare and flesh that now patrolled his walls and dungeons and stood vigilant at his gates and towers.

Solûsin found the secret paths into Ūrokas' cells, and here he found many and more prisoners of the Bedlam Crusade: The Eleaos'i Iaco of the Shimmerwood, the oracle of Orphaeon – Delfûr the Lesser – as well as a half dozen men and women from the lands north of what's now the Ishrine. He asked all if they'd seen his daughter, but it was the Myrmaiden Eurymyr alone who answered, recognizing the name on the wind – *Noxukûr is the haunting creature used as Syrsevar's breeding tool*. She pointed the way to the Tower of Evenrûn, the Tower of Nightmare.

Solûsin swore he would come back for the prisoners the moment Noxukûr was safe in his arms.

The Seventh ascended the crooking tower,  
and found his daughter  
restrained at an angle against a  
slab of shimmering gray  
mineral. Iron chains  
bound her to the cold bed,  
and the sight reviled him.



Solûsin attempted to release her, but the abominations of Syrsevar fell upon him, a gnarling macabre host. He fought back, but was no match for the horde; they threw him from the Evenrûn's precipice. The Seventh crashed to the crags of Ūrodûn, broken, defeated, and retreated west from Ūrokas. He found sanctuary with the Elvar beneath the Evar-aeor Ritûm.

*Mythnote: The Elvar translates to the people of the “elder stars.” They flourished through the heights of the Evar-aeor Ritûm. Some knew them as Star-folk or Blackwalkers. Their long, shimmering onyx locks grew to or past their ankles, and their extending necks stretched skyward, a whole lateral foot in length. Their natural height bore upon them a flagrant aristocracy. If anyone of smaller stature addressed them, the Elvar replied softly in either authority or disregard. If advice was sought, the Elvar would give their piece with the air of veracious, ethical knowledge (whether it was accurate or not).*

Solûsin spent years with the Elvar, planning, doubting, always hesitant to return, but his thoughts never strayed from his daughter, chained to the Slab of Oblivion.

Across the seas, Syrsevar appeared and erected Stormhold at the eastern edge of the Stormstone Cascade. He came down on the Wreatheland with fire and brimstone, while his abominations occupied the fortress of Dûnrór in the west. Here, the last of the *ghasdûr* in fear of the madness Syrsevar's shorn mind wrought went into hiding, never to return to this Age.

Syrsevar's Sire allies at Ildûron had not been idle either. By this time, they'd stormed southward across the Eventyr Bight to the Reignhearth. The cities at Searidge and Reignberg crumbled, and Templeton felt the Embermen loom. The armies' campfires encircled the fortified farm town, ready to lay siege when the command came down the line.

By fate or happenstance, in Templeton was Orphaeon's Nameless King, residing ere the city's walls during the Baymen's campaigns across the Reignhearth.

*Mythnote: Since the Battle of the Bloodwash, the Nameless King had searched far and wide in a desperate pursuit, a quest to find his lost love, the Myrmaiden Eurymyr. As we in part know now, she was captured during the Bedlam Crusade and sent to Ûrokas, one more nameless prisoner of war. To the King, this was unbeknownst, and he'd thought his cause lost.*

While the Nameless King was tired of such senseless killing through a lifetime of warfare, he saw the evil surrounding Templeton, and recognized its threat to all of Aegis – he knew the time had come to place his unwanted mantle back across his aging shoulders. He heard of a marshalling at a place called Sanctuary across the Spine, and called the six bravest knights of Templeton to ride with him.

The Nameless King left the city in the night, advising the rest of its people to flee south to the Crookveldt.

The Knights of the Nameless crossed the Spine and through trial of battle won the strength of arms of many mountain clans in their passing. At their journey's end, with a force of two hundred loyal savages at his back, the Nameless King found this Sanctuary – a spiraling fortress of ice, strong as steel, rising from the center of a large crescent lake. The immortal Tyr'draeor had raised it for the refugees of the Elderlands, Embers and Reignhearth, as well as peoples who fled the northern Spine, the Cascade and Raeori Ritûm from pocket skirmishes.

News spread of Syrsevar's attack on the Wreatheland to Sanctuary's east, the destruction of the Citadel of Sires, and the flood down the River Wreathyr and Marbor Bay. It wasn't long until winged messengers reported the impending assault on Templeton was at hand, and that there was indeed a massing at Dûnrór by Syrsevar himself, no longer leading the charge across the burning Wreatheland.

Then, a light in the darkness! An old man in wooden armor, and a band of veteran knights from Númundor upon Wreathe's Eye had sailed north along the Vesper Shores. They'd made camp at a place later called Boughfort, then crept along the Bay of Bells and erected a stone hall unbeknownst to Syrsevar's forces. Stonehall was just a league west, across the hazardous peaks of the Stormstone's end to Stormhold, on its opposing shore. In six days, the Boughs Band of Thane, Thrush-King, built the impossible – a bridge spanning the Cascade's peril – and came down on Stormhold with decisive, methodical fury. They cut off the abominations reach to their master.

The Nameless King knew it was time to strike. He rallied what able men and boys were at Sanctuary to march north, in aim to attack Dûnrór.

This army of Orsain, Reignwalkers, Tûrväini, Myrmen and Mountain Clans even saw the immortal Astar join their cause and march beside them. Tyr'draeor himself lent his wings to their aid, cloaking the legions of justice from enemy eyes in a veil of mist and Shadow for their long journey through the dark, while the Elzhri – Vyrlos, Amaredi and Nûmarria – followed, but refused to take part in any battle.

The army camped a single night in Mimir's Pass, and a messenger from Myrhaven rode down in haste to the Nameless King. The messenger withdrew her hood, and lo and behold! it was Mimir herself. The other Elzhri greeted her in gladness, but sobered at her news. From atop Mt. Myrkûr, she'd seen not only the fires rising from Templeton's fare, but a host out of Orphaeon had joined a horde of abominations east of Dûnrör, now just north of the heroes. If the evil weren't intercepted, they would likely cross the mountains to Myrhaven.

Something had to be done before this malicious force reached Mimir's Athenaeum. Therefore, the Nameless King immediately woke his men and marched the army north to the Isdûn, a lake that stretched for miles, bridging the gap between the Raeori and Stormstone ranges. Tyr'draeor came forth and froze the Isdûn, claimed it would act as their ally if they lured Syrsevar's host upon it.

When Syrsevar's forces arrived, they assumed the tract was frozen by winter, and crossed it willingly. The Nameless King marched his own army out to meet them, and the battle began. Vyrlos, Amaredi and Nûmarria held back at the mouth of the pass, abiding by their unwritten creed – they would not interfere in the lives of men, they would not change their fate. Even when Syrsevar arrived mounted on a corrupted Fyr'draeor, they stayed their hand. If man was meant to triumph, he would do so by his own merit, not by immortal's.

However, the Astar had no such creed, and had never felt what conflict could spark in their ever peaceful dwellings across Aegis.

The moment the surge of battle took them, they became obsessed, and fought with the vigor of any immortal of such insurmountable power. They alone could win this war, and while the Elzhri and Ildraeor disapproved, there was little they could do to stop it.

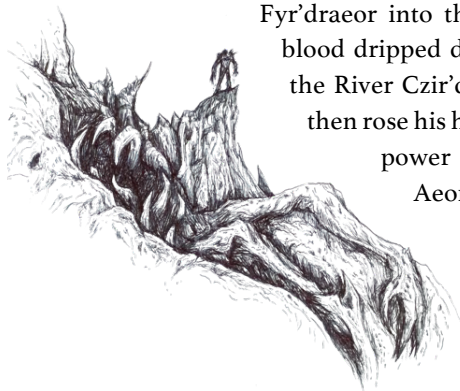
That was, until Syrsevar executed the unthinkable. He swept down on Fyr'draeor and leapt from the earth-changer's back. He landed atop the High Lord of the Astar, Myrkûr, and, with the Chain of Aegis lashing from its sheath of flesh, he shattered the immortal into shards of glass that scattered across the battlefield in incalculable fragments of divinity. The Elzhri panicked: *Had one immortal killed another? It was impossible!*

One Astar did not satisfy the Elzhri of Chaos, however. Testing his limitation, and finding none, he brought his cackling madness down upon the Astar in all Wrath and Valor. He snatched the rib of Myrkûr's shards, fused it with the Chain in his hand and slammed it into the thick sheet of ghastly ice below them. It pierced and split the frozen tract, then cracked out like a web across the Isdûn. The rifts reached beneath each Astar in turn, and at once shattered them all by the hundreds – an immortal genocide unbearable to watch. The army of conscious glass fell in a single instant of splintering ruin, and their shards scattered across the Isdûn.

The Nameless King refused to balk, and led a single rush over the breaking ice. Even the Elzhri could no longer sit idly by at this atrocity against Aegis, and charged. Tyr'draeor slammed into Fyr'draeor, as Syrsevar remounted. They rose and battled in the skies above the din of death and destruction.

The Nameless King's forces found traction on Tyr'draeor's ice, and their enemy slipped into the slaughter. The Elzhri joined them in untamed fury, using weapon and wizardry, to fight side by side the valiant. Far above, Syrsevar recognized his folly, knew he no longer could prevail here. After casting Tyr'draeor back with a slash to the belly, the Twelfth turned his mount and retreated westward.

Syrsevar forced his immortal beauty down, crashing Fyr'draeor into the crags of Ūrowar. The Ildraeor's blood dripped down the southern Maw and formed the River Czir'dûn. If this wasn't enough, Syrsevar then rose his hands in hatred and lunacy. Using the power given to him by the imprisoned Aeonar, he siphoned the Ildraeor's power, Fyr'draeor's flesh and soul, fusing it with the Chain of Aegis and spirit of Ildûr, slaying the proud immortal, and leaving him split open against the mountainside.



Syrsevar left what remained of the body of the Ildraeor at the foot of Ūrowar and fled north, calling all his forces back to Ūrodûn and the wastes around the Worldsgrave.

The Nameless King could not give time to his forces to weep for the Astar. Instead, he commanded them to march on to Dûnrôr. They found it barren of abominations, the *ghasdûr* already reclaiming their desolate halls, and he did not enter that place. He led his army straight down the Nûm'rill to the Zhrizûr Divide where what was left of Syrsevar's army collected and waited for them.

At camp across from his enemy, the Nameless King walked the perimeter, watching the fires burn through the night until sleep took him unwarranted. Solûsin, still in wait atop the Evarseer, found the Horse Lord in his dreams, and told him all he'd discovered at Ūrokas, from the dungeons to the slab of oblivion. When the Nameless King awoke, the clear vision of his imprisoned Eurymyr seared into his mind.

Vyrlos attended him, calmed him at once: *What else did you see?* He pressed, for surely there was more. *One of your kind! At the summit of what is called the Evenrûn,* the man exclaimed. It was Noxukûr, and they must release her.



Vyrlos advised him: *Attack when the moon is high, and Tyr'draeor's tears fall from the sky.* Waiting and watching impatiently over the next fortnight, the Nameless King's scouts learned much.

First, Templeton was not lost; no, the town had fought back, and was still fighting. If only a turn of good could change their luck, their morale, maybe the city of Reignmen could be saved, but the deeds of lesser men, nameless in history, while no less heroic, cannot all be recounted here.

*Mythnote: The Reignmen, or Reignwalkers, were the peoples – tillers, croppers, herders and fishermen – that settled across the Reignhearth. They erected countless towns and villages throughout the lands west of the Spine of the World, from the Barrows, in which they lay their dead, all the way to the foothills of the Czir-aeor Ritûm. The River Reignway was ever their fondest ally, lending its speed for trade from the Spine to the Silent Sea, and at its middle, between two large bodies of water called the Irises of Tyrdûr, was Templeton, their largest settlement, great not for its structures or armies, but for its land and people. These were a good and honest folk, pious and faith-following, carving ornate cathedrals from marble brought in from the quarries at Stonebarrow, and ringing bells of gold-laden brass for feast and holiday.*

Second, Syrsevar's abominations were on the run from the Thrush-King across the Wreatheland, their power severely diminished and Thane's Boughs Bands hunting them down one by one.

Third, and lastly, the body of Fyr'draeor was found desecrated against the crags of Ūrowar. The Elzhri immediately called Tyr'draeor to the ruined tower, who then wept at the loss of his brother. He circled the skies and roared out in lament, in rage and despair.

*May his spirit release,  
To the Evar'tûm's peace;  
Oh the Shadow come forth,  
Shade the lands her remorse,  
Hear the cries, the lament, the descent of the Deep.*

Tyr'draeor's tears fell over the Zhrizûr Divide, as if cleansing it before the inevitable bloodletting to come. Thus, the Nameless King took this as his sign, and the two armies met at the foot of the Worldsgrave. It was the greatest battle of their time, and it soaked the roots of the Evar'nûm and the rocks of the Dûn'raeor, with the blood of mortals and immortals alike.

Far below, within the Minds' Eye, Kyrksos heard the battle cries, and knew what had come – his release. The Rosefinch had healed and returned to him, so he sent the little bird up in the hopes it would lead someone to his aid.

As it were, the only man to notice the little bird's distress amidst the battle was the Nameless King. He followed the curious sight down through secret shafts to the caverns below the Dûn'raeor and after hours of twisting, turning tunnels of pitch, he found the imprisoned Elzhri. At once, Aegis blessed and empowered the Nameless King, who, with a swing of his sword, released the Fourth of his fetters. Kyrksos' freedom, however, was insignificant against the answer he'd found in his years of imprisonment with Mardûm.

With the remaining eleven links, he'd forged a crown, tantalum molded in the fires of the Aeonar and the power of the incarceration Aegis devised. The crown held one purpose, to stay the mind and madness of Syrsevar, to bind the Elzhri with its metal thorns.



The Nameless King knew what had to be done. The crown must be placed atop Syrsevar's head and hammered into his temple.

The Rosefinch called out, came a third time to their aid, and led the released Elzhri and imbued Horse Lord through the scars of Aegis' womb to slip behind the armies in battle across the Zhrizûr Divide.

They wound their way up the spiraling stairs, crossed the thorny walkways of Ūrokas and found Syrsevar at the Evenrûn's peak. He cackled at the sight of bedlam below, and much was said to a silent, drained Noxukûr that is forgotten here. All that's known is that the Nameless King allowed his immortal friend to strike first, and Ūrokas was eclipsed in storm.

Lightning fell like rain in explosive torrent, and lashes of madness struck Kyrksos in piercing blows from all sides like whipping spears, while his own steel and staff parried to no avail. The Nameless King knew Syrsevar would overcome his Eldûn brother all too soon; his eyes fell on the Slab of Oblivion.

The Nameless King thought: *She does not belong here, what command, what hatred could she siphon from the other side?*

Thus, sneaking to Noxukûr's flank, the Nameless King cut free the Eleventh, who immediately rose in fury. Out of freedom, she drew strength; not being born to Aegis, she drew power. As Noxukûr was never meant to cross the threshold to the living, damned by Aegis herself at birth, she siphoned that which the Spirit Kingdoms gave her – celestial influence with unearthly control. Much the same as Syrsevar, who could not be stopped in her realm and reality, she would not be stopped in his.

Noxukûr threw Kyrksos aside, and grasped Chaos by the throat. She raised the Twelfth up and dangled him over the edge of the Evenrûn's precipice.

The Fourth cried out to stop her – if she killed him, she'd lose herself in the madness he wrought. They could not kill their own kind, no matter the charge. Kyrksos attempted to pull her away, but his strength failed him. The Nameless King had no other choice, but to sprint to the aid of that which they sought destroyed.

With a mighty slash, the Nameless King cut Noxukûr's hand from her wrist, and Syrsevar was dropped. The opportune moment at hand, Kyrksos leapt upon the master of cruelty, the tantalum crown in hand. He forced it upon the Twelfth's head and hammered it into his temple with all the force he could muster.

Entangled, the Fourth and Twelfth as one toppled over the tower's barbed crenellation. They fell for miles, and Kyrksos and Syrsevar crashed to the crags far below.

A tremor rippled out from the basin across the Zhrizûr Divide, a sign to the opposing armies all had changed.

Syrsevar was defeated. He lay there beneath Kyrksos, his body collapsed and madness subdued, in an unconscious world warping, imploding in on itself through his ravaged mind until it was tamed.

His abominations fell to the Nameless King's army within the hour; they no longer found strength from the hive-like command of Chaos. Forevermore, the blood of all – black, blue, red – stained the rocks of the Divide.

The prisoners beneath Ūrokas were released, and the Nameless King once again, after so many years of searching, embraced his lost love, Eurymyr.

Solûsin called, and Noxukûr retreated, weak and consumed with despair, to find her father at the Evarseer. He and his Elvar allies helped her slip back into the Spirit Kingdoms safely before returning home.

Tyr'draeor stayed for six days and six nights, singing to Aegis and calling brother and sister to Fyr'draeor's fall. All came and wept, and Lûm'draeor in his grief left the world to men.

The Nameless King, mortals' champion, never gave his name, but was instead eternally recalled in myth and legend as the senior of his sire – as his son was named Everon, so would he be known. The Zhrizûr Divide thereafter was rechristened the Fields of Everon in his honor, and the Horse Lord himself renowned as Everon the First. His son, though the first of his name, would be bitterly baptized by man as Everon the Second.

This bloodline would carry on, strong and proud, for many generations, until its fatestreams fell to corruption in the Age of Shadow.

Syrsevar was bound to the same tantalum spire in the Minds' Eye as his predecessor, joining the subdued madness at its source. The crown itself was removed, no longer necessary for his incarceration.

The eleven remaining, grim Elzhri communed then in their second council of this Age of Origin. With Fyr'draeor fallen, they decided Kyrksos' Ring of Manifest, returned to him by Solûsin, could be their best way to recognize evil, and apprehend it before it brought Aegis to ash again. They rent the Crown back into its twelve original links, and Kyrksos fashioned them all into similar bands, but infusing the powers of their masters as their manifest, one for each Eldûn present – Aeginsyr, Mimir, Isar, Vyrlos, Dûnkrath, Amaredi, Nûmarria, Solûsin, Somnyr and Noxukûr. Each Ring of Manifest tightened around its master's finger, promising a hope of peace across Aegis for Ages to come.

The twelfth link, as Syrsevar would not receive such a ring, was left alone, and Aegis ordered it be thrown into the Silent Sea, where it would manifest its own rite and power, and would eventually come to find a worthy master.

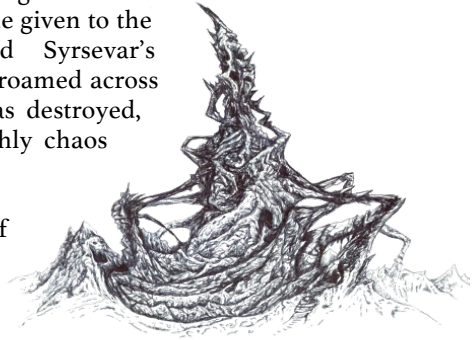
Thus ends the War of Shattering.



## The Collapse and the Astar Revisited.

Following the War of Shattering was the Collapse. The Collapse was a name given to the years of decay that followed Syrsevar's imprisonment. His abominations roamed across the land and much and more was destroyed, corrupted, or twisted into unearthly chaos until all the Realms saw loss.

While the battle on the Fields of Everon was won, and the immortal madness felled, Aegis all but died as the entire world dipped into Shadow.



The Baymen, who had pillaged every port and burned every town west of the Spine until they saw defeat at Templeton, were hunted down like the rabid beasts as they were perceived. Years this lasted, until their race and culture were driven to virtual extinction.

Their greatest city, Ildûron, was torn down and the fields of the Embers salted. Only the strongest of the guilty found hidden coves which granted them sanctuary during the Collapse, havens their sires would arise newly amidst the tides of rebirth.

The remaining abominations of Syrsevar were systematically pursued and slaughtered by heroes in crusades both religious and fanatic. However, it's said some of the damned found their way into the secret shafts of Aegis' womb, and dwelt as gods beneath the very veins of the Shimmerwood, silently commanding and twisting the Eleaos'i's minds as they slept. They found the fissure of madness in their descendants' nature, and fueled it.

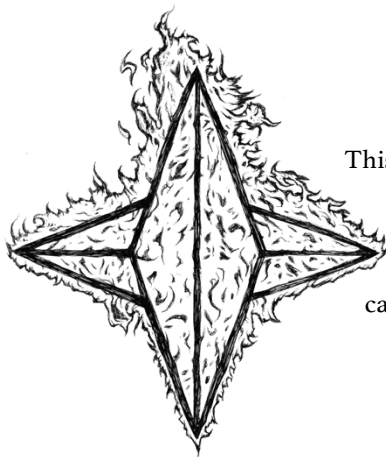
The Astar, broken pieces of what once was – known thereafter only as the Shards – fled the Isdûn and were scattered, whether by another’s hand or spirited away by their own wizardry, I cannot say.

These Shards would pass into legend as beings of ancient wisdom, but would fall from this grace into a broken people, not just of body, but in mind, their language lost, and their ways forgotten.

They became a haunted Shade of corrupted memory, a voice of sinister enchantment that ebbed despair and awoke desire in unwitting passerbys. Their voice would call for reason, but as swift judgments unwise, corruption by word – all who heard fell under their spell. Friends could appear enemies, harsh and uncouth – a contrast to the melody of the El’arria – or enemies as pleasant, welcoming a knife in the back. Their trill kindled the cinders of ignorance and fanned the weak-hearted with whispers to obey and urges to trust their Glass masters, until the paths laid before them lit asunder in deliverance undeserved.

This corruption would rue the Second age.

There is rumor of a prophecy to the Shards’ redemption, but there is little proof of it. At times, when the world is at peace, it is said the Glass will guide travelers with their light, but it is only a small glimmer of hope for the shattered Eldûn in remembrance of an Age lost and friendships they can’t remember to forget.



## The End of the Beginning.

This marks the end of the Age of Origin. Rebirth loomed near, beneath the mists of Shadow, beyond the dead to once more rise into consciousness. All that came before was lost, and a new age begun.



