



The World of Day of
Glory

From ancient ruins and corpse-filled fields to dazzling towers and mighty cities. From vast libraries and beautiful courts to cruel dungeons and menacing swamps. The world is a vast place, filled with danger, opportunity and wonder.

Mighty kings beloved by their people lead shining hosts into battle against cruel tyrants commanding armies of monsters, and noble paladins duel twisted puppets of darkness. Or at least so the great sagas and epics claim – sometimes it can be difficult to tell the monsters apart from the paladins.

This is a world where steel is brought to bear against arcane magicks, and the dead walk the earth at the whims of sorcerers, where orcs roam the wilds in great bands, and goblins infest the nooks and crannies of mountain and forest, where crumbling ruins hold great secrets of ages past, and spirits whisper temptations to lonely travellers on a windswept path.

One does not go into the street without a knife, onto the road without a sword, or to the forest without a trustworthy band of companions. But such treasures, such glories, await those bold enough to seek them out! For those with the guts and the skill, for those adept at swordplay and magic, the dangers of this world are but an obstacle to greatness.

A horn blows through the cold morning mist as the first rays of the sun creep over the horizon. Armoured ranks of spearmen lock their shields in formation, and rows of archers prepare their arrows. War machines are tested and calibrated, and the knights mount their steeds. The priests give their final blessings, and the assassin slips away.

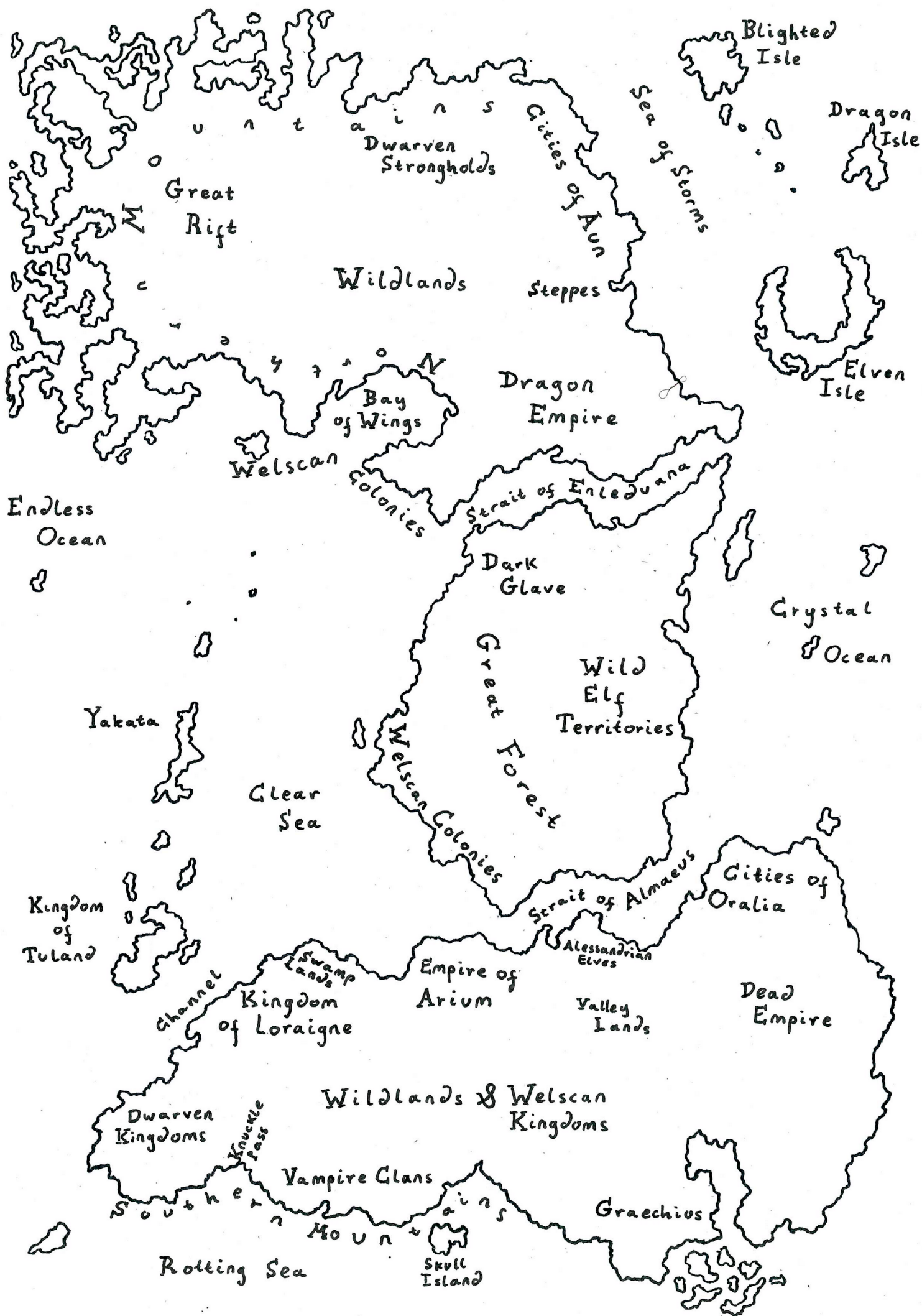
Forget good and evil. Forget death and disgrace. For this day there is a battle to be won. And won it will be. At any cost.

Raise your banner, and muster your legions. Sharpen your blades and repair your walls. Today is the day you are tested. The day the world will know who you really are. So will you be up to this challenge? Will you win fame and pride? Will this be your Day of Glory?

And when the smoke clears, and the groans of the dying intermingle with the calls of crows feasting on the dead, then you will know if it was worth it or not. Perhaps you yourself will lie among the dead and dying – a glorious final duel? Or perhaps just a chance arrow in the eye.

As you see them around you, your soldiers who followed you to the death, think: was it worth their lives? Their pain and suffering? Did they believe in your cause, or in your gold? Perhaps it doesn't matter any more. After all, when the dead return, it won't be of their own accord.

Money can be raised, fame can be bought. A name is inherited, a title given. But glory? Glory is won. Won by strength of arm and wisdom of mind. And that is the true achievement. The true aim. Glory. At any cost.



Many different races exist throughout the world, some existing only in small, isolated communities, others spread across many lands, often mixing with other races. There are many different theories as to how so many different races came to exist, from creations by various gods to radical ideas about races evolving from each other. The most numerous and important (on a global scale) are presented here.

Humans

One of the most common and numerous races, and found across the world, humans tend to reach heights of about five feet, and live up to about 50-60 years, although both are subject to great variation. Humans have little to no concept of their race as a single entity, and instead see themselves as belonging to their nations and ancestral lands. Like all races, human skin-tones are decided by the magical energies present at their conception, but being less magically-attuned, their skin is normally only mundane shades of pink and brown, rather than the more exotic colours sometimes exhibited by races such as elves.

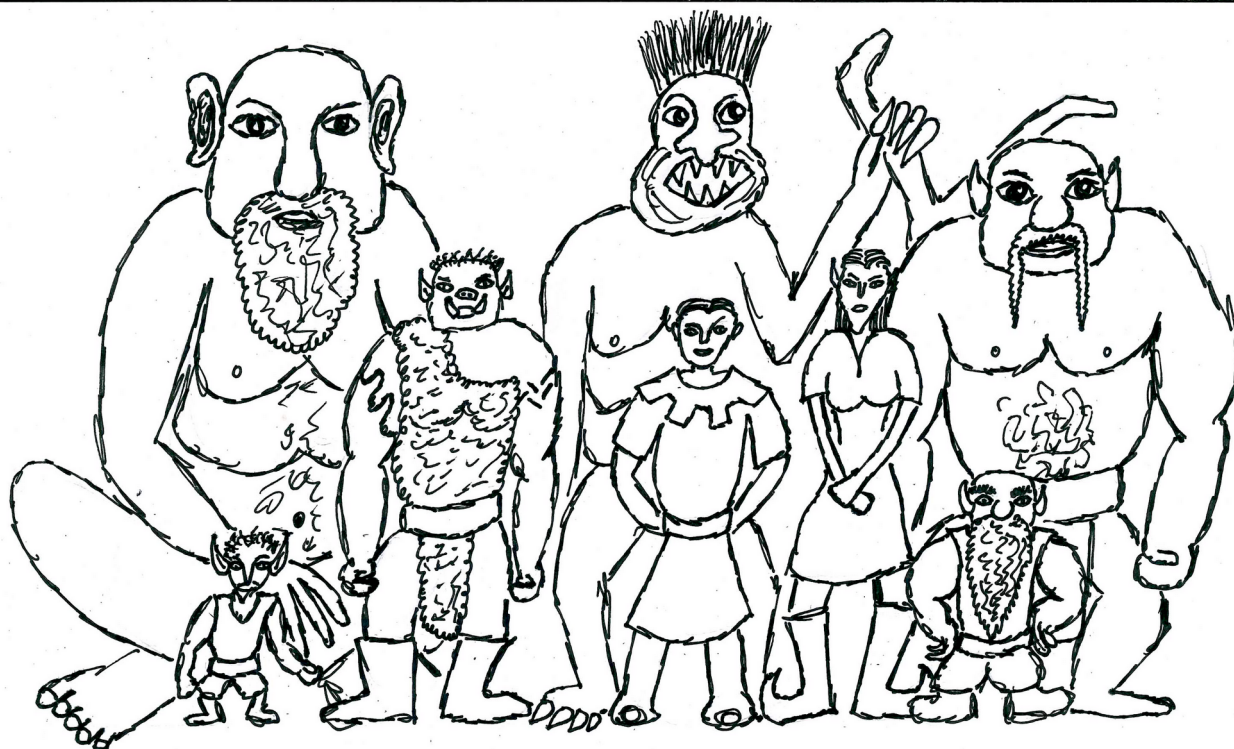
Humans are found all over the world in great numbers, and the variety in their cultures and beliefs is as great as in their appearance. In

many parts of the world, humans live in the shadow, or at the mercy of, the older races, but these older races can sense the winds of change blowing, and many suspect there may one day come a day when humans dominate the world.

Elves

The oldest and greatest race (or at least so they claim), elves exist across all parts of the world, although in much smaller, and more isolated communities than humans. Elves are tall, being around six feet on average, and can live for well over a hundred years, with some elves supposedly having survived to over 200. Elves are naturally lithe, and are incapable of achieving the same strength and physical endurance that humans can, but this is not to say that they are weak, and their natural dexterity more than makes up for it. Elves have smooth skin, with little to no body-hair, except for silky, flowing hair which is often grown long, and can have a much wider variety of skin tones than humans, with hints of greens, purples, and blues being relatively common. Elves are also naturally much more attuned to the magical energies of the world, and this combined with their long lifespans, makes them excellent wizards.

Dwarves



The least numerous of the great races – that is, those who wield significant influence in the world – dwarves are the only race, alongside orcs, whose creation is clearly known, for they are the descendants of House Wildox, one of the original elven people. Their unique physiology is the result of a curse placed on them by high king Alterion in the late days of the elven civil war, after a prince of the house, Gruminor, disobeyed orders, and inadvertently re-ignited the conflict after a period of relative peace.

Although the elves (at least those of the Isle) continue to see the dwarves as cursed, the modern-day dwarves have no problem with their bodies. They are short and squat, being around 3-4 feet tall, but their muscle density is far higher than that of both elves and humans. They are much hairier, and beards especially are a great source of pride. Dwarves are incapable of casting spells, but their knowledge of magic is great, and they have made up for this weakness by mastering the art of rune-craft, something most elves do not bother with. Dwarves have the same skin tones as humans, although it is often difficult to see this due to their hair.

Orcs

The only other race whose creation is known, orcs are as widespread and numerous, if not more so, than humans, but are shunned by most other races, so tend to live in wilder places. The orcs of the modern day are the descendants the victims of terrible experiments by the dark lord Cralthon. This makes them, like the dwarves, descended from elves, although there are few visible signs of this. Exactly what Cralthon did is unknown, but centuries of natural selection have led to a race of very tough and strong creatures. Orcs are broad and tall, being much larger than humans and elves, and are both strong and tough. They are however, much shorter-lived, reaching maturity in under a decade, and rarely living beyond 30, even if their lives are not cut short.

Orcs are naturally chaotic creatures, and though rarely competent wizards, are sensitive to magical energies. Their tough, leathery skin

normally exhibits dull, earthy tones of red or green in contrast to the brighter tones of elves.

Goblins

It is not clear when goblins appeared in the world, or why. The various tiny creatures mentioned in elven tales have been speculated to be their ancestors, while others maintain they are simply a specific breed of orc. The two races are often found living side by side, although their ways of life are generally very different. Goblins are small, skinny, and physically weak, making up for this by their speed, dexterity, and extraordinarily fast growth. Goblins are probably the most numerous of all races, although they generally shun open spaces and bright sunlight, preferring caves, forests, and other hiding places.

Goblins also have very short lives, which often makes them great risk-takers and very ambitious, as well as far less patient than other races. Because of this, goblins, like orcs, do not become wizards. Their skin tones are similar to that of orcs, but often brighter and more saturated.

Ogres

Rarely found in large groups, ogres are large humanoid creatures that mostly keep to themselves, but occasionally join human or orc societies, where their immense strength is greatly valued, even if their equally immense appetites can be difficult to satiate. Although not generally very creative, ogres are, despite stereotypes, just as intelligent as any other race, a fact that has been the downfall of many an underestimating opponent.

Ogres have similar skin tones to human, though their skin is thicker and dryer. They are also balder more frequently than humans, though they are capable of growing magnificent moustaches. Ogres are found primarily in various parts of the Southlands, as well as areas of the Dragon Empire and the steppes to its North. They are uncommon any further North, and in the forests of the Midlands as they are not suited to the terrain.

Trolls

The antagonist of hundreds of folk tales all over the world, trolls are actually quite rare, and are generally reclusive creatures who shun humans and orcs. They tolerate goblins since they struggle to see the little creatures as much more than a greasy snack, but avoid the company of most other intelligent races. Their remarkable physiology means that trolls don't need to do much thinking, since they can eat almost anything, and recover from almost any injury. They are often goaded into battle by goblins, though they have no investment in fighting, and only do so when angered.

Various sub-species of troll exist, from the slimy and finned river trolls, to the hard-skinned and strong-boned rock trolls, and the particularly tall and thin hill variety. Trolls vary a lot in appearance between these types, but all trolls are incredibly tough, being able to regenerate wounds with astonishing speed, and all are also surprisingly fast, being able to cross most terrain quicker than one would expect.

Giants

Even rarer than trolls, it is said that there was a time in the ancient past when giants, including giants of far larger sizes than exist today, ruled the world, and built huge cities of stone. Whatever the truth, giants today frequently grow up to about 20 feet in height, and live solitary lives in wild, remote places. Although they have little interest in the comforts of civilisation, giants are very intelligent creatures and throughout their incredibly long lifespans, which can last well over a hundred years, most learn to speak the languages of the other races.

Giants are generally peaceful creatures, but when angered can be absolutely devastating to anything and anyone that gets in their way. When they can be convinced to join an army, they are an incredible asset, able to throw boulders further than most artillery, and crush regiments with wide sweeps of a torn-up tree trunks.

Dragons

Supposedly the oldest intelligent race in the world, dragons certainly have incredibly long lifespans, living many hundreds of years, although the older a dragon is, the longer it will spend in hibernation – which can last for decades in extreme cases. Dragons start life little larger than a dog, but quickly grow to the size of an ogre or troll. Such adolescent dragons are flighty creatures, easily distracted, and difficult to teach or convince of anything. As a dragon reaches adulthood, they can grow to enormous proportions. At this stage, a dragon will generally settle down, defending its territory and any eggs it may have with a fierce and deadly pride.

As a dragon ages further, they lose a lot of muscle mass, growing longer and thinner, until they are almost serpentine in appearance. Such ancient dragons are often sought out by elves and occasionally humans, as sources of great wisdom and knowledge. Indeed, dragons are highly attuned to the energies of magic, and most eventually become fearsome spell-casters in their own right. Although they generally prefer to be independent, dragons do occasionally let other races – almost exclusively elves – ride them if they prove suitable.

The cousin of the mighty dragon is the considerably smaller, and less intelligent wyvern. These have much shorter lifespans, and generally live much wilder, simpler lives, though they do often resemble dragons. Dragons detest being compared to what they consider to be their pathetic inferiors, though the feeling is not reciprocal, and wyverns often look up to dragons, trying to imitate them in their own simple way. Wyverns are much easier to tame and ride than dragons, though the process is still not easy in any way, merely possible, and many particularly brave orcs do so. If only for a short time.

A Historical Overview

History is a complex subject, and the civilisations that have existed throughout the known world are many in number, and each deserving of dedicated descriptions. What is given here is meant as an overview of the most important events that have shaped the world into its current form.

Dwarven geologists say the last ice-age came to an end around two-million years ago. The creatures that might have roamed the Earth then are not known, and countless are the legends of the civilisations that spread across the world before the semi-mythical great flood. What is known is that the age of the dragons followed after. This was a time when dragons were far more numerous than they are today, and also grew to sizes far larger. But this age came to an end also, for what reason, no one knows.

When the dragons relinquished their mastery over the world, and most of them went into deep hibernations, the venerable elven race emerged from the cradle of its native isle, and spread across the world. It was the elves who invented the wonder of writing and metal-work, and it was they who built the first great cities the world had ever seen. Humans too came in time, although they were not as wise as the elves, and lived in savage tribes, roaming the wilderness as hunter-gatherers.

The elves also discovered the secrets of magic and spell-craft, and in combination with their great creativity and aesthetic sense, they crafted truly wondrous things wherever they went. But alas, the time of elven dominion over the world was not to last either. For there was one born among the elves whose name would forever be cursed by all, who would bring about the downfall of this mighty civilisation.

By this time, cities that had lasted thousands of years had been established as far South as the edges of the Southlands, and as far North as the polar wastes, and vast quantities of tribute flowed to the Elven Isle, the centre of the empire, full of the most beautiful architecture, and the greatest libraries before and after.

The elf who would change all this was named Cralthon, and his terrible tale is too long to be related in these pages, but in short, he delved into corners of magical lore that should have remained untouched, creating the first generation of orcs through hideous experimentation on his fellow elves. When his crime was discovered, he was exiled to the far North, but this was to be a great mistake, as Cralthon escaped his bonds, and incited rebellion among the Northern provinces.

The resulting civil war began as a relatively minor affair that was expected to be over quickly, but as the years and decades passed, it only grew in size, as all the cities were forced to pick sides, and increasingly deadly weapons were deployed. The rebel armies penetrated further and further South, and countless thousands of elves perished in the great battles fought on the plains of the Northlands.

The events of the war are many and terrible to relate, indeed, though it is a story they all know, elves shudder to tell it, and rarely divulge anything but the bare outlines to humans. It seems the rebels managed to gain a foothold on the Elven Isle itself, and Cralthon infected the land with a magical plague that left it barren. Before the plague could spread across the entire island, the high king of the empire, Alterion, used a mighty spell to rip the tainted section away, and send it far North, giving the remaining isle its distinctive crescent shape.

Such awesome magical might is unheard of today, and many humans doubt that such mastery could ever have been possible, but such are the tales told by the elves, for it is said that in those ancient days, the powers of wizards were far greater, and this was not even to be the most devastating use of that power in the war.

The Northern rebels increasingly began to enslave orcs and humans, both living primitive lives in the shadows of the elves, to supplement their armies and workforces, and in an attempt to gain more such slaves, Cralthon launched an invasion against the Southlands.

The Southlands were then the only part of the world that had never been properly settled by

the elves, though they had of course explored it. It had however been settled by humans, who, though still tiny compared to the elves, had established the first great civilisations of humanity. It is said that in those days, humans used swords of bronze, and great heroes fought mighty beasts at the whims of the gods themselves.

Whatever the truth, the rebel elves saw this land only as a source of labour, and Cralthon created the first undead army in recorded history to destroy the cities of humanity, and bind their people in chains. Such horror greatly offended the loyalist elves, who had a great reverence for the dead, but Alterion ruled against any kind of aid for the humans – the empire could not spare the resources.

But prince Gruminor, of the house Wildox, went against these commands, and led an army South. Upon his arrival, he met with the greatest human ruler up to that point – Queen Trelina, who had at that point established a mighty empire stretching across the Northern border of the Southlands – and offered the aid of his people against the undead horde. The elves taught the humans the secrets of iron, and gave them magical weapons of great power, and the bravery and numbers of the humans, combined with the skill and power of the elves, succeeded in destroying the invaders.

This victory, at the battle of Oakhead, would come to be seen by humans in the Southlands as the start of their history, and it is the point from which they date their chronologies. Indeed, though at the time it went unnoticed by those further North, the battle of Oakhead is generally now seen as the turning point in human history, from which humans were able to establish themselves as truly great powers to rival the elves.

The civil war of the elves however would continue for many years yet, and it was only ended, when, in a last act of desperation, Alterion and the twelve most powerful mages of the time, performed a great ritual, which tore a gigantic hole in reality over the Northern colonies, exposing them to the pure chaos energies beyond, and destroying them utterly.

This mass destruction and murder shocked all who came to know of it, but it achieved its aim. With their homelands destroyed, the remaining rebels lost the will and resources to continue their war, and retreated to the desolate isle their ancestors still inhabit – that cursed land ripped from the elven isle in ages past.

The fate of Cralthon is not known – some say he perished along with his country, or otherwise in some battle now forgotten. Others maintain it must have been his continued studies of the dark arts that took him away to some darker corner of reality. Alterion meanwhile went into a self-imposed exile in shame at the hideous act he had performed, and was never seen again. It is said he wanders the world still, seeking absolution for his crimes, though where he could possibly find it, none can say.

After the end of the war, the elven empire crumbled completely. None but those on the isle itself believed in the glory of the empire any more, and the cities to the South all declared independence or were abandoned. In their place, migrating tribes of humans or orcs settled to build their own kingdoms and states. In many cases, the fledgeling human nations were helped along by the various local elves, as well as in some cases, the newly settled dwarves – those proud descendants of house Wildox who no longer had a war to fight.

Many have been the battles fought, and the empires established since, too many to tell here, but though many call this age that of humanity, the elves still hold much sway over the politics of the world, and the world itself has been scarred, and its wonder dimmed. Monstrous creatures migrate from the far North to spread their mutated spawn, and acts of cruelty are commonplace. If this truly is the age of humanity, then not only will they have to truly shake off the influence of the elves, and unite their very fractured race, but also contend with the darker things of the world.

It remains to be seen if humanity is up to this task, or if their petty wars and ambitions are to hold them back forever. For as the elves know well: nothing lasts forever.

The Nature of Magic

Magic is a force that is present in all parts of the world, and affects every living creature constantly. Indeed life itself is inherently magical. The fundamental principle of magic, that all who study it know, is that the universe is composed of a mixture of chaos and order energies. Chaos energy is destructive and random, it has no form, or logic. It is constant change and improbability. Order energy is the opposite: it is consistent, perfectly logical and predictable. In truth though, these two energies never exist in complete isolation, and so are just abstract concepts. Everything in the real world is made up of a mix of these two energies, and the ratio of chaos to order is what defines its nature.

Everything in the world, from people, to plants, rocks, and rivers, has a *soul* of sorts. This need not be imagined as a sentient consciousness (although many do), but instead a reflection of that thing as a mixture of chaos and order energies. So the soul of a raging river for instance is quite chaotic, but the soul of a tree has much more order energy. Neither are purely one or the other though, since otherwise the river would have no form, and the tree would not grow or be distinct from other trees. These souls exist in everything, and are constantly present in the world. In fact, heat and cold are expressions of chaos and order energy respectively, and are two of the most obvious manifestations of magic. In fact, the world's climate is created by a complex interaction of magical energies, and can therefore be manipulated relatively easily by wizards.

The energy-structure of the universe is a matter of considerable debate among wizards and other scholars, and a variety of different beliefs exist across the world. None of these can be definitively proven, but the highest luminaries of the Moon Elves teach that the universe is maintained by a layer of order-energy that gives the world its form, and prevents it from collapsing. However, cracks sometimes appear in this layer (or can be created), to allow chaos energy to seep in from beyond. What exists beyond the universe is unknown, but is speculated to consist of mostly chaos energy.

This chaos energy that seeps in can be channelled through existing souls to cast spells.

So for instance, a wizard might channel some of this chaos energy into a plant, to make it grow considerably, or lash out at enemies. Order energy cannot be manipulated directly, since it is unchangeable, so all wizards make use of chaos energy, or a mixture of the two. The manipulation of chaos energy is dangerous however, as well as difficult, as control is precisely the opposite of its nature. It is quite easy to unleash huge amounts of energy, but very difficult to control it, so most of the training a wizard does is aimed at teaching them to limit their power. Also for this reason, magic cannot be used for subtle and precise purposes, except by exceptionally skilled practitioners. Most wizards can barely control blasts of energy, and it requires a huge amount of skill and experience to, for instance, levitate an object, or reshape a piece of metal into an aesthetically pleasing form.



If a wizard loses concentration while harnessing chaotic energies, especially large amounts, they can quickly lose control, and the resulting backlash can prove deadly to them and their surroundings.

Of course, it is not just the magical energies themselves that are dangerous. The planes of existence beyond this one are inhabited by creatures of some kind, though their natures are not comprehensible to mortal minds. The realms these creatures, known as demons, inhabit are probably to them like ours is to us, and so when they are wrenched into this one, they are maddened and confused, lashing out at anything nearby, and striving to return to their own realm. Whether they eventually make it when they disappear is not known.

Demons can be drawn into the world both by accident and deliberately. In places where the cracks in the skin of the world are wider, lesser demons are frequently found, floating through the air as insubstantial wisps, but those trained in the art can also deliberately break through to these other realms to pull through demons, before binding them to their will with powerful incantations. This process, known as summoning, is a very dangerous one, but can be devastatingly effective on the battlefield.



must study and practice intensively, and risk much whenever they ply their trade.

There is, in truth, no real difference between the various types of magic practised across the world, and different categories only exist to aid learners. For this reason, the arts that most label “dark magic” are really not inherently more evil than any other use of magic, it merely goes against the sensibilities of those who create such labels. Such arguments can of course become rather slippery slopes however.

Most dark magic revolves around using the souls of living creatures to do magic. Often this involves letting out the blood of a creature, since this is what contains their soul, and such sacrifices can be powerful sources of magical power.

Souls also leave an imprint on things even if they are no longer present. This is what the art of necromancy relies on to create puppets who can fight in battle even if their puppeteer can’t – the traces of the cadaver’s soul are stirred back into use in a simplified form to obey the whims of the wizard.

A variety of terms exist for those who practice the arts of magic: wizard, sorcerer, magician, witch, and many more. Such terms do not however generally describe any real difference in what they do, just their different appearances or perceptions in society. All users of magic

The Southlands

Our journey begins on the islands of Yakata. This is a small, but prosperous land, full of mountain ranges, and sunny rice-paddies. Most of the population are farmers, who serve local lords. The most powerful of these lords make up a council, whose head shares power over the nation with its emperor, who inherits their position. There is another class above the peasants- the samurai. These are the professional soldiers of Yakata, who take their oaths of loyalty to their lords very seriously. Traditionally, samurai are trained to fight with every kind of weapon, whilst the peasant militias called up to support them in times of war use spears, or pikes. Yakata also has a small number of firearms at its disposal, generally captured from Tuland armies, or bought at extremely high prices from merchants.

Yakata is a nation made up of dozens of small islands, and its outermost territories are practically next to Tuland. Such islands are heavily disputed between the two nations, and have seen much fighting over the centuries. The legends say that Yakata was once part of the mighty Dragon Empire further North, but its people once committed some unknown crime against the elves, and in punishment, their lands were ripped away from the main landmass with a mighty spell, and scattered South as the islands they are today. The elves refuse to comment on the validity of such tales, but Yakata is one of the few human nations that has no elven ambassadors in its court.



Given the island geography of the nation, Yakata's people are expert sailors. Their ships are small and fast, perfect for journeys between islands, but less adept at long voyages. As such the Yakatan people are mostly a secluded people, who defend their own territory fiercely, but rarely venture beyond their borders.



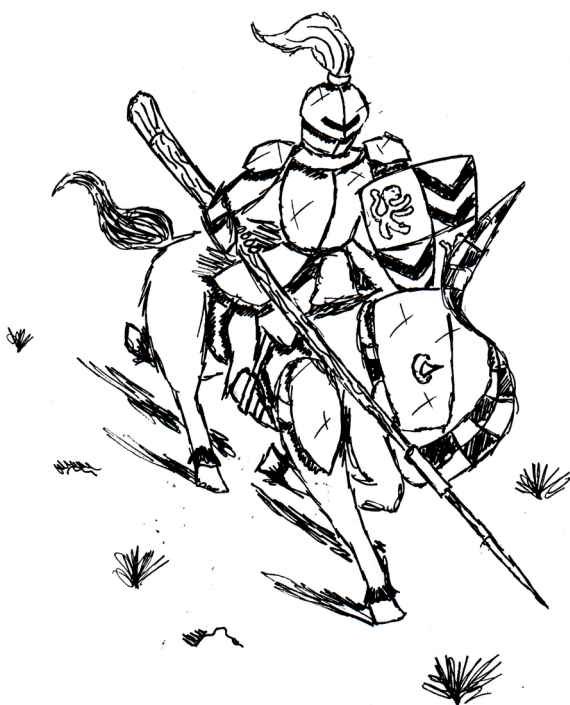
To the South of Yakata lies the isle of Tuland. Much larger than the islands of Yakata, but still relatively small, dwarven geologists have confirmed that the island is from the main Southlands, being separated only by rising sea levels since the last ice age. The north of Tuland is a wild, hilly land, where the clans, though legally under Tuland rule, are fiercely independent, and retain much autonomy. Sailing around this area is extremely difficult, and many a Yakatan fleet has been wrecked in its stormy seas. Further South, the climate is marginally less wet, and here lies the industrial heart of Tuland. Port cities are filled with merchants from all across the Southlands, and even further away, and workshops ring out at every hour with the sound of metal being forged.

Tuland is ruled by a monarch, supported by a parliament made up of the various counts, barons, and lords of the land. Its armies are made up of citizens who are trained, predominantly in the use of the longbow- a weapon Tulanders are proud to claim excellence in. Due to their close relations with the dwarves, Tuland armies also employ large numbers of muskets and cannons compared to other armies. The merchants and craftsmen of Tuland are

becoming increasingly powerful, and growing into a self-made middle class, to rival the traditional hierarchies.

“I fought in the morning when the day was
young,
I fought in the mud and the grass, and the sun.
I came down from the hills and I fought on the
turf,
On the plains of battle I had my birth!”
-Tuland drinking song

Across a short stretch of sea referred to either as the Tuland or Lorraine channel (depending on who you ask), lies the mighty kingdom of Lorraine. Split into dozens of provinces, ruled by dukes, the kingdom is ruled by a monarch with absolute power. The knights of Lorraine are famed throughout the Southlands for their bravery and courage, and they come from a variety of sources. Royal knights are appointed personally by the reigning monarch, and they serve them in both times of war, and peace. Provincial knights are very similar, but they are lower status, since they are appointed by, and serve, a duke, rather than the monarch. Finally, there are many knightly orders found in Lorraine. The country is home to the cults of many gods, and most have at least a small order of knights dedicated to them, who live in remote fortresses, patrolling and defending the surrounding region. Such knights dedicate their



lives to not a ruler, but a deity, but they still serve the monarch, fighting with holy vigour when they are called to fight in battle.

The kingdom's remote, northern regions are only loosely controlled by any human authority, due to the swampy terrain. This area has a reputation of being home to evil monsters and spirits, but also contains the various micro-empires of the snail-folk, a race of short-lived creatures, who live in the swamps, and have an agreement with the king of Lorraine to be left alone. The area is also home to the highly prized giant snails- animals of enormous size who are slow, but very strong and tough. They are used by elderly knights in combat, and their shells can be used to make very light, yet extremely strong plate armour. The more Southern regions of Lorraine are known for their idyllic, warm villages, as well as the many castles, which also stretch to the East, defending the kingdom from the various threats it faces.

One of the biggest threats is the neighbouring empire of Arium to the East. Beyond the border of Lorraine, hundreds of forts form a highly organised defence, each manned constantly by vigilant legions. As we move further East, the climate becomes warmer and drier, and it is here that the great cities of Arium can be found. The city Arium itself, from which the empire began, and after which it is named, is a sprawling, urban complex, larger in size than any other human city in the world. Its size and population is only possible because of the supplies that come in from all over the empire to maintain it. And the empire is certainly enormous, stretching all the way to the Eastern deserts, and Oralia, covering a wide swathe of the Southlands.

The empire of Arium is ruled by a senate, whose members make up the elite class of Arium. A pair of consuls are elected every year from their members who rule jointly. Arium's army is it's mighty legions- of which around a dozen exist, spread around the empire. These legions are made up of citizen soldiers fulfilling their compulsory military service. They are armed with standardised armour and weaponry, and are supported by equites- the horse-riding elite class below senators, who are also attached to

legions. Arium is aggressively expansionist, and is always eager to secure more territory, or regain old ones, especially since military success is a vital aspect of a person's political career.



Moving even further East, we come to the edge of the great desert, and the borders of Oralia. A coalition of a series of coastal cities, Oralia is one of the richest and most prosperous kingdoms in the world. Its position makes it the centre of trade between much of the world beyond the Southlands, and humans from all across the world, as well as even elves can be found in its cities.

Oralia would have been conquered many years ago by Arium were it not for the great stretch of desert between the two, which not only serves as a naturally hard to cross barrier, but is also home to the ruins of the dead empire. Very little is known about this once mighty civilisation, except that it once stretched across most of the East. Perhaps untold millennia ago, great rivers gave this land life, and prosperous cities flourished, but only ruins and tombs remain now. The land is dry, and dead, inhabited only by deadly scorpions and snakes, as well as of

course the dead. But the dead are not so still as they might first appear: sorceries older than human civilisation, and the breath of dying gods stirs the mummies in their tombs, and the skeletons of unfortunate travellers and would-be invaders to walk the sand once more, mercilessly hunting down those that would disturb their rest.

The people of Oralia have learned to respect the desert and its inhabitants: and they pay for its protection with their dead. Many a curious traveller has remarked that the cities of the Eastern coast have no graveyards or cemeteries, and this is because the dead of Oralia are taken out into the desert, where the winds dry their skin into parchment, and their souls are drawn back into their bodies to serve the dead empire in undeath, and protect their past homes for eternity, emerging from the desert in times of need, a lifeless wave of fury and retribution.



To the South of Arium lie the plains of the Southern wildlands. This area is home to marauding bands of orcs and goblins, as well as the horse-riding tribes of South-Welskans. Considered by Ariumites to be uncivilised barbarians, these Welskans may live nomadic lives, leaving little to no trace of their existence apart from the occasional burial mound, but they have a rich oral history and culture, and in fact, both Lorraine and Tuland originate from Welskans- a fact of which they are proud, for the Welskans are famous warriors, many clans being able to trace back their lineages to heroes from the time of the Southland invasions, and the coming of the dwarves.

“Two tribes, not unlike in strength, in the valley lands where we lay our scene, from ancient grudge break to new mutiny, where orcish blood makes dwarven hands unclean...”

- Bill Rattledart (famous dwarven poet)

The South Wildlands are also home to large numbers of orcs, goblins, and even the occasional ogre or troll. These are generally of a smaller breed than in other parts of the world, and are often regarded as weak by their northern kin, although to the humans of the Southlands, they are just as dangerous. They roam around the fields and woods of the Southlands, occasionally gathering in huge armies, to make war against the civilisations of humans, although small communities of orcs can be found living in human territories, especially in the empire of Arium, where they are generally better treated, and given more rights.

Even orcs though, will not dare to cross into the forests of the far South and the mountain range beyond. Though all forests are full of dangerous creatures, the Southern Forest is particularly full of evil for it is the hunting ground of the dreaded vampire clans and their minions. Vampires are creatures formed when a demon- a creature from another plane of existence- possesses the body of a dying creature. In such cases, if the soul of the creature is strong enough, it will merge with the demon to create a highly unstable creature of chaos that requires souls- which are found in blood- to keep itself from degenerating into chaotic matter and energy. Vampires are born only very rarely, and when they are, they rarely survive for long- most often either not being able to sustain themselves, or being killed. If such a creature can survive however, it can develop high levels of intelligence, and have a natural affinity with magic, being a creature of chaos.

The Southern mountains are home to the great vampire clans. Their members have existed for hundreds of years, feeding off their human subjects living in the valleys below, and studying the dark arts of necromancy. Twice have the clans waged war against the kingdoms North of them- the first resulted in the extinction of two entire clans, while the second destroyed four more. After the first vampiric war (or second undead war as some scholars refer to it), the clans swore not to invade any more- content with their dark kingdoms. It was only through the actions of the infamous

vampire Dragomir that the clans went to war for a second time. His name is still spoken of only in hushed and hateful whispers by other vampires, and the few of his offspring who survive are hunted ruthlessly by their kin, such was the destruction he wrought not only to the human kingdoms, but also vampire kind.

It is ironic that the human population ruled over by the clans live in possibly the greatest security and safety of any humans in the world, greedily protected as they are by legions of undead warriors. Orcs, goblins, and humans alike have all learned not to spend a night in the long shadow of the vampires' mountains.

To the South West of the mountains of the clans lies skull island, a small island ruled over by the renegade Sjorove clan. These piratical raiders control the Southern seas, and bring back vast hoards of wealth to their fortified isle on dark ships manned by the living dead. Even the most well armed Tuland fleet will stay away from Southern waters for fear of them becoming another floating wreck in service to vampire masters.

On the tip of the Southern mountains, there is a gap, known as knuckle pass. This marks the end of the vampires' territory, but travellers should still be wary, for the remaining mountains further North are controlled by the mighty kingdoms of the dwarves. These Dwarves are descended from Gruminor, and his people, exiled from the elves centuries ago. After settling in the Southlands, they constructed vast complexes of underground mines and fortresses, and learned all the secrets of rune-smithing- a much more efficient, and safe, if less powerful, method of spell casting than that used by elves and most humans.

Now the Southern dwarves are few in number, their population decreased after frequent wars with goblins, who like them, build lairs in the mountains. But the dwarves make up for their lack of numbers with the most advanced technology in the entire world. It was these dwarves that discovered the secrets of sparkpowder, and its devastating potential in firearms, and it is a secret they jealously guard, selling small numbers of the weapons to

humans, but never the secrets behind their creation.

Although most dwarves live underground in their own realm, a handful have settled in the cities of Tuland, where their skills are highly prized, and they are responsible for the manufacturing of much of the country's armaments.

The Southlands end at the strait of Almaeus, a short stretch of sea North of Arium and Oralia. It is just below this sea that the Great Forest starts, and the (comparatively) small area of forest that begins it is home to the only known community of elves in the Southlands. These are exiles from the end of the elven civil war, who settled in their forest not long after the dwarves settled in their mountains, and centred around their woodland city of Alessandria, they maintain mostly good relations with both dwarves and humans, even if conflicts do occasionally break out, especially with Ariumites, who are, to the elves, newcomers to the land, and are therefore not trusted, or included in many of the ancient treaties and oaths that the dwarves and Welscan people are.

The Alessandrian elves live in a broadly similar way to their cousins on the Elven Isle, although they do not adhere to traditions quite so strictly, nor do they hold themselves so responsible for the fates of the rest of the world. Although Alessandria is the largest and most important city, there are a number of smaller settlements in these forests, most of which are just as ancient, dating back to the days before the Elven Civil War.

The Midlands

Beyond the strait of Almaeus is the start of the Midlands. The entire region is covered by the Great Forest, which also extends further South and North, into the lands of the Alessandrian elves and the Dragon Empire respectively. But the largest part of it covers the Midlands, which is split into four rough areas. Borders and territories are not as clearly marked as in the Southlands, since the forests make it difficult to establish clear boundaries. Nevertheless, distinct powers exist in the Midlands, these being the Wild Elves, the Forest-Welscans, various tribes of orcs and goblins, and finally the Dark Glaves. The structure of power in the Midlands is fundamentally different to that in the Southlands, again because of the forest: nations exist only in a loose sense, and they do not make alliances or war in the same way. The inhabitants of the Great Forest generally abide by ancient traditions and ways of life that have remained unchanged for centuries. Conflicts are frequent, but generally take the form of raids and guerilla warfare rather than open battles.

The Wild-Elves are regarded by most as the truest inhabitants of the forest, and its main power. They are the descendants of a faction of elves who, after the end of the civil war, decided the only way forward for their race was to return to their origins, and live wild lives one with nature. While all elves love the forests, and most live to some extent in them, those to the North and South of the Wild Elves do so by shaping the forests to suit their needs via magic. They build cities that combine with the forests, and practice farming in the clearings. The Wild

Elves are true to their name: they have abandoned almost all the marks of civilisation, and live as truly wild creatures. They commune with the spirits of the forest, and follow the commands of the most ancient ones, taking revenge on trespassers to sacred groves in brutal fashion.

The Wild Elves enjoy hunting most of all – most often on foot, moving far faster than any normal elf, and tracking their prey – whether it be beast, human, or orc – with uncanny precision before brutally slaughtering them, and offering their blood to the forest in a gory ritual. The Wild Elves are ruled only in the loosest sense by the oldest and wisest among them, who have over the years become more and more one with the forest, in the most extreme of cases even melding with the great trees in a bizarre symbiosis.

“Goblin goblin, in my sight,
In the forests of the night,
Which of my two dextrous hands,
Will crush your beating heart?”

-Wild Elf poem

The humans that live in the Midlands are few in number, and generally inhabit only the coastal regions, where they build small settlements on the treeless cliffs. These humans are Welscan migrants who settled here centuries ago, and live in much the same way as their cousins further South, but generally in smaller groups, and with less politics between them. In the Midlands it is a daily struggle to survive, and the humans who live there are quiet, quick, and unambitious – to be anything else increases the chance of death in the forest significantly.



Orcs, and especially goblins, inhabit the Midlands in vast numbers. What orcs lack in speed and stealth, they make up for in brute strength, although they are



generally still at the mercy of Wild Elf raiding parties. Goblins are much better suited to the terrain, and huge clans of them exist throughout the forest, a constant nuisance to the elves, who have never managed to exterminate them despite frequent efforts. Having little contact with humans, and as the elves in the region are also extremely primitive technologically, orcs and goblins of the Midlands often use stone tools, and are much less advanced than their cousins to the North and South. What little has been learned of their culture also shows significant differences, and it has been suggested that these groups have preserved a more ancient form of orcish culture that has changed in other areas.

The North-West of the Great Forest is the only region of the forest the Wild Elves will never go, at least not in organised raids. For this section of the forest is tainted and corrupted, an evil place of insanity. It was in this region that centuries ago, the mighty elven citadel of Hatusha stood, and in the Civil War, it remained a staunch supporter of the Imperialists. When Cralthon's forces laid siege to the city, they could not penetrate its mighty walls, and so they attempted to break through by spell-craft. But whatever they tried, the spell went catastrophically wrong, tearing a hole in reality that destroyed a large part of the city completely, as well as most of the invading army. For the next few centuries, the tear was confined to a small area by the efforts of generations of mages, but when the dissolution of the Empire happened, this could not be kept up, and the tear has since expanded to cover a wide swathe of forest.

The leaking chaos energies mutate humans, orcs, elves, and all variety of animals into hideous and maddened monstrosities, which

sometimes wander out in roving bands, spreading destruction wherever they go, and polluting the land with their very presence. The Wild Elves hunt such creatures when they grow too large in number, but it is whispered among the spirits that something more terrible than simple mutation is growing in the depths of the Dark Glave, some monstrous intelligence that directs the ever-growing attacks of monsters.

The Northlands

By far the largest of the three regions the known world is traditionally split into, the Northlands encompass a vast area from the Northern tips of the Great Forest all the way to the arctic wilderness of the far North, and the Great Rift. At the very South, the climate is still warm and wet, becoming colder and dryer the further North and West one travels.

The South of the Northlands is covered by the vast Dragon Empire – a human state. This is its name in the languages of the Southlands, derived from the local name for the land *Koraton Drakon*, the “land of the dragons”. The name comes from the fact that the skeletons of countless ancient dragons have been found across the land, some who fell in the battles of the elven civil war, some even older. A small number of living dragons do also inhabit the North-Eastern mountains of the empire, mostly very old ones, seeking peace and quiet from the dragon isle further East.

The resources of the empire are channelled primarily towards defence against enemies to the North and South, and great walls manned by thousands of soldiers keep threats at bay. From the South, these threats are the hordes of mutated monsters that emerge from the Dark Glave, as well as the occasional band of orcs or goblins. From the North, far more varied threats come, who are also far greater in number.

Rivals dismiss the empire as a mere puppet of the elven kingdoms, and though it is true that the elves, particularly the sun elves, hold great influence over the politics of the empire, their control is far from complete, as evidenced by the bloody wars of succession that have scarred the history of the empire.

The elven kingdoms, on their crescent isle further East, are the only elves who claim to be the inheritors of the old empire, though even this island is divided into three distinct kingdoms. Those of the Moon Kingdom believe the way forward for the elven race is not in conquest or power, but in the seeking of knowledge, and ultimately in the transcendence of their physical bodies towards a higher state of

being altogether. The moon elves study the stars obsessively, and build lofty towers with great observatories for this purpose. They are the greatest wizards in the entire world, and know more secrets than any other.

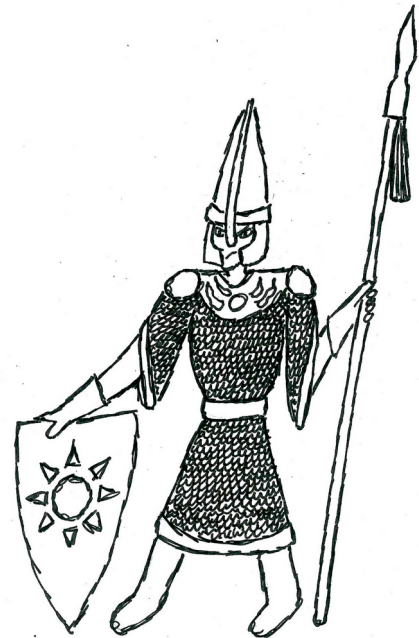
The elves of the Sun Kingdom meanwhile, are far more materially-minded.

They believe in the supremacy and glory of the elven race, and their gleaming hosts constantly strive for greater acts

of glory and strength. It is the sun elves who most frequently call upon armies of the Dragon Empire to bolster their numbers in battles against the hated Night Elves, and who maintain the most fleets and forts, protecting the isles, and ever attempting to expand elven influence.

The final kingdom, known as the Old Kingdom, is somewhere in between its neighbours. They believe that the salvation of the elven race lies in its past, and it is they who maintain the most ancient traditions and customs. The king of the Old Kingdom is traditionally referred to as the High King, but this is little more than a formality, and though closely connected, the three kingdoms are completely independent.

To the North of the elven isle, is the isle of the dragons. This small and remote land is far from the only place in the world where dragons can be found, but it is where they are found in the greatest density. It is mostly younger dragons who live on the surface, but in deep caverns, much older dragons hibernate, re-emerging every few decades, and it is rumoured that somewhere even deeper, huge specimens from the original age of the dragons still slumber,



waiting to one day awake and wreak havoc upon the world.

The seas around the isle of the dragons are dangerous enough, and not just because of the dragons who will happily snap up a light snack from passing ships, but as one progresses further North, they become even colder and stormier. The isle of the Night Elves, also known as the blighted isle, is a barren, rocky land, surrounded by jagged cliffs on all sides, and the wrecks of countless ships lie abandoned.

The land is almost perpetually wreathed in dark storm-clouds, giving the inhabitants pale, unhealthy complexions, and the rain-soaked, crumbling battlements hide vast armouries of wicked weapons, and fleets of ships which the Night Elves use to raid settlements along the main coast, and do battle with their Southerly cousins on the high seas.

The Night Elves are a spiteful, cruel people, who have abandoned all hope of a brighter future for their kind, and now seek only to inflict the suffering they have experienced onto others, especially the hated Elven Kingdoms who claim to be the continuation of that terrible empire that oppressed their people so long ago.

“How can you even think you have a chance? Your race had not yet crawled out of the mud when mine was at its height. I was old when your grandparents were young, and you think you can challenge me?”

Along the coast to the West of the blighted isle can be found the cities of Aun. Once past the coast, the climate is generally dryer, though still bitterly cold, and Northernmost cities are covered in snow for most of the year. This civilisation gets its name from the god Aun, who legend claims built the first ever city for his fellow gods to live in. But no matter what he did, he could not get crops to grow to feed the city, and so his brother Inlil killed him, spilling his blood over the land. The inhabitants of the land believe that it is this divine blood that nourishes their land.

It is also for this reason that the area is sometimes referred to as the land of the

murdered god, and this legend well exemplifies the thinking of the people who believe it. The individual cities function as independent states, who often ally into larger factions, especially to make war on the Dragon Empire, but also frequently clash with each other over petty border disputes or matters of religion.

Each city is dedicated to its own patron god, and the city is controlled by the priesthood of that god. Sometimes there is a priest-king, in other cases it is more of an assembly of priests. Either way, hundreds of daily sacrifices are performed to appease the gods, and it is rumoured, especially by those from other lands, that in the innermost sanctuaries, even humans are slaughtered in bloody rituals.

The Night Elves take great interest in this civilisation of humanity, and have taught the people much about the ways of magic, and especially the art of demon-summoning, a dangerous practice the armies of both make great use of in battle. In fact, many of the cults of these cities have been developed by the Night elves to take advantage of the humans, and much of the ritual revolves around summoning or communing with demonic entities.

Moving further West along the coast, the great Northern mountain range begins. This truly mighty natural feature wraps around most of the Western coast of the Northlands, going through the rift-land, and ending on the borders of the Dragon Empire.

It is in the North-East of these mountains that the Northern clans of the dwarves make their home. When Alterion banished and cursed house Wildox, his decree affected the entire house, when in fact Gruminor was only the younger brother of the house's leader, his elder sister Mitanna. When the house left the elven isle, the two siblings decided to split: Gruminor would travel South to continue protecting the humans, while Mitanna would go further North to fight Cralthon's forces in the heart of their own territory.

In the end, house Wildox would become experts at guerilla warfare, striking at rebel armies without warning, and using the natural

landscape to their advantage. When the war was over, and the elves had gone from the Northern mainland, Mitanna settled her people in the North-East of the great mountain range. Since that time, although these Northern dwarves have split into multiple different clans, their high leader still carries the title of Mitanna, in honour of their original queen.

The Northern Dwarves share much in common with their Southern kin, and indeed the two maintain relatively close connections, but the Northerners are far more isolationist and traditional. With no elven or human allies in the region, they fight a daily battle for survival in the cruel arctic North, and they maintain a vast string of fortresses around the mountains, manned by large armies of soldiers, far larger than those raised in the South.

Just like their Southern kin, the Northern Dwarves share their mountains with tribes of goblins who they wage a constant war against. The northern breed of goblin is slightly larger than that found further South, and they have established the largest and most powerful goblin societies anywhere in the world. Northern goblins are religious to a fanatical degree,



worshipping all manner of spirits and gods they believe can be found in the freezing winds of the North, and not infrequently do they march to war at the perceived whims of these deities.

Orcs are generally not found in the far North, but in the lower steppes, and Southern coasts they exist in great numbers. Like goblins, they are of a larger breed than in other parts of the world, and many are nomads, riding saber-toothed tigers or dire wolves into combat against the settled peoples of the region.

The most frequent opponents of these orcs are the legendary Northern Welskans. Having migrated from the Southlands centuries ago in

their longboats, these Welskans have earned a reputation as truly mighty barbarian warriors. Their culture and language is similar to that of their Southern kin, but the years of separation have led to many differences emerging. Indeed some North-Welskans actually live in territories controlled by the Dragon Empire, and are fairly well integrated into its culture and society, serving its armies as mercenaries.



Those that live further East battle daily against their environment and enemies, and raid settlements further South from time to time if they cannot get the resources they need in their own lands. Clad in heavy furs and wearing horned helmets, they are a terrifying sight for a lightly defended settlement to spot approaching from the sea, but the North-Welskans are also great explorers and traders, and frequently sell their services as mercenaries to other peoples.

The greatest danger however to these various peoples of the North, and those further South, are the hordes that emerge from the Great Rift. The cataclysmic end of the Elven Civil War was the tearing open of a giant hole in reality, allowing vast quantities of chaos energy to leak into the world, utterly destroying the rebel cities of the far North-West. This tear in reality has remained ever since, growing in size, and spewing forth the stuff of magic.

In the very centre of the rift, it is assumed (since no one has ever returned from it) to be a

nightmare world of pure chaos, where nothing is permanent, and everything is constantly shifting and changing in an abstract world beyond comprehension. Further out, the land is at least physically present, but constantly changing form and shape. The West Coast is a cartographer's nightmare, since the unnatural spirals of land are constantly changing shape, and no map of the region can claim to be accurate for long.

Both beasts and the intelligent races will from time to time stray too near to the Great Rift, and the rampant chaos energies will affect them in myriad ways. All who spend too long in the ever shifting lands quickly lose their sanity, raving about wonders beyond mortal comprehension, and hearing the whispers of demons. But they are also changed physically as the chaos energies mutate their bodies randomly. Frequently, creatures of multiple races will be merged into one, giving rise to legends of creatures such as the chimera, or beast-men.

“Oh, the rift up North is frightful,
But the South is so delightful,
And since if we went up, we'd mutate,
Let's just stay, let's just stay, let's just stay!”
-Welscan ballad

Monsters of unnatural size, with maddening physiologies are formed, and these occasionally wander out from the riftland, and terrorise the rest of the world. Societies exist, in a manner of speaking, in the outer riftlands, where tribes of various maddened and mutated creatures raise idols to random spirits and demons. Sometimes these tribes will go to war against each other or others, bringing with them giant monstrosities, and wielding the rampant forces of magic at their disposal.

The most dreaded of these hordes are the mythic Men of Iron. It is said that in ancient times, the tribes of men who inhabited the Northlands grew sick of the incursions of mutated monsters into their lands each year, and so they selected six-hundred of their greatest champions, and forged them suits of heavy iron armour, and the mightiest weapons they could design, tasking these warriors with travelling to the riftland to slay these beasts once and for all.

But of course this was an impossible quest, and the warriors were eventually driven insane, like everything else that wanders too close to the rift. Their iron armour dampened the effects of the chaos energy, so the warriors were left with some will remaining, and were not mutated as much as they might have been, but they were changed nevertheless, and before long these warriors were themselves coming back to their old homes, burning them in destructive frenzy until no trace was left.

It is said that a small number of these Men of Iron still exist in the Riftlands, occasionally joining tribes in battle as individuals or small groups in raids against their former homes. They are kept alive by the chaos energies, and have melded with their armour completely, such that they are now hulking monsters in a humanoid form, serving only their own twisted madness.