

Final Haven: The World of Phanterra

From the Physical to the Metaphysical

A Brief History

Early History and the Great Wars

-translation by Dessa McVain

The first race was known to themselves as the An'Dar, The People. They spread across the world and claimed it as their own. As a people they represented strong will and fierce beauty. Four things their race held dear. These were beauty, cunning, intelligence, and strength. After many generations their society stratified into two castes. The An'Dar and their servants the An'Dar'Vi.

Even today An'Dar ruins and sculpture litter the surface of Phanterra, demonstrating the pervasive nature of their rule. Their structures have an alien beauty, a sense of loss and emptiness that no structure since has held. In places the strange metal ribs of these buildings still stretch skyward in great rectangles that have survived the death of their creators by millennia.

The literature and art we have been able to find of the An'Dar people was focused around power and politics. Each family seems to have striven for supremacy, battling all others in games of intrigue and wit to rise ever higher in station. How the most powerful separated themselves from their underlings or how these games were even played remains a mystery to even the most talented of archivists and translators. It is known however that the An'Dar people possessed talents and artifacts whose power was beyond that of our comprehension.

In the end it was the infighting common to the An'Dar that brought about the war and tragedy that doomed their race to dissolution. They became so stratified that they treated all laborers as slaves. The An'Dar'Vi became the menial labor force of the people, and the An'Dar, thinking themselves vastly superior never dreamed that those they abused might someday rise to challenge their superiority. For generations they toiled under the domination of the An'Dar, unable to organize any resistance to the power of their superiors. Then from within their ranks a brave few emerged, recorded only

among An'Dar records as 'The Five Traitors' who lead uprisings in five cities, which soon spread to engulf the An'Dar nation.

The First Great War

This conflict was a civil war that raged in every city of the world. The stricken An'Dar were at first shocked, then roused to anger by the effrontery of their underlings. The strange part of this war was the unbelievable strength the An'Dar really did possess. Though outnumbered more than ten to one by their An'Dar'Vi labor force, and even though both sides had control over vast powers of mind and body, the An'Dar were quickly able to turn the tide in this war. Block by block they swept through their cities, exterminating all who stood against them.

After centuries of oppression the An'Dar'Vi had rebelled against their noble overlords but suffered a terrible and brutal defeat. Those who fled the vengeance of the An'Dar were cut-off from the great cities of the ancient world forever. The remaining families of An'Dar'Vi were pushed out into the wilderness of swamps and mountains that the An'Dar considered too worthless to claim.

The Coming of the An'Fa'Dar, the Av'Ian'Dar, and the Ga'Vin

Near this time an ancient race of travelers appeared from the ether, looking for new realms to make their own and reshape to their will. This proud and ancient race called themselves Fae, and the An'Dar knew them as the An'Fa'Dar; the unchanging people, for they never seemed to age or die.

The Fae sought to reshape the world of the An'Dar to their will but found that the will of the An'Dar matched their own and were unable to reshape this world's reality. Giving up their goal of conquest the two peoples lived together for a time. Some Fae also visited with the An'Dar'Vi in the mountains and swamps, but most found their company boorish.

During this time of inter-racial mingling the An'Dar and the Fae interbred and formed the offshoot race that would later become Elves.

These children were first frowned upon, then praised; for they held some of the greatest strengths of both races.

From the few conjunctions among An'Dar'Vi and Fae the first of the gnomes were born. These creatures were outcasts and put upon for a great time, living as shadows among other societies. They learned from these societies, but were unable to form a place of their own. After many years of separation the An'Dar'Vi grew in numbers and in strength. They met with another race in the swamps and a third hidden high in the mountaintops. These races were the Ga'Vin (beast men) and the Av'Ian'Dar, the people of the sky. The Ga'Vin explained that they had once been An'Dar'Vi but were changed and strengthened by their travels and the new resolve they had found. The Av'Ian'Dar had no explanation to offer for their sudden appearance in a world that the An'Dar'Vi thought they knew well. Av'Ian'Dar simply claimed to have always been present, merely ignored by the ground dwellers beneath them.

The Second Great War

The An'Dar'Vi forged alliances with these two peoples and a pact was made between them to concur the rest of the world and drive out the An'Dar and their Fae Allies.

At first the conquest went well and many of the An'Dar were killed in the initial surprise of the attack. However the An'Dar regrouped in small numbers to fight a defensive. Seeing that they had almost won the An'Dar'Vi pressed the attack, but they were betrayed by the Ga'Vin who struck from behind in the last moments of battle, seeking to take the possessions of both sides for their own. The Av'Ian'Dar fled the battle to preserve their own lives and left the An'Dar'Vi to face alone the might of the angered An'Dar. This betrayal routed the An'Dar'Vi and drove them deep into the mountains where they had long hidden. The An'Dar'Vi swore vengeance against those who had betrayed them and never forgot.

Once the An'Dar'Vi had quit the field the An'Dar were able to defeat the Ga'Vin quite quickly. The defeated races fled to their homelands and nursed their wounds for several centuries. The An'Dar would never recover from the grievous losses they received however, and in the end died a slow racial death. They were replaced by the Elven race who had stayed out of

the war between their progenitors.

Age of Myth

According to Seerach, Elven Sage

During the age of myth the An'Dar'Vi delved ever deeper into their mountain fastness, gradually shrinking in stature, but growing ever stronger in their rage and hatred at being betrayed. When at last they emerged from the mountains again, they were no longer the An'Dar'Vi, having given up all traces of their former heritage. In the depths of the mountains they learned new secrets that left them as the Dwarves we know to this day.

The Gnomish people integrated slowly with both Elves and dwarves, trading between the two for no member of one would speak directly to the other. It was some time during this period that the Fae migrated onward, silently and without warning.

As for the Elves, this was a time of growth and prosperity where many of the traditions and legends of the Elven people were formed. We learned law and justice, and the arts of poetry and debate first appeared in the literature of our people at this time. No longer did our race seek to copy texts out of the language of the forerunners. Instead we blossomed with creativity and delved the secrets of Phanterra's mysteries on our own terms.

It is important to realize when coming to know the nature of the Elves, and likely that of the Dwarves as well, that the trauma of our racial births have made us what we are. By knowing the legends we first created as people, you can see how we have become the races we are today.

*Dwarven story of Maiden Morwannag's
Betrayal: A Dwarven Bedtime Story*

The contest of the brothers was staged for the amusement of the Princess Morwannag, heir to a high elfin throne. Her name was given thus because she lived by a great sea. Her people, although they lived lower than Ga'Vin, loved her for her beauty. Stories of the Lady's beauty had traveled across the land, both near and far. Hers was the beauty of legend. Many Warriors were beguiled into battle for the privilege of claiming her hand. She attracted not only Elves, but Dwarves, and small folk, and even a few of the

ancient ones. Many battled and many were slain. Morwannag did not let her hand be won. Some she enchanted to die, some she cursed, and some were so overcome with her beauty that they lost their brain for battle.

Before our grandfather's grandfathers were bearded, two Dwarven brothers heard news of Morwannag and sought her hand. She would become the bride of both brothers, since they would easily overcome any opponents and they vowed to share her rather than fight each other. Their brotherhood was their bond. Not escapable.

"When we get there my brother, we will defeat any foe who vies with us for the Lady's hand. Let no one stand in the gap between us," said Primus the Battleleader. Primus was firstborn to his mother and had the responsibility to watch over his younger brother Secundus, even though they were forty years out of their mother's womb. *"None shall win the heart of our prize if we have any say in the matter,"* he continued.

"Aye brother." Secundus agreed with Primus. It was not his place to dispute his brother in any way. *"Disputes are for enemies, not brothers,"* their mother had taught them, *"never fight amongst yourselves. Do not even disagree. It will bring down defeat upon us."*

The days of their journey passed in much the same fashion. Primus would make bold statements of the coming victory, and Secundus would agree. (Neither was simpleminded, for their mother had taught them as well as she could. Their fathers had both died in recent battles with the filthy Ga'Vin, and their mother refused to marry again.) Secundus was the more clever of the two, but Primus was the stronger. So Primus was able to lead by right of strength.

Finally they both arrived at the stronghold of the Lady Morwannag. There were dozens of Warriors camped around the fortress, and many more arriving all the time. Primus told Secundus to go forth and demand to know where the contest was being held.

Secundus returned several hours later. *"It is being held inside the fortress, brother. I was told that we need but to present ourselves to her household and we will be admitted. I have already done so. I presented myself on your behalf as well, brother. All we need do now is*

join the fray. You do not need to present yourself to her."

Primus was angered by the words of his brother. *"You have beheld her then? Without me by your side? Was she as beautiful as it has been told to us?"*

"A kingdom may be won or lost for her hand." Secundus spoke in answer but did not see the rage rising in his brother's eyes. He was too lost in the beauty of the Lady. *"And I've scouted those who will vie against us for her hand. None can stand before your strength or my cunning."*

"Cunning?" Primus allowed the rage to engulf him. He had become jealous of his brother. This was the first time Secundus had achieved anything ahead of Primus. He had become enchanted by the lady's beauty. *"Cunning enough to win her for yourself?"*

This broke the enchantment. *"My brother, I vow that what we win, we will win together. We shall share in the victory. She is only a female. You are my brother. Nothing can break the blood bond that we share. I would not be a Dwarf if I allowed that to happen."*

"You vow?"

"I vow."

"Let us go forth and win the lad,." rejoined Primus with his rage cooling.

The battle for the hand of the Lady Morwannag went as Primus had foreseen. None were able to stand against his strength during the fight. He slew many Warriors that day and took an eye from every one that he defeated. Secundus too slew many, but he spared many more, for his heart had not been hardened by battle. (Secundus always let Primus fight his battles for him.) He also took fingers from his victories, rather than eyes. He reasoned that a defeated Warrior would hold no grudge against him for a finger. They would be able to see well enough to go on being Warriors. (Secundus did not know that a defeated enemy that is allowed to live becomes more dangerous. He did not know that a crushed spirit could sometimes take shape again.)

At the end of the day the trophies from all of the winners were counted by the lady herself. The two Dwarven brothers placed their trophies in

front of the Lady.

"The total is 78 for Primus, son of Erlik, and 81 for Secundus son of Rolfe."

"What does my lady mean?" asked Primus. "We do not understand such words. My kind is not taught these words you use."

"What I mean to say is that Secundus has more trophies than you Primus. Do you understand now?" At this point you can begin to see that in spite of her beauty, Lady Morwannag did not have any honor within her. She was after all only an Elf.

"More?" cried Primus, "More than me?"

"Yes, more than you, and I have promised myself to only the greatest Warrior. Are you saying that you are the better, despite your fewer trophies? I can see only one way to settle this problem. You will fight your brother, the winner to have my hand."

Maiden Morwannag dismissed the host of Warriors who had come to try for her hand. She made a declaration that she had found two Warriors who were worthy of her. Her household began to busy itself with wedding preparations. Excitement filled the air.

The two brothers were led to a healing house to be mended of their wounds. While they had both fought bravely and well, they did not escape battle unscathed. It became clear to those in the healing house that the two were not happy about the outcome of their day's contest, and they sent for the lady.

"My lady," said Primus, "My brother and I have decided that we will not fight each other for your hand. We both made a vow to share all the spoils of our conquest equally. We will not fight each other for your hand."

"You must. I cannot allow myself to be wed by two. You would tear me apart. One of you is sure to become jealous of the time the other spends with me. I have seen it happen before. Each begrudges the time that the other spends with me," replied the lady.

"We have made a vow to each other and to our father's families. We will not break that vow over a woman. Primus has spoken and I have

spoken," said Secundus, *"We will not fight each other for you."*

"Then you shall be put to death."

"It is honorable to die in order to keep a vow. We are not afraid." The brothers both placed their weapons on the ground at the lady's feet. *"We will not fight."*

"It is honorable to watch other Warriors die?"

"Yes lady, it is."

"Then for every day you refuse to fight each other, I will have one hundred of the Warriors outside killed and roasted for my dogs. One hundred means more than you killed today." The lady was fast becoming angry at the pride of the two brothers. *"You will be responsible for many deaths."*

"My heart tells me that would not be so lady. They came here to die at the hands of others, so their deaths are well prepared for, I think." Secundus intoned, *"They came here ready to die. All will see that it is your hand, not ours that is delivering death unto them. Let your own people see what you are."*

"Let it be so." And with that she ordered her guards to begin killing all of the Warriors within the walls of the fortress. This slaughter went on for days. As the guards removed the dead, more came in to take their place, still hoping to vie for the lady's hand.

For more than a week it continued. The two brothers watched in amusement and went so far as to place wagers on which single Warrior would last the longest. Morwannag saw that her plan did not displease the Dwarves. In fact they were entertained by the battle. She was losing her patience. She also noticed that the number of Warriors arriving to win her hand had begun to get smaller and smaller. She realized that stories of her actions were beginning to be told across the land. Finally the next week a captain of her guards announced that they had killed all of the Warriors within the fortress walls.

"We have killed them all, my lady. What would you have us do now?" asked the captain.

"Stop the killing. Let it be known that the first Warrior to come into my house will be my new

husband. I cannot wait for those two Dwarves to make up their minds." Morwannag replied.

"We have her now my brother. We may go and claim her," said Primus.

"But she said that she would not marry both of us. She will have no part in this plan," replied Secundus, "she is trying to tear us apart."

"We will not let that happen, brother. We have both vowed to it. Here is what we shall do. You will go and claim her for your bride. You will tell her that I no longer want her hand. She will then marry you." Primus said. "We can then take her home with us and start sharing her when we get there."

"I don't know if she'll come with us or not. If not we can tell her that we'll both leave and you'll come back with your household. She will have to let you go."

Primus thought it a very clever plan. He did not know that they were being watched by the servants of lady Morwannag.

"I think that she will at least let us leave together, if she believes that one of us is no longer interested in her. I will do as you ask Primus."

Secundus dressed again in his battle armor, and arranged his armaments in place. During this time the servants ran to Morwannag and reported what they had overheard.

"I think I shall make a plan of my own."

Morwannag laughed and told her servants what they must do.

"The Dwarven brother Secundus is here to claim your hand my lady." A servant announced as the Dwarf entered the hall.

"Where is your brother? Did you break your vow of brotherhood? Has he gone home? Why do you come to me alone?" she asked.

"We have not broken our vow to each other. We decided that we would not fight for your hand, and we will not. He has decided that I am to have you. He was remembering our homeland and the many women who live there. Primus has many proposals of marriage, but held back until we both could be wed at the same time. I am here

to claim your hand. We will then travel back to our homeland and be wed among my folk. Please prepare yourself for the journey." Secundus turned and began walking to the door of the lady's chamber.

"Hold Dwarf," she cried out, "We have some things to say. First I will not leave my kingdom. Second, your brother will accompany us nowhere. He will be put to death for refusing my hand. Thirdly, I will not marry you unless you prove your love to me." The lady began speaking in a quiet voice, "You will do these things for me because you love me." As her hands moved she chanted in a strange tongue. Secundus felt himself unable to move or think as she wove her spell. She continued to speak for a few minutes and then woke him again.

"Have you understood what I have told you Dwarf?"

"I have, Princess Morwannag. I will go and get my brother."

Secundus left the room and went directly to where his brother was waiting for him.

"It is done my brother. She has consented to be my bride. She does wish to see you first, to make sure you are not under the notion that we will ever share her."

"You did a fine job convincing her then? Good. We will go and see her together. Bring me to her place." Primus ordered his brother to lead him to Morwannag's presence.

They walked as brothers to her hall.

"It is good that you have both come to me." Morwannag said, upon seeing them enter. "Close the doors."

Her servants closed and bolted the doors from the outside, leaving the lady alone with the Dwarven brothers. She looked at Secundus and said, "Are you ready to have me as your bride? Then fulfill your duty. Kill him."

Secundus lunged at his brother. Primus was caught completely off guard by the blow. The stroke was deep into his chest, cutting through tunic and belt. He fell to his knees and vainly tried to hold his guts inside his body. Primus was dying fast.

"Why have you done this my brother?" he asked, "She turned you against me, your flesh and blood. I see it is so. Kill me now then brother, with the mercy stroke. But remember me after the enchantment leaves your mind."

The lady responded with laughter. *"Your brother is under my spell, now and always. You hope in vain, Primus. Secundus, let him lie there a while. I have never seen such a Warrior beg for his own death. It interests me greatly."*

Secundus looked at her and then at his brother. He dropped the sword and stooped to look into his brother's eyes, and if hearing the lady mention his brother's death put it into his mind to do so. Primus looked back through the pain. There was pity in his own eyes for Secundus. Primus reached for his brother as if to embrace him one last time. They hugged each other for a moment.

"Stop this at once! Stop it and kill him you fool." The lady cried, but it was already too late. As Secundus stood she noticed a dagger in his throat. His brother had killed him. Morwannag watched in horror as Secundus rushed her with his sword raised above his head. She had never seen anything so enraged. His rage drove him to her. He pierced her own black heart with his weapon and fell dead on the steps of her throne.

As she lay beside him, she heard Primus speak, *"You are undone lady. Your spells cannot hold sway over my brother any longer. He told me so with his eyes. He asked me for this end. Your mistake was allowing him to look into my eyes. We were brothers. We are brothers. We will be brothers again in the Halls of the Grandfathers. We have earned our reward."* He slumped and said no more.

The lady lived on yet for many a year with half a heart. It is said that she never again knew the joy of life, honor, or victory. She still had her beauty, but as she ruled with half a heart, her kingdom fell to her malice. In the end it became a desolate place, deserted and despised.

This is why we hate all others that are not Dwarves.
This is why we will never hurt any Dwarf.
This is why we never break a vow.
This is why we die rather than be dishonored.
This is why we stay in our own kingdom.

This is why we are taught to be strong and clever.

This is why we speak only the truth.

This is why we are Dwarves!

Elven Story of 'The Knowledge Seeker': The Tale of Aerissa and the Challenge

There once happened to be a young Elven maiden of a noble house who studied all day long. Aerissa, being her name, was spending the day in the library as usual when a slightly taller elf who was tanned and rugged-looking stepped inside. His eyes jumped from wall to ceiling to wall again as he proceeded in the building. He sat down in a far corner near a window and opened a book. Aerissa couldn't help but notice this man's entry, but decided to continue reading.

A long time had passed; the sun had set and the moon had rose when he packed up his books. He was very careful not to damage the binding, covers or pages, this appeased Aerissa, for she had thought less of him. He had left before her, as she always takes good measure that not a page is folded or ripped before putting the book away. As she stepped outside, she was greeted by this fellow whom she had seen before.

"G'day, or g'd eve, I should say. I couldn't help but notice yer book readin' in thar and was wunderin' if yer ever gonna come out." He smiled at her, but she gave a disgusted sneer.

"What is it you want wood walker? Why is it you so boldly approached my person without addressing me as madam, or lady?" She stomped her foot as she waited for an answer.

"M' Lady, its jus' that I was wunderin' if you knew as much as me?" he retorted, half-hoping the statement wouldn't offend her.

"What? Of course one, such as myself, knows more than you! You with your vulgar voice and slackened appearance. What house do you attend?"

"I don't attend a house, my Lady. An' that sounds like a challenge to me. I challenge you to a battle of wits and intellect." He raised his hand out to make the challenge concrete.

"I should have you arrested! You of NO house, and myself of noble house! What business do you have with me anyway? Best you be off before you

regret it!"

"Sounds like you're intimidated. If you surely in doubt of your knowledge then I shall leave you, but if you have any pride in yourself, take me up on the offer."

Aerissa crossed her arms and tapped a foot before she agreed to the challenge. *"What are the terms?"* she questioned.

"If I win, you'll go outside more often, an' enjoy what's given to ya" he stated.

She raised an eyebrow, then smiled *"And if I win, I'll teach you how to speak properly,"* On those terms they shook hands and agreed to meet at the library at first light.

Upon the coming of morning, Aerissa met her challenger at the library. His hair was disheveled and he was standing underneath a tall shady oak.

"Tell me," Aerissa asked as she pulled a leaf from his hair, *"we made a pact, I haven't your name?"*

He growled at her hand as it pulled the leaf away. She jerked her hand back and dropped the leaf. They exchanged names, and Thaellin Brightthorne suggested the challenge.

"We'll take a walk in th' forest, and you'll name everything ya' see."

They walked for nearly half of the day. The challenge was met. She named off everything she saw, but only the names. He told her what everything did medicinally for he was a renown Healer and skilled with herbs. She was in awe of his knowledge, but she never let it show. When they finished, she brought up her challenge,

"Your skill with words and numbers will be measured now." She smiled as she walked into the library. He followed closely behind and sat at the same table he did the other day. She walked over to the table with a sheet of paper and a wax mark. First she wrote down dozens of sets of numbers and symbols, and then asked him to figure them out. He glared at her and ripped the paper in half.

"You never set the boundaries," she said victoriously, *"now for the other half of the test,"* she said as she pulled out three different books in

three different dialects of language.

"Read these," she demanded.

He slowly looked up at her, then at the books and opened one up to the first page and pretended not to know how to read, for he was very smart and well versed in language too.

"I can't, Lady Aerissa. I can't read but a language an' none of these 'er it. I set this down then. I can redeem maself with the book reading. If you can't read this book I got, then these other books don't count."

She thought for a minute, and figured that if he can read it, it must be a simple language and said, *"Yes, in fact if I cannot read your book, then you will win, but if I can read your book then I win."*

She picked up his well-kept book and opened it to the first page, and then with a stumped look upon her face, she set the book down. *"This is cheating!"* she declared, *"That is the language of magic, a language I cannot read! You must know other languages to be able to read that! You lied, therefore I win the challenge."*

"No," he solemnly said, *"I didn't cheat, for it was a game of intelligence and wits, and I beat you by trickery. Something that someone should've been looking for in a challenge such as this. Anyway, it was your own boundaries that you broke, because of your own ego."*

She accepted this ruling for it was true. She had underestimated his knowledge and in turn lost to a mere peasant among her people. Then upon reflecting his last words and how clear and correct they were she wondered if he had purposely tricked her.

"You lied twice! You speak much clearer now than before."

"That's correct," he stated, *"I had lost. I couldn't figure your equations, and if I lost you would teach me correct speech, and that you did."*

She looked bewildered for a moment, and then asked, *"I had not spent a day with you and you have already learned the correct way to speak?"*

"Yes," he answered, *"Why do you think my challenge was vocal? In case I had lost, I still*

would have proven to be more wizened than you, thus duping you in yet another way. You must think ahead so that you will never lose in whatever you do. Remember my words.” and that was the last Aerissa ever saw of Thaellin Brightthorne, the wisest elf ever to wander the Phanterra.

Age of Ancients

The age of Ancients represents a time of knowledge and power far beyond that which is available to modern scholars. This was the golden age of the Elven and Dwarven nations. A time of powerful magic, and mighty weapons. A time of hero and legend. With the An'Dar and the Fae consigned to history no impediments remained to outshine the glory of the younger races.

Elven cities were famous across the vast world of Phanterra for their beauty and magic. The buildings were grown from living plant and crystal matter. Each held soaring towers that seemed to touch the sky with grace and shouted to all the world the power of the Elven nations. Each building was imbued with its own consciousness. This consciousness was a sort of vague intelligence which according to tales passed down in the lands of men, was capable of controlling lighting, doors, temperature, and directing visitors to the proper hallways. During this time the great magic of order and essence reigned supreme over the Elves, and their wizened spellbinders could look across time and space for answers to nearly any question. With Elven sorcery chariots that could move themselves were devised, weapons that needed no wielder, and perhaps the greatest creation of all, the Valkin'vi. This race was progenitored by the Elves to control the very weather of the entire world.

The Guthrie race, young and carefree wandered the face of Phanterra in great caravans, whose wagons could stretch for miles across great golden plains. Each wagon stood close to thirty feet tall, being pulled by a team of four giant shaggy beasts. The colors were so bright and garish in the sunlight that at times visitors would have to shield their eyes from the light of a caravan making its way like a great glittering snake across the rolling hills.

Guthrie story meets originated during the age of ancients and were known around the world. According to the Guthries, thousands would

flock to their summer festivals for the honor of hearing the greatest legends ever written portrayed by the Guthrie epic poets. Once every ten years the entire Guthrie nation would gather at Great Meet for a year long festival of song and dance. The noise and commotion was said to be second only to the great artifice furnaces of the Dwarven nations.

As for those Dwarves, they had carved out the interior of entire mountain ranges, filling them with the work chants of Dwarven smiths and great cities of living stone. The high science of Alchemy was first invented here as dwarves discovered new methods for strengthening and blending metals. This quickly passed on and changed among the other races to become the blending of minerals and herbs we know as Alchemy among the modern studies of scholars. Dwarven armor was said to be impervious to any bombardment, even the fire of dragons, scarcely heated the surface of these great works of master smiths. Nowhere on Phanterra were such marvelous creations of steel possible. For the first time in ages Dwarves and Elves worked as allies, through their emissaries, seeking to balance each other's weaknesses and improve both their lots.

The Valkin'vi first appeared in the Age of Ancients as creations of Elven sorcery. A small group of young Elves was volunteered (usually those who had committed some crime) and through a rigorous magic transformed into ethereal beings capable of controlling small portions of the upper Airs. In order to control and monitor their new creations who were of fiery temper and less than happy with their new positions, the Valkyn'Vi were given into the care of a powerful race of beings calling themselves the Valkin. These strange travelers who never appeared in great numbers and seemed to step through thin air at will were capable of balancing all of nature's forces within themselves. Though unable to naturally procreate the Valkin never aged and maintained unceasing vigilance over the Valkin'vi and the pleasant weather of the Elven Empire.

At this time the Gnomes were greater in numbers and often found living in large enclaves as either diplomats or engineers. They hired themselves out to Elves and dwarves as go-betweens and aided in the construction of a vast empire of magical causeways to ease travel across Phanterra. Gnomes were liked by all for their

honesty and amiability; in fact a common saying among the other races was to compliment on being 'honest as a gnome'. In all respects gnomes were generous and proved to be warm hearted and have a genuine concern for the well being of others. They looked upon themselves as a race responsible for guiding the less educated masses into careful decisions.

The Avyana dominated the highest peaks and airs of Phanterra, feeding their communal society on the refuse and castoff scraps of others. Often a Dwarven gem or Elven orb would mysteriously appear in a rookery with none the wiser as to how it got there should the owner come a looking. This was a time of equality and peace among the Avyana who were known as marvelous guides and linguists to the peoples of Phanterra. Their gift for language was not lost until the talkative fellows were silenced by the poverty and corruption that destroyed their socialist lifestyle at the end of the age of ancients.

As for the sly and cunning Ga'Vin with their enormous numbers of shock troops and reavers, an entire continent was theirs to lay waste. Their struggles transformed the ground into an ever changing landscape of muck and battle as each Ga'Vin shaman and war wizard tried to carve out his own empire as Father, from the chaos around him. Their numbers were so great that no one Ga'Vin was able to meet and challenge all those of the same Tier in order to prove his superiority, and conflict was rampant. At birth Ga'Vin were born into the slums that were the only towns left after armies moved across the land. If they lived long enough, at puberty each Ga'Vin would enter the fire and follow in the footsteps of his predecessors.

Those with the cunning and strength, which the Ga'Vin prized among their soldiers, earned great honors and collected the bones of many enemies to adorn themselves with. The rare Ga'Vin who lived through a decade of service went back to the slums to raise huge litters of children, some of whom might live long enough to follow in the war-like footsteps of their forebears.

In the time of the ancients the world was a well-settled place, filled to bursting with many races and cultures of people. Great cities sprawled across the surface and under it. Wars of glory and conquest crossed and recrossed the land. In the end over population became the great burden

of Phanterra, her life and beauty sapped by the creatures dwelling upon her creaking back.

No more space existed for the travels of the Guthrie. No more mountains to be carved by Dwarven masons. No more forests to sculpt and hunt for the Elves. No new lands for the Ga'Vin to conquer. The only beasts living were those bred to use as food or in war. The only game remaining was that too terrible to eat. Realizing the imminent danger for the world should not a solution to this overcrowding be found a great meeting was called and the wisest men and women of all races were called forward to speak on behalf of their peoples. For two long years they met and argued over what was to be done.

The dwarves believed the solution lay in greater structures and mightier buildings. The Ga'Vin agreed that the solution was to kill everyone over the age of fifty and any who could not fight to defend themselves. The Elves did not appreciate this view greatly and suggested simply killing all the goblins instead and opening a new continent for settlement. The Avyana said things were fine the way they were, and the Valkin'vi stormed out in rage against the control of the Elves, never to bow under their yolk again.

In the end it was the gnomes who proposed the chosen solution. They suggested that a series of mighty portals be opened to other realms so that the over-crowded world of Phanterra could colonize distant worlds for herself. After much debate, it was decided that this was a plausible solution and the most powerful magicians and Sages of the various races were gathered.

From each race and culture they came, the mightiest spell weavers to live in a time of great sorcery. Aged beyond belief and fearsome in their wisdom, they represented the pinnacle of the secret arts. Behind each traveled five hundred colonists waiting for the portal to a new realm, fit for colonization and expansion. Together the mages numbered over a thousand of the most brilliant minds the Age of Ancients had to offer. Together in a show of trust and camaraderie that was never to be repeated they worked the magic to bridge the gap between worlds. Together they succeeded beyond their wildest dreams, and failed beyond their most terrible nightmares. Of order and essence they wove strong connections between the fabric of reality, bridging faint fibers of life between distant worlds, a magic so great that none today could

duplicate its magnitude or the number of worlds it touched. While deep in ritual the vile betrayers attacked. A host of Ga'Vin brought through a portal from the Ga'Vin continent by their own warlocks descended upon the host of mages who were too busy in their own ritual to defend themselves. Unprepared for this betrayal they fell under the sword of Ga'Vin hordes who desired to rule the entire world without the interference of other races. It was genocide. Luckily they failed as well.

The magic of order and essence so carefully shaped and maintained went awry when its controllers died. Driven by the emotions of their dying thoughts the magic perverted and twisted in upon itself becoming magic of chaos and some dark force never before realized. The world was shattered as the magic streamed through all the realms corrupting what it touched. Whole mountains rose from the sea, continents disappeared and chaos was loosed upon the world as a malignant hatred created by the sorcerous deaths.

The Splitting

'So you want to know the lore of our people, the secret knowledge that only we possess about the events which lead to the splitting?' The old elf grinned, his pasty teeth showing nearly ground down to the gums.

'Yes, I need you to reveal your truth to me, so that I can pass it on to others.'

'I shall tell you what I know, what was, is, and will be again.' He paused to take a breath, and broke down in a fit of coughing before taking a drink of strong cider.

'The Age of the Ancients ended in fire and suffering. They had meddled in powers beyond their own control, and the suffering of thousands twisted the magic of the great spell casters. The magic released had gained a malicious life of its own. Everything that the magic touched faded and died, drained of life and hope, and feeding that great evil, making it ever stronger.'

'Even as it consumed those who had survived the failed sorcery, it spread a new enemy across Phanterra. The unliving. Such a thing was a corruption of all that had been before, and struck fear into all the ancient peoples, even the Ga'Vin, who betrayed all, feared the undead. Some of those who survived fought back, they

used the great magic which had been raised in peace before to wage war, and all of Phanterra fought against the darkness, and the evil which they named The Master of Death.' His voice dropped to a whisper, as he continued, *'They called him Shri'Illi Aingun in the ancient language of Naming.'*

'Such things should not be spoken of though, even now, long after these dark days there are forces which ally themselves with it.'

He turned and took another sip of his cider and waited for me to record what he had said. When He saw my quill still upon the page, he took a deep breath and continued.

'The war dragged on, but it was a losing battle for the living, all of Phanterra suffered under the tyranny of the evil force. Some of the members of all the races had allied themselves with the darkness, even some of the elves, much to our shame. It would take many years after this for us to purge ourselves of the guilt we felt as a whole over this treachery. In the course of the Great War many of the bravest and truest Warriors, scholars, singers, and artists came together in a plot for the survival of all.'

'Using their cunning arts they created a trap designed to feed on the very greed and hunger of the evil one, who the Gnomes began to call Regis Mortem. These Warriors, scholars, and poets spread themselves across the battlefield, their timing exquisite, as they baited portions of the evil, which had split itself to guide its armies. Somehow, these seven managed to trap portions of that creature, sacrificing themselves to its hatred in the process.'

'When the creature was distracted and weakened it fled into the bowels of the earth. Deep below the ground and beneath the waves, it fled and hid. It could still draw the life from the living creatures around it, and slowly rebuild itself. Even without the senses that had been stripped by the heroes above, it was still a danger, and would surely have consumed all of Phanterra if given enough time, were it not for five great wizards from among the ranks of Elvenkind. Well actually four great wizards and one of their apprentices.'

'While the other races celebrated the end of the war and purged the world of the many unliving still in existence, as well as their allies, we of

Elvenkind looked to the future. We realized that Regis Mortem was not beaten. We knew that if we did not finish what the others had begun, it would rise again to destroy us all before we could rebuild the glory of our world. So with the future in mind, the four greatest remaining wizards formed a plan to counter this evil once and for all. With a single apprentice to record their deed, they entered the catacombs under the earth by means of a great maelstrom, and found their way into the fiery core of the earth, and passed even through that until they came at last to a pulsing sphere of metal and stone, somewhere at the heart of Phanterra. It was here that they found Regis Mortem.

'The evil creature was feeding on the very magical fiber of Phanterra. It was using the energy and life that powered the planet to fuel itself. Knowing that magic was the fabric of creation, and that life could not exist in the absence of magic, they understood that when this creature was done feeding, there would be no magic left in Phanterra, and the world would be dead forever.

'Using his powerful arts, the eldest of them erected a powerful barrier to preserve them. Then the four of them joined their powers together and raised a focus of great force. They turned that force between themselves against the very nature of reality, bending it to their will as their ancestors had done in the time before the age of ancients, before memory and records become dim and fade. The time of the first races. With their great shaping they pulled at the very fiber of magic, because up to that time there had been only one magic.

'First the youngest of them strained out the threads that traced through the earth, that provided life, the fabric which tied structure and order into a physical body. He reworked each and every living object on the planet, and all of the unliving ones as well. Into each and every stone, grain of sand, each tree and flower, he awoke a consciousness. His mind struggled to grasp the complexities of all existence, and in the end, to complete his working he poured his own life energy into his crafting.

'Even as his own life's candle burned out, his work was taken up by the next sorceress, who grasped at the fabric of the seas and the rain, the water within each living thing answered to her call. She strained from the whole the energies

that define intellect and differentiate those motive creatures from the more stolid deep intellects of trees and stone. Her working touched each creature, and through her craft she protected all those on the surface from the ravaging destruction of Regis Mortem. As her work was nearing completion, Regis Mortem grew aware of their presence, he could feel their life near him, as all things were near him, and feel the source of his power growing fainter, weaker. Howling with a rage that shook the world it hurled through the darkness to strike at their barriers. The force of its blow shook the world, and their bubble of reality began to crack.

'Straining with effort they held on to their faith in their purpose, and redoubled their efforts, even as it raised power against them again. On the surface the world was beginning to feel the strain of the massive forces being released beneath it. Chasms opened, rivers flowed uphill, and mountains sank or rose as seas shifted. The winds swirled and the sky was darkened with storms that seemed without end. Even as she struggled to complete her work, the last of her energy gave out, and Illuminia Corazona too sank into the slumber of death.

'Her work was not for naught though, and where she had left off, another took up the strands of mastery and worked great conjures. Again the chords of reality vibrated, as from within their pocket of reality the world was changed. Alljina MosDariia reached into the great airs, and the currents that are the breath of life. Her mind touched the consciousness of the sky, where before the Valkyn'Vi had been sole masters and reworked the permissions of the sky. From the whole of reality she singled out the air, the force of change and motivation. Even as she worked, so too did Regis Mortem. With the energy it had gathered in plundering the world, it reached out in pain and suffering and battered at the minds of those inside the wards. Under the strain of her conjuring Alljina was in no shape to resist and her mind collapsed into a whirling wind of despair, and she was destroyed. The beast rejoiced smelling victory at hand.

'But it had not counted on the mastery of the eldest. He was a wily old elf, nearly two millennia had passed in the time he had lived, and in that time he had learned more than any other still living. He grasped the last strands, those of natural consumption, the fires of creation gave ear to him. With his powers he

sealed the cycle, bringing an end to all things, as must be done to preserve the natural order. Magic was sundered with his will, from one made into four. Even as the fires raged through his body he stepped through the crumbling wards, which could no longer exist in the new reality, and embraced the darkness, bringing light. As he flared in brilliance Regis Mortem retreated from his death flash, but not before it knew despair.

'At last only the apprentice was left, standing alone in the darkness at the center of all things. And yet he knew deep inside himself that all was not done. Something was lacking. He knew, that all things had a consciousness, one that was outside of and beyond the elements; there was something more, something intangible in all creation. The dreams of reality and the harmonies which fueled Phanterra had not been accounted for in the conjuring by either the old wizards or the evil creature.

'After pondering for a long time in the darkness, finding his old skills and powers exhausted in the changing world, he grasped at the fibers of the dreams within, and begging the permission and forgiveness of the four elements he beseeched their aid. And aid him they did. A prison of the elements bathed the core, and was sealed with wards of the most complicated mathematics, theories, and dreams that the apprentice could construct when calling upon the knowledge of the ages. Thus was Regis Mortem sealed away, and the time of prophecy begun.

'One year after they had journeyed beneath the surface the apprentice emerged, gaunt and tired. He traveled the changing world, and was wracked with sorrow and despair at the changes that had been wrought. Never again would Phanterra know the glories of the ancients. In sorrow he traveled the world, trying to make up for the destruction which he had been part of. He taught others, for a time, and then disappeared in solitude into the wastelands, which had taken over much of Phanterra's surface.

'It was never known if the creatures created by the splitting of magic were the end of him. If they were, perhaps in his death at the hands of misdirected creation he atoned. Such is life, we all pay in the end.'

And with those words the old man closed his speech to me, and walked from my study. I never

found out who he was, or where he had come from, but I will be forever thankful for his story.

-Saethin Maevers

Age of Mystery

as explained by Talarin PyrErris

Mystery exists in all things, but no time is so blank to the history of Phanterra as the centuries following the Splitting. During the upheaval created by the rampant change of magic's basic laws civilization as it had been known disintegrated. Creatures alien to the world of Phanterra seemed to spring full grown from the ground overnight.

Natural disasters destroyed cities and flattened mountains leaving a death toll so catastrophic that even now the races who went through it mourn the loss of knowledge which has never been recovered since. It was during this time that humans and Orcs were found wandering the soil. Humans were often born to Elven and Gnomish parents, seeming to be overgrown aberrations that left parents weeping in despair.

The Age of Mystery is also responsible for many of the bizarre and localized creatures that exist across Phanterra. It is quite possible to have a completely different bestiary at distances of only fifty miles or so. Creatures that may be prolific near the town of Katak for example may never have been seen in Dorchak or Da'Thanis. This is one of the great perils of living in any place that does not have a large civilization. The sheer number of dangers from natural causes is difficult to comprehend and even more difficult to avoid. It is because of this that many of my people spend much time learning lore, and trying to master the secrets of the forest so that it does not master us.

We know now that the age of mystery lasted for several centuries and it is believed that no man or woman lived at the end who remembered the Age of Ancients. The power of our ancestors was lost forever long before the earth settled its rumblings and the weather could be predicted by soothsayers again.

Age of Humans

Excerpt by Stephan Veers, from his lecture on the History of the Kingdom, 995 P.E.W. in the Royal Academy of Arts.

'The age of humans begins officially when the first Elven city fell to human hands. However, mankind was not truly a common force for several hundred more years. During this time city after city chose to be led by beneficent men and women who preached that all life was connected and precious. They attempted to form a just system of government and provide for the needs and education of all.

Unfortunately their own magical techniques were perverted and turned against them and others were tempted by a strange power of darkness that had been believed defeated since before the age of mystery.' 'The Essence Wars as they were later known ended this time of growth and peace between man and Elf. Those beneficent individuals who had once ruled converted all their energy to war, for the fate of all life hung in the balance. Few of either side survived the devastation and those who survived and remembered the time of destruction cannot help but weep at the horrors that were committed.

After the essence wars at last ended with the near total annihilation of both sides, but the preservation of the world, a new faction seized power. These were the elemental mages, who used the raw force of the four primal strengths to achieve their magic. They wielded power like an iron gauntlet and marked all who opposed them magically so no descendant would ever escape their eye.

Mankind revolted after more than three centuries of abuse and took the power of state back into the hands of the ungifted. No man of magic has been permitted within office of political power since these dark days passed.

Out of the ashes of the Magriocracies rose the first empires. Into the Silverthorne region from the west came the Empire of Great Lassa. They moved large infantry units into the area and attempted to subdue man and beast around fortified stone towns, the first of their kind. These replaced the wooden palisades and earthworks that were previously common barriers against the beasts of the wild in these parts. Though ruins of earlier cities, ones created during the centuries of the Magriocracies and

before existed, they were thought cursed and left as abandoned ruins for bandits and clans of cannibalistic monstrosities. The advent of new military strategy and cohesive armies significantly altered the region.

Military might however was not enough to prevent trouble in the center of their empire and one legion after another was called away after another to leave the foundling cities of Sussra and Dorcha untenanted by guardian hands. These two cities were nearly destroyed by the creatures of the wild before gaining a significant population of nomads from the north a little over three hundred and fifty years ago. The nomads brought with them horses and the skills of cavalry, turning the tide for the two city-states in the wilderness.

Dorcha was abandoned sometime around 450 P.E.W. There came to follow another small rise to empire as a warlike culture expanded from the tundra driven out of their homeland by great white-haired beasts. The people called themselves the Haurks and demanded tribute from all city dwellers. For nearly one hundred years they dominated the region of Sussra and Dorcha demanding slaves and food from the laboring peoples - riders and farmers alike.

In the year 726 P.E.W (post essence wars) a ship sailed into the bay of thorns under the ensign of the corsair isles. It ran aground on the volcanic rock, forcing its crew to conquer the locals or perish in the attempt. A glorious battle was fought against a group of black robed slaveholders who were digging in the volcanic rock from which the captain, a man by the name of Draelin Falconbridge emerged victorious. He and his crew set free the slaves and declared the bay the new kingdom of Silverthorne. Captain Falconbridge became the first king.

His reign was long extended and the officers of his crew advised well the expansion and operation of this fledgling nation. Shortly before his death a second corsair ship was sighted off the bay and requested permission to settle the bay as well. Captain Asand Falconbridge, brother of the new king of Silverthorne also sought the riches of this new bay from which he could launch many profitable raids against the clans of the mountains to the east and the beach dwellers of the savanna to the south.

King Draelin turned his brother away, telling

him that piracy and brigandry were at an end within the boundaries of his kingdom. Captain Asand sailed east into the rising sun never to be seen again, but forever cursing the name of Silverthorne.

With the succeeding generations of Silverthornes came a rapid growth in kingdom and population. Exploration of the lands outside of the bay found them rich in wildlife and ground suitable for profitable farming. Tribes of previous inhabitants rapidly fell under the charm of the warlike son's of Draelin, Valric and Arthur. Both held the throne for a short time after their father and succeeded in expanding the realm. Valric added Portsmouth and Norillon, before falling in battle with a fierce tribe of burnt skinned hunters at the mouth of the Silverthorne River. His brother Arthur took up the standard in that same battle carrying the cry of Vitii Valiri 'Life to Valor' and broke the tribe scattering them northward. On the site of that battle he founded the city of Brax and then turned west along the coast of the inland sea. Within sight of the dark depths referred to by natives as the Vaun or steam 'Steam' a military colony under the command of the grizzled veteran Tucor was formed.

At word of repeated raiding by the burnt Warrior aided with devices and herbal magic of strange short folk Arthur turned his army back to the embattled site of Brax determined to push the creatures out of his realm and punish them mightily for their effrontery. He reached the new city of Brax with a little over one thousand men and less than a full hundred of Archers. A bitter and bloody battle fought under torchlight and bonfires threw the interlopers across the river and into the unexplored regions to the east.

Arthur gave pursuit, though reduced to only half his original force and continued to harry the retreat of his enemy. At long last on the banks of another mighty river he found the homeland of the small allies to his charred enemies. Here at a great castle shaped rock their leader surrendered his claim to land and bowed his head before the supremacy of Silverthorne. The young prince, Arthur's dear nephew held the city while his brother continued with a small party of Scouts to the north hoping to find where the other tribe of enemies was hiding. Two weeks later three injured Scouts carried his body home to his nephew, the new king. The body was carried south into the gentle rolling hills on the eastern bank of the silver river and there laid to rest in

the founding village of Norillon in which all the surviving soldiers of that great campaign were granted land. In later days this pleasant village would grow to hold the Decorum of Toevass, where philosophy would be hotly debated and knowledge prized above all else.

The current king, Edward gave little thought to expansion, choosing to consolidate his holding and encourage immigration from the corsair isles and other distant land to bolster his growing kingdom's economy. He set up trade with the neighboring kingdom of Alleria and imported refined items of jewelry and precious metals which his own kingdom was very short on while selling massive quantities of food to the land short Allerians.

His three sons in the late 860's began the westward expansion once more. They moved up the Serpent River from Fort Tucor and rapidly conquered the strange swamp city of Mordin at the fork of the Serpent and Susspin. However, they learned of a great city-state to the north containing vast riches and horses of the highest quality and dreamed that it would soon be theirs. Thomas himself made a pilgrimage into the depths of the Vaunephasauk forest searching after a legendary city within. He found the City state of Vaunephasauk and its people and brought back with him his wife, Anne of Ishania. After the death of their father in 867, Thomas led his brothers Lionel and William against the Armies of Susspin. The war was brutal and Susspin's military trained to perfection, honed in centuries of war with the Ari'i forest and the riders of the high plateau. The war dragged on for years costing first Thomas and then William their lives.

At last the peace between Susspin and Silverthorne was sealed when Anne and her first child Edward brought the aide of enchanters from Vaunephasauk to turn the tide against Susspin in the battle of Shrouded Glen just south of the walls of Susspin itself. After the battle Lionel married the daughter of Susspin's ruler and out of his respect for them gave up title to Silverthorne in favor of ruling Susspin as a fief for his nephew.'

'With ties firmly secured in the West the eyes of Silverthorne at the turn of the century returned to the frontier on the east. After the depletion of the last war, Edward's children George and Delkirk put war aside for a time and concentrated on the

improvement of life within the country. Delkirk was the first ever to be named First Knight of the kingdom and defended his brother's interests both militarily and politically away from the throne while George concentrated on matters of state and diplomacy from within the capital city. For the next three generations the descendants of Delkirk had the title of First Knight and were loved by the people as they mediated between nobles and commons in favor of their king.

George's grandchildren brought the expansion of Silverthorne across the black river and into the Dorchak forest. Here the natives of the long lost colony of Dorcha fought with skill, bravery, and savage force. For years they held out against the growing nation of Silverthorne, but at last gave in when the nation of Silverthorne cut them off in a two hundred day siege.

Grayston the First took control of the city until a suitable replacement loyal to the crown of Silverthorne could be found among the local nobles while his general, a man by the name of Harrison pushed north for the headwaters of the Dorchak. There he formed a strategic fortress and settled it with the men of his army until such

time as a suitable number of the peasantry could be recruited to follow into the north.

Grayston passed over his reign to the house of Kendal and Established the House of DeVris to minister the Law with the knowledge that the First Knight and the other roving noble justiciars were no longer enough to maintain the king's peace and the king's law. This was the year 945'

Shortly after this James the brother of Grayston assumed the thrown and firmly entrenched the law of the realm for the first time in books of paper and the Laws as a force of man. In the late seventh decade of this century disappearances began along the frontier in great numbers and the First Knight, Prince Gwyndwr along with his wife and child were killed in the frontier by forces unknown.

In 991 Johannes assumed the thrown and made a declaration of war on the unknown armies from across the mountains to the east. Those armies later came to be known as the hordes of Gromm and that war continues its bloody cost until this day in 998.

The Forty Years Leading up to the Cataclysm

First Entry in the Journal of Bernham Kielson 1011 p.e.w.

May knowledge grant you who find this wisdom. The Year 1011 P.E.W. has been dark in passing. I must record the tragedies of the last years here, for the people have begun to believe the deceits foisted on them by the guild. I can only hope that some of the sanctuaries will remain long enough to see this copied and hidden so that the truth may some day be known. I, Bernham Kielson, sixth tome of House Toevass and keeper of the sanctuary at Hillcrest, bear testament with my word as truth. The desecration of the storehouses and sanctuaries of house Toevass began in the year 1007. For several years prior to this, our house had experienced a number of unexplained disappearances. However, those of us in the order are given to expect that a certain number of us will be lost in the quest for knowledge, and initially we were not concerned. In 1005 a fifth tome stationed in Bonnifuss commissioned a research study with the intent of finding the cause for the dramatic upswing in Toevass

disappearances. His research came to a startling, though not wholly unexpected conclusion. According to his investigation, members of the Guild of Mages had been covertly working against the house, with the intent of acquiring much lore and artifice which has been carefully kept from their hands over the last centuries, out of fear that too much knowledge in their hands could lead to a return of the magiocracy states that existed before the uprising. We took care to inform the house members quietly of this, and removed many of the more sensitive artifacts from circulation and study, to locations of presumed safety. The sanctuaries of Toevass. I fear our action came to late, and we were far too out of touch with the people of the kingdom, for they had grown to fear us. Where the rumors of our ill actions and secret societies came from I cannot say. Most commonly though, it was whispered that among Toevass a sect of mages had formed, which dared to challenge the might of the guild, and was not registered with the guild or king. The people, fearing a rise of unregistered mages turned against us, and our

good king, Johannes, authorized the Guild of Mages to investigate these allegations of unlicensed sorcery.

Thus was the sum of our greatest fears revealed. The guild bore the king's writ in search of sorcery, and their inquisitors and witch-hunters spared no effort in questioning the members of our house. Academies that stood untouched for two hundred years lay now in ruin, the pride of our students are taken, broken, and tortured. Some were aided to escape, for there are those among the people, whose home did not sanction the actions against us, and who had no love for the guild. In my own escape, in the belly of a river caravan, my two young students were discovered by the inquisition and burned at the stake. Neither had a whit of sorcerer's talent, but their young screams could be heard for miles as the flames rose. I am haunted still. Perhaps the king will have a change of heart before it is too late. I fear that too late was years gone by though. Much which was hidden is now lost forever, for those who hid it are dead. Much else has been taken into the towers of Vaunephasauk, and I fear even more what the results of the powers unleashed by such knowledge will be. Today, as the autumn closes in during the year 1011, a band of cavaliers rides from Dorchak for Silverthorne castle with the king's brother Prince Grayston, at their head. I have heard it said that he intends to see the bloodshed brought to an end. It matters little though, with the passing of a few old more scholars like myself, none of Toevass shall remain to see fear their blood shed. I give this record into the hands of Daon, son of Janos. He is a carpenter of Castelion, whose daughter once served as a tutor to young girls for my poor house. She disappeared three years ago, and her father has sworn to carry this message to the library at Silverthorne itself for me. I have learned that the inquisitor Malbekir and the Witch Hunter Hanovir come for me. I will lead them away from Daon, may he carry my records to safety. As the Gnomes are given to say, Via et Lumina bene et serva Phanterra.

Declaration of the Magi 1012 p.e.w.

I, High Magus of the Guild of Mages, send greetings to my peer the King of Silverthorne on this day, 1st of spring in the year one thousand and twelve. Your Majesty, With all due respect, the guild finds the actions of your cavaliers to be an outrage against all sensibility. My guild merely acted upon your own given word that problems arising from the harboring of outlaw

magicians by the traitorous acts of the House of Toevass must be dealt with in all expediency. Should an unfortunate few have taken these actions too far is of little concern to men such as ourselves. Surely you must see reason and recall your cavaliers from the field before matters proceed apace beyond any hope of the intervention of reasonable men.

I give your Majesty this warning, heed it well: The realm of Silverthorne shall no longer dictate action to the Guild of Mages. We hereby inform your majesty that due to the recent actions of the throne, we remove ourselves as subjects from the King's Law. Any further encroachment upon our activities by servants to the King shall be regarded as acts of war and be met with ultimate and final force.

Do not seek to disobey us or ignore this warning, for to do so will unleash a river of blood in your Kingdom as you have never seen.

Your colleague,
Archibald Denithor
High Magus of Vaunephasauk
Ruler of the Realms of Wizardry

Letter of Support 1013 p.e.w.

My King, it is midsummer one thousand and thirteen, Forgive the urgent nature of this correspondence and the impropriety of form, for my scribes and seneschals lay slain in the field. Slight skirmishes and brush conflicts have erupted into full-scale war. No longer can the treachery of the mages be ignored.

The second legion of Susspin has been marshaled and marches to war against the aggression of Vaunephasauk, for the soldiers and sorcerers of that land have blighted the river trade, and sealed off our access to the rest of your realm. We humbly ask you to send aid as soon as may be that the threat of evil sorcery be purged from the land before it is too late. I look forward to standing at your shoulder in war once again my king.

Yours in Life,
Kirka Ironheart
Duke of Susspin and Marshall of the West

p.s. my king, I bring to the field of battle a full legion, consisting of one thousand light horse, one thousand heavy horse, five hundred cavalry Archers, an artillery company, and three

thousand foot. This is all I can spare while maintaining the security of the northern and western borders. We estimate the field strength of Vaunephasauk at nearly ten thousand men all told, with griffon riders, elite artillery abetted by Alchemy, enchanters, warlocks, and illusionists, among them. Rumor also has that the forces dedicated to fighting the beasts from the Chaos Mountains will be marching with Vaunephasauk, adding another two thousand elite soldiers whose morale is unquestionable to the forces of the mages.

Letter of Support 1013 p.e.w.

In the year one thousand and thirteen, thirty days beyond the summer solstice, King of Silverthorne, glorious defender of man, friend to the free peoples of the world, I, Duke Kendall send you greetings and salutations.

Word of the doings in the duchy of Vaunephasauk has reached us, even here, and we are outraged on your behalf. Troops of this nation, with the assistance of my personal soldiers and those of House DeVris have closed down the dens of iniquity operated by the brotherhood of mages within these lands. However, I fear that my aid will not reach the West in time to be of any assistance to your loyal Kirka.

I maintain troops at the border with Harrison and have become bogged down in a rolling field skirmish with the hired lackeys of the mages guild in the lands of Bonnifuss. I will be able to route these traitors given time, but for the moment they seem to be slipping through my fingers with the greased ease of river eels. I believe they may be receiving aid from unknown supporters, and we receive little cooperation from the forces within Bonnifuss without first paying exorbitant tariffs. My troops will reach the inner sea no earlier than next year, for the winter will catch us still within the lands of Bonnifuss, putting down the mages' rebellious tendencies here.

Your servant,
Duke Kendall
Marshall of the East

Grayston's Letter 1014 p.e.w.

My Brother,
Tomorrow will be the first day of the spring campaign in the year one thousand and fourteen.

We camp a bare three leagues from the city of Mordin, in the north where my force of cavaliers has joined the armed might of Susspin. Tomorrow we shall stand on the Shores of the Serpent River; if destiny is willing we shall cross in victory.

I have a bad feeling though, my brother, for tonight we saw the glow of great fires beyond the horizon, and it is likely that tomorrow's conflict will be bloody and hard fought. My Scouts estimate at least half of the traitor's forces lay gathered beyond the Serpent River's banks. Today we received a request for parlay from the council of mages that leads their forces into battle. I will attend personally, as a show of good faith, and the power of the King. I take with me fifty of my best men, as well as a scribe from Toevass that I picked up on my way to Susspin who was being hounded by the forces of the traitors. He is no mage, and writes a neat hand. He shall keep track of tomorrow's events for me.

Light bless you, send my regards to our sister. My last will and testament has been granted into Kirka's keeping until I can return to reclaim it. May this missive find you well.

Your Brother,
Grayston Silverthorne

The Journal of Bernham Kielson 1014 p.e.w.

On this day, the first of the planter's moon, I bear witness to treachery and courage. I wish I had never lived to see such things, and that the bravest and most noble of men had spared me from the terrible duty of reporting such awful deeds. I, Bernham Kielson, sixth tome of House Toevass and keeper of the sanctuary at Hillcrest, bear testament with my word as truth.

When the sun rose this morning I accompanied fifty brave cavaliers of DeVris bedecked in bright mail, accompanied by the jingling of harness, to the parlay of war arranged between the circle of mages, representatives of the mages' guild, and Lord Grayston Silverthorne, first Knight of the Kingdom. When the sun had reached a span above the horizon we came to the crossing of the Serpent river, and found it destroyed in our path. The army of the Mages had fired the crossing the night before, leaving the causeway to the city of Mordin a smoldering ruin. The stones themselves had cracked and split from the heat of their unjust flames.

However, a bridge of sorts remained. The air was filled with the strange hum of unclean sorcery, and a glimmering span of red stretched over the wide and slow muddy waters of the Serpent's mouth. At each end the span was anchored between two corpses raised on posts. To my sorrow, one of them was known to me as Thomas Loeklara, a sixth tome of house Toevass, and one of the gentlest men to ever live. He had dedicated his life to studying the slow pattern of changes, which sweep river valleys with the changing seasons and had written eight fine treatises on the subject. Never again shall I read his words without seeing his agonized face limned in red light.

Lord Grayston's face tightened, but he did not cry out as some of his men did with the horror of what they saw. Many loosened steel, but Grayston would not permit them to draw, and he fought his mount's better instincts to guide the animal across the river. I remember that span of glittering red, like blood or rubies, ringing like steel beneath the shod hooves of our destriers. A pavilion of white silk awaited us on the far side, a mere fifty spans from the riverbank. The pavilion was guarded by fifty handpicked foot of Vaunphasauk's Order Guard, and they looked magnificent in their shining mail and burnished helms. They stood proud, as symbols of the honor their land still possessed, each staring ahead with unmoving perfection.

I entered the tent behind Lord Grayston, with only one pageboy in attendance to carry our belongings. There seven men sat on pillows raised in three tiers. The first tier of four was only a knee above the ground, the second, of two robed figures, was at waist height, and the third, with a single red robed and hooded figure was nearly shoulder height. Forcing Lord Grayston to crane his neck should he take the pillow offered him upon the carpeted ground. Choosing instead to stand, and denying the refreshments offered, Lord Grayston minced no words with the robed vultures. He was perfect in decorum and form, but offered no ground to the King's Law, and would permit no treason from the traitors. Grayston offered honorable surrender to the soldiers serving with them, and a life sentence in prison to the mages, with death only to be met out to the High Magus himself.

These terms were deemed unacceptable by the seven, who took the opportunity to drink wine and laugh at the expense of Lord Grayston. They

asked him what army he planned to accomplish such a feat with, and with their words the tent, and its bindings of silence fell away to reveal a visage from nightmare.

Beyond the tent's walls the brave cavaliers fought for their lives, outnumbered ten to one. Each was laying about with sword and lance, though arrows and bolts of light filled the air, they cried in one voice SILVERTHORNE, SILVERTHORNE! And from the far shore came an answering shout, as Ironheart led his men in a doomed attempt at rescue to the banks of the Serpent river. Under a hail of arrows they fought the current in an attempt to rescue Lord Grayston, throwing their own lives away as tinder before the fire. A cry of rage and betrayal such as I have never heard, and hope never to again ripped the air, and Lord Grayston's face was painted with agony for each of his men needlessly slain through treachery.

The four mages to the bottom row raised their hands and attempted to conjure a binding on him, but they were too slow against the power of his rage, and their conjures fell short, along with their heads, which rolled across the floor in a single sweep of the great blade carried by Grayston. They died with mouths open in mid-incantation. Grayston swept his pageboy up under his other arm, and pushing me before him, made for his horse. The noble steed stood still, waiting, lashing out at any who tried to mount his proud back, all but Grayston.

The men saw us, and the handful of cavaliers still standing raised a ragged cry, making a ring around their lord of steel and death. Two were felled by sorcery before my eyes, turning incandescent before blowing away on the wind. Grayston did not mount the stallion himself though, instead choosing to throw his page over the saddle, and following that motion, he slung my person over the saddlebow as well. The horse snorted in annoyance, but obeyed with alacrity at a slap to the rump with the flat of Grayston's blade. The last I saw of him, Grayston led a fistful of men in a driving wedge into the heart of the enemy, intending to wreak vengeance by the sword on those who had betrayed his confidence.

The horse made for the bridge of ruby light, which it had earlier detested, only to find the crossing gone. We turned to the city of Mordin, for the gates were a bare half-league distant. Fire, light, and ice fell upon the streets of the city, and

the ground was rent in twain. Over the screams of steal and the cries of the dying the fell thunder of great sorcery announced the ruin of Mordin. The city that remained would never support the hope of living men again. The horse turned again, as if of its own will, and fled into the forested marshes of the Serpent's mouth, leaving the sounds of battle far behind. From our hidden cover, I could see the desperate battle of the men from Susspin. They had nearly breasted the far side of the river's current when the final act of treachery caught them unaware.

From the rough dells to the north of Mordin, behind the forces of Susspin rose the cries of wolves and men. For the Ga'Vin brought betrayal again, as in the ancient histories. The gray skinned Warriors, clad in the bones of their victims rode war wolves to battle attacking the flank of Susspin's proud cavalry. Men screamed and died as the sun rose and fell, until with night silence found a bare third of Susspin's army beating a retreat back to their walled cities, defeated not by force of arms, but by the evil bent of cunning displayed by the mages of Vaunephasauk.

These deeds I swear to be true. This record I give into the keeping of the Pageboy Garrett Halberson, loyal servant of Lord Grayston Silverthorne. He shall bear this to the keeping of the king, for I go to take my anguish to the men responsible for tragedy. Should even one die under my knife before I fall, it will be one less to betray such good men as I can never equal.

Ballad of Harrison's Return 1017 p.e.w.

The Ballad of Harrison's Return – heard chanted by soldiers first in the year one thousand and seventeen post essence wars. The battle of Silverthorne city occurred in one thousand fifteen, followed by the fall of Vaunephasauk in one thousand sixteen.

In the fell north woods
Where few heroes dwell
Men brave rain under hoods
And harvest grain in fair dells.

Here came the call
At kingdom's dark hour
That the throne should fall
If no help rode south with power.

Though weakened with age
And betrayed by his kin

The old duke called his page
To order a return to battle's din.

His true heir is armed and geared
And rides with the dawn
O'er mountains and desert seared
The shield-bearers carry tirelessly on.

Through their dark hours
Siege befell the silver cities gates
And griffon-riding mages beset glittering towers
While brave men strove to hold back dark fate.

The volcanic rim rang to fell sound
The loyal kings men pushed to watery weirs
Many of the guard backed to thornebay to drown
Not knowing hope was near.

Then steam bitten morning cleared
To the roar of rising steam columns
From dwarven sea engines holding shear
Their decks with soldiers whose feet nigh flown.

From behind the serried ranks of Vauns'
sorcerous host
Laid in the fresh soldiers beneath a golden lion
Led by fair haired young Knight who moved like
a ghost
His streaming banners to destroy dark's scions;

Whose foul magic did corrupt
The galleries of our state
And betrayed great houses with wills abrupt
Now were routed to flee the torn gates.

Pushed back to retreat, confused, they
contemplate the golden discuss,
The host wrought great doom
The high magus charged the great focus
And in high sorcery wrought death to their own.

The land of Vaun now is ruin,
Haunted and tainted by that which once was,
And through bitter tears of victory the host rode
in
To find empty the city of elements was.

A new hero arisen from the conflict
Brought honor back to end family shame
He bears the name of Harrison and his eyes glare
direct
With the fire of bright justice and a reputation
spreading like wild flame.

Named duke at his father's death,
Who was poisoned at the hand of his own dark

twin,
Now returned to the slopes of cold mountain
breath
He leads a people freed by courage, and loyal to
Silverthorne ever shall he victory win.

In Medico Res 1018 p.e.w.

Summer Solstice, one thousand and eighteen
post essence wars.
Patient Care Journal Palace Healer to the Crown,
Karn Lidell

My patient has fallen into a depression following
the events of the past few years. I considered that
it may be due to an imbalance of the biles or an
inflammation of the bilious humors, however he
fails to respond to treatment through poltice,
leeches, heartwart, or fiendbane.

The patient is also experiencing a rapid decline
in physical mobility and a morbidity of the
muscle tissues due to lack of use. Regular
constitutionals have been proscribed, as well as
an airing of the royal apartments to clear the four
airts for smoother flowing through the soft
tissues.

The patient's sight remains clear, and the eyes
bright, though they bear the blackened evidence
of a lack of sleep, perhaps indicative of a regular
nightly malaise.

I have sought council with the fine gnomish
apothecaries beneath the palace foundations, but
hesitate to resort to drugging a patient whose
vigor may return given time. Consultations with
Elric Silverthorne, a man of unquestioned skill in
the healing arts have also proved fruitless, as that
personage believes the malaise affecting the
patient is due to an imbalance of the mind, not
the body. He suggested treatment corresponding
to this conclusion; unfortunately, the patient has
declined to accept such treatment.

It may be years before any recovery is made. At
best, hypothesis leads to the supposition that
sentiment of guilt resulting in the past war effort
has led to degradation of the physical self.

Letter to the Queen of Alleria 1018 p.e.w.

To my esteemed lady,
The Queen of Alleria,
Rising sun of the peoples of Phanterra
Janira Pan Theolia

My lady,
It is the summer of one thousand eighteen, post
essence wars, and I write to my glorious sponsor
from the comforts of the city of Bonnifuss where
I have become the guest of one Baron Theodore
Illistmus, a skilled man of the world.

The good baron has made it quite clear that he,
and a number of his colleagues in the society of
the region are looking to make up monetary
losses due to the war of the past years. I believe
this provides quite the opportunity for expansion
into fresh lands for your wealthy subjects. Such
expansion will provide the agricultural base you
desire, as well as a ready supply of labor among
the peasantry already here.

As you may have heard, my dear brother came to
the rescue of the king of Silverthorne in the last
war; however, he was unable to spare the
kingdom much of the ravages of war. The king
has become reclusive and neglects the welfare of
his lands, providing us with the perfect
opportunity for an alliance of sorts.

I would be most happy to provide your people
with the negotiating power to acquire that which
they desire, in turn for their, shall we say, loyalty
to me within these lands.

I leave for the capital tomorrow, where one of
my listeners reports she can gain me audience
with the king. Soon all that you desire shall be
yours, providing you continue to show the
gracious support you have so far provided.

Your servant
Magnus Harrison

Urgent Report 1020 p.e.w.

Cartographer's Guild Study Record,
X -37.46.32 Y -18.24.53
Year: 1020 P.E.W

Volcanic Activity Study, Southern Extension
Range, Beyond Chaos Mountains. Peak 989XT1
exhibited signs of instability. Local inhabitants,
known as the Avyana, inform that activity has
been seen before and seem unconcerned.
Measurement by air demonstrates swelling in the
substrates surrounding the peak.

On day fourteen of survey study, peak exhibits
some smoking and ash fall.

On day seventeen of survey, eruption imminent.

Large rock fall, some fire on rim. East wall above local habitation seen to be cracking. King of inhabitants refuses advice to relocate.

Day eighteen. Eruption covered Avyana homeland. Survivors limited. Peak destroyed. Ground softened and sinking. We prepare to relocate to a much more distant observation point.

Study Record of Guild member 412: s14

Merchant Letter 1025 p.e.w.

Letter to Merchant factor in Castelion from colleague in Bonnifuss. Summer caravan season, one thousand and twenty five years post essence wars.

My dearest cousin,
It has come to my attention that those of the Elven persuasion are interested in making large purchases of perishable and non-perishable goods. My house would be willing to perform a trade exchange in the currency of these peoples, providing that such exchange can be underwritten by crown funding. We are prepared to provide immediately five hundred wagons of grain, with an additional five thousand wagons at harvest. Of cloth, oil, fine timber and dressed stone that have been requested, I have forwarded my accounts to those more suited for such bulk commodities.

As for the armament requests, I suggest those be maintained in confidence, as the last group to arm themselves not so long ago came to little good in the region. Aye? I am prepared to provide five hundred steel swords and other accoutrements of battle; however, to reach the thousands of the request will take some time. I shall begin negotiations with the Dwarven people of Gateway in the hopes that they may have the quality and quantity of demand, but I fear, even they shall fall short. I must admit to being slightly surprised that the Elven people would go outside of their own for such equipment, but shall endeavor to prove to them that we are a reliable source of trade.

Your Cousin,
Ledell Ovidson
Merchant trader of Bonnifuss

Dwarven Edict 1026 p.e.w.

Letter scribed by gnomish engineer on the behalf

of Dwarven clan leader Gunnar Draconis to Ledell Ovidson of Bonnifuss. One thousand twenty six P.E.W.

Human,

No more shall the kingdoms under the mountain trade with man or elf. For the true purpose of your proposal has been found out. You would arm the Elves, our ancient foes, against us. You hope that they will do your dirty work that you may claim our lands as your own. We have taken note of the purchases of the pointy-ears and know that they provision for a great war. This has happened before, and in the tales of the great bloodsingers we know that war has always followed for the Dwarven people.

Consider Gateway closed to all foreigners from this day forth. Your caravans shall be turned back. Those who refuse to leave us alone shall find only death in our halls.

Thus has the king of the Dwarves spoken, and thus do I, Gunnar Draconis, elder of clan Draconis, Warrior of the proud nation tell you.

Allerian uprising 1027 p.e.w.

Letter supposed to have originated within Bonnifuss prior to the Allerian uprising. Author unknown.

To my lady supporter from your loyal servant within these foreign lands,

It is the first day of the harvest month in the year one thousand and twenty seven, and I have good news to report that saves us from the disaster wrought by the foul-smelling diggers in dirt that call themselves Dwarves. Their closing of the passes shall no longer hinder our goals, as our people are now in command of the Town of Pellin. From this vantage we have gained the providence of a deep-water harbor, known as a fjord by the locals, and have additionally commandeered a number of slim-lined vessels formerly destined for the King's fleet.

The old man had yet to take any interest, and we see little indication of him stirring himself soon. With no heirs to be sired by such aged loins, we shall indeed prove prosperous in the days ahead.

Yours,
The disinherited, returned.

Allerian uprising 1028 p.e.w.

Letter from the regional director of House Jakoric on the third day of Hunter's Month, one thousand and twenty eight post essence wars.

My great King,

Your loyal servant, Thomas Veritius of the House of the People, has ill news that I feel it my duty to provide you with. I gain no pleasure from these ill tidings, but regret to inform you that the people of Silverthorne need their king, now more than ever.

Your sister, her husband Jaimis, and their three children, were found dead this morning in their country estate. The royal family was killed by Assassins, along with two dozen guards and all the servants of the house.

Even now, the House of the People searches out the killers. We have little proof yet, but suspicions dictate that the same factions responsible for the siege and seizing of your port city of Pellin are likely responsible for this grievous affront to the royal family.

The Allerians have taken your seaport my king; they have killed members of your family, and now try to tear the kingdom asunder through the acquisition of all the Bonnifuss region, from the Crescent Mountains to Castalion. The house of the people asks you to act my king, save your lands.

Your loyal servant
Thomas Veritius of House Jakoric

Allerian uprising 1030 p.e.w.

Journal Entry of Horace Vandermyer, Army Surgeon in the year one thousand thirty.

March 3rd 1030

I continue to be sickened by what has befallen the pride of the royal army. With the king at our head we sallied forth two years ago to counter the rising influence of the Allerians within our domain, and make the criminals responsible for the death of the King's family pay for their crimes. Those goals were noble, but the actions of the king, and as a consequence, the army, have been bloody beyond belief.

No longer content merely with sending the

Allerians on their way, the king has decreed that all of Allerian blood be put to the stake. He leads his troops from town to town, carrying inquisitors in his retinue to torment the villagers, who were already ravaged by the depredations of ill-set Allerian rule. The peasants here are a poor and starving lot, mistreated for the past decade while the kingdom has thought little of them, and now that their deliverance should be at hand they find themselves beset by the very ruler they once trusted. Fertile fields and valleys lay empty, for the peasants are too frightened to farm. I fear the worse is yet to come. I have spoken with the royal surgeon, and he tells me the king's depression over the death of his brother did not break until news of the sister arrived. The king flew into a rage such as none have seen, which has not quieted in more than two years.

May fate have mercy on us all. Little will be left of these fertile lands when we are gone.

Ships Log 1031 p.e.w.

Ship's Log, the Month of Harvest, in the year one thousand and thirty one, post essence wars.

Second Fifthday,

Just crossed from the mouth of the River Dorchak into the Inner Sea. The Dancing Bride is listing slightly to starboard due to our human cargo. They have gathered at the rail to watch the unusual weather pattern we are heading into. I would make for the coast, but the waters here shoal unpredictably due to the great whirlwind. Yet that whirlwind seems little in evidence today. The current is not pulling us southeast, as in other coast runs the 'Bride has made. The sky is covered in a dark blanket to the west, and I can see a tremendous amount of lightning in the cloud cover, though I intend to keep the ship well away from it.

Occasionally, I think I see an island through the storm, where the whirlpool and hurricane should be. It is odd, but these are odd times.

Captain Haracio Talbot
His Majesty's Royal Navy

Travelogue 1034 p.e.w.

*Travelogue,
Montegue Istani of Susspin
The Month of Storms, in the Year one thousand and thirty four, Post Essence Wars.*

It is the third firstday of the month, and I grow weary of traveling through this deserted and blasted land. At first I thought the tales of the fall of the province of Bonniffuss must be greatly exaggerated, but now, having walked the dead fields and seen evidence of the great drought first hand, I know better.

My father, though grain prices may be high in Susspin, I fear they are fair indeed. Here nothing grows in the once lush soil. Since the king's army passed here half a decade ago, the land has lain fallow and should be rich with crops, but instead wisps of Sage blow on the desolate wind and even in this cold month, there is no rain.

I found one of the Valkyn'Vi on my journey, and asked him about the weather. He looked at me with sad eyes and told me to expect another year yet of the same before the rains returned. It is as if the land grieves for the pain of its people at the hand of their own king. His purge of the Allerians, at the urging of the new high counselor cost many of the locals their lives for no crime at all. His grief over the death of his sister may bring much grief to us all.

I hear rumors that the king believes the Merchants guild to be in collusion with the Allerians, and also behind the devastation of the Mage's War. These rumors do not come from traditional sources, and for once I think Jakoric is keeping its nose clean. If our family is to survive the coming years we must plan well and carefully, for I fear the kingdom trapped in a downward spiral. Perhaps it is time for our duke to consider forging his own path.

I ramble and am sorry. I would not speak so boldly did I not trust this messenger with my life.

Best wishes to you and mother. Tell sister Catherine that I wish her success in her marriage.

Love
Montegue Istani
First son of the Istani house,
Baronet of Susspin

Overheard Conversation 1035 p.e.w.

"In truth, success in all we have dreamed and planned grows near. The Red Tear shall rise triumphant and all the portents are ours for the taking. That old doddering fool who advised the kings for nearly a century has not been seen in

years, -rumor has he fled into the dreaming- and the king's ear is twisted by a serpent of his own making!"

"Our people have seen their master's prison revealed by storm and know that the day of his waking comes. We prepare, our women and children have readied holds of foods and weapons in strongholds chiseled from the hard rock of the world's bones. We shall rise from the shadow of his revenge to rule mankind for eternity as our promised right!"

Conversation recorded by Jakoric specialist
Month of March, Firstday of the fourth sevenday – equinox.

One thousand thirty five. Warrior's Day.

Succession (1040 p.e.w.)

Solstice Eve, Weavers Month, One thousand forty Post Essence Wars.

From the hand of Their Graces, the Good Dukes Lionel Ironheart the Second, Son of Kirka the Fourth, of the line of Mordrik and Azmad, and Brian Kendall, Son of Garrett Kendall, grandson of Brandon Kendell, of the line of mountain chiefs to the founding of Dorcha by the Empire of the East.

To the August personage of Johannes Silverthorne,

We bid you greeting and good wishes, and bear you no ill will though it pains us to pen this missive in our hand. Trusting no other to deliver this unto you, it has been bequeathed to the personage of Nathan DeVris, Grandson of the Davram DeVris you knew well in days gone by.

Nathan has promised us his utmost confidence in delivering this, and we ask that you spare him any ill will, for he does not know the contents of this most grievous missive.

Your majesty,

We the sanctioned and ordained Dukes of Susspin and Dorchak do hereby renounce all ties to the nation of Silverthorne. All ties of fealty are hereby severed. No more shall the unjust tax collectors bring suffering to our peoples. No more shall we submit to the brutalities and inhumanities condoned by the distant court. No more shall we bow to the scions of Draellin Faulconbridge who have fallen from the grace of their position that once guided and guarded the

people of these lands.

Johannes Silverthorne, you stand accused of crimes against the peoples of our nations and your own. You are charged with murder, extortion, and graft, as well as held to count for the starvation and disease that besets your people.

Know you this day Johannes, that though our fathers and grandfathers have served at your side, we can no longer condone the ignoble acts which rend our hearts and stomachs.

The territories of Dorchak and Susspin are henceforth closed to the servants of the Crown. We ask that you do not push us in this, for we shall not yield though our every liegeman lay dead on the field of battle.

With utmost regret,



A Call to Council 1049 p.e.w.

The following is a widely distributed letter to the nobility of the lands of Silverthorne, Dorchak, Susspin, and Gilbain. Additionally, from later records it is believed that copies of this missive reached the Dwarven Homeland and the Elven City of Silv'An'Dar. Rumor states that the eldritch of the Valkyn'Vi, the Champion storyteller of the Guthrie, the pirate kings of the Corsair Isles, the Lords of Carthin, and the Lady of Alleria also received this letter.

Fourth Seventh day, Harvest Month, Reapers Day Eve in the year One Thousand and Forty Nine By the Hand of Baron Strider Al'Terra,

A Changed Land

Notes found following the Cataclysm:

By the Light! What has been done! My lord warned that trouble was on the horizon, and his words proved only too true. The King and their nobles have gone, the fabric of the world is torn asunder by fire and ice. The very mountains

Lord of the Blasted Lands

My Lords and Ladies, Esteemed Peers and Persons of Notoriety,

I Strider Al'Terra, call on you my friends and colleagues to attend me in a Neutral Ground of my choosing, that the grievous wrongs addressed to these Lands may be addressed in Formal and Fitting manner. Let my call of brotherhood not go unanswered, for it is a call to a last chance of peace, a Final Haven for the hopes and dreams of the great peoples of these nations who have shed too much Blood, and suffered too many Wrongs, to continue to suffer the Misunderstandings of their leaders.

On my Honor and my Blood I shall provide Guarantor of safety to all who shall attend. None shall shed the blood of another while under my Seal. On this you have my word as Truth by that Virtue instilled by a House that Was.

On Solstice Eve we the esteemed shall Gather together on the isle at the eye of the storm in the Inner Sea. Here, on lands unclaimed by all, all claimants may have their say, and pending disaster averted. To Prevent War, the stars of Phanterra shall shine again.

This I proclaim, and it is so. Each attendee may bring an entourage of fifty Men at Arms. All but two of these shall remain on the shores of the sea. Only the dignitaries and two who shall hold their honor will be permitted on the isle. This I proclaim, and shall make so.

I look forward to seeing you soon, friends old and new.

**Yours in Life, Light, and Truth,
Strider Al'Terra
Baron of the Blasted Lands**

wake and walk from their slumber of ages. My gifts in healing and the Arts which were preserved from sanctioned destruction years ago have begun to fail, and my lord is no where to be found with the answers for his actions.

I did as was asked of so many of his friends, though no explanation was given, may I be

forgiven. I have been responsible for the kidnapping of the heirs of three noble lines and their delivery into the keeping of my master's liegemen. They are far too skilled in the ways of woodland travel for me to follow, and I have only their words that the will of my lord bends to preservation and not destruction. I fear that I was misled, for now when we need the leadership of heirs most all of them seem gone.

The Council of the Isle occurred more than six months gone, and not one who was there is confirmed to have been seen again. They say that the whole island is gone, replaced with a swirling sea of molten fire and light. Some great disaster happened, whether planned or not. The reports from soldiers on the shore say that on that night the very sky burned and the heavens were ripped open by a darkness beyond night. They say they fought side by side with their former enemies against creatures out of night and chaos, and the dead rose in great numbers against them. When dawn came again after a night three times the length of any known, the isle was gone.

After that the changes began. The very fabric of reality seems to have shifted, and if my theories are correct, the ancient prophecy is fulfilled. Seven Sevens of Darkest Days saw the breaking of the Seven Bowls with the Seven Dark Blades. He who is known as Shri'Illi'Aingun reached for freedom. I can only theorize that since we are here, alive, he was in some way thwarted, but in so doing the very elemental nature of the world which has served us for eleven thousand years has been shifted....

All guesswork. What happens now is beyond me. I will continue my search for my lord's lands, though I could swear they were around here....

Martin Havi Scribner
Seventh Rank in the Forgotten House
Second Third-day? Weaver's Month,
One Thousand and Fifty Post Essence Wars?

A letter to Martin Havi Aprox 2 years post Cataclysm

My Friend, I write to you in the Sailor's Month, in the Second year following the Cataclysm. I hope this letter reaches you somehow, I have given copies of it to a number of Guthries, who seem to take the shifting and pliable ground in stride. I myself can journey no farther, seeing mountains one day where none were the day before, and watching forests spring whole from valley floors is beyond my kenning. I have settled with a family of farmers who have been farming in the same stead for six generations. They used to live on a plain, and now rest atop a hill with a creek bubbling from its top where once they had a well ten spans down. But the changes seem to have stopped, or at least slowed in this area.

If you find this letter, ask the bearer for directions to me. I have still in my possession that which we once talked about which you were seeking for so many years. It has begun to respond in strange ways to places it traveled through, but was quiet here, so here I stay. I have offered the elder here my services as a smith and protector of sorts, and his daughter is a comely enough sort, though a bit skinny. The crops did not come in well last year, and the hunting was poor. At least that much should not be a trouble this year, as there is more game than I can trap and much of it of strange sorts I have not seen before, or strange coloring on sorts I have seen. Have you ever seen a green deer? I have.

Enough of this rambling. I waste paper, which is in short supply these days. I shall be reduced to writing my lists on skins shortly, for parchment has become very dear. If you can find me, bring some, and metal stock as well, for we run low. All manner of trade goods have become valuable beyond compare, as few will brave the wilds to search out those who need them. The last thing I shall say to you my friend, is take care. I have seen things so terrifying that my mind burns to recall them. There are foul things afoot that are far better avoided than faced. As the Guthrie tell me, Fear the Daedrim, ware the Ancient Bloods, and above all cover eyes and ears in the presence of the great wyrms, or your mind shall be destroyed by their will.
Fare thee Well brother of my Calling,

Warren Skysinger of Castelion

A New Magic, the Metaphysics of the world of Phanterra

The cataclysm happened not just because Magic was rejoined, but also because of the way it was rejoined. It was "snapped" back together. It was like taking four bowling balls attached to a central point by a bungee cord, pulling them away until they are tight, and letting go. It was an instant infusion of ALL elements into EVERYTHING in Phanterra to create "The One Magic" within them.

Some things, very old things, took the infusion without a problem. They were created when the "One Magic" Ruled Phanterra before the first cataclysm. These things are few and far between because most things that existed during the time of the One Magic were touched and changed by the first cataclysm. These untouched, unchanged things were primarily crafted items that were shielded by great magic cast in the time of Ancients by the An'Dar, the An'Dar'Vi, the Fae'AN'Dar, and Drae'AN'Dar. These items, in the new Phanterra, have been recharged with the One Magic. They are ready for use again, if anyone can find them and figure them out that is.

Most things on Phanterra (including the terrain of Phanterra itself) couldn't quite handle the infusion of Magic, but they were malleable enough to change and evolve in order to accept it. That's how the terrain changed, some plants and animals mutated, people's brains got fouled up, etc. These rapid changes *are* the cataclysm itself.

Some things on Phanterra couldn't handle the infusion of magic at all and were destroyed or pushed out of existence. The "One Magic" that was meant to inhabit these objects now has no home so it is "free" or "wild" magic just floating around the metaphysical landscape. Some of this free/wild magic found a new home in the form of corpses and free roaming essences, known as the Undead. Zombies and Skeletons are corpses and ghosts, shadows, and shades are essences infused with the one magic.

The Arcane

When an Arcane casts a ritual, they are pulling the one magic out of an item (the material component or themselves). That's where the

sacrifice comes in. They are ripping the magic out of something, shaping or refining it, and then releasing it or tethering it to a different item or person. The item that the Magic is ripped from is destroyed or damaged because a metaphysical piece of it is ripped away. When the effects from a ritual have served their purpose the one magic used to create the effect unravels and returns to a natural state, thus becoming free or wild magic. Therefore, by releasing magic from items and creating free or wild magic, Arcanes fuel Empaths.

The Empath

When an Empath throws a "channel," they are channeling free magic into a concentrated mass and rapidly forcing it into a target. The magic enters the target so quickly the target does not have enough time to adapt to it. This causes damage to the Metaphysical aspect of the target, which in turn damages the physical aspect.

All living things are constantly losing magic from their essence or metaphysical self. When the level of magic in their essence decreases enough, they die. Damage or degradation of the physical self increases the rate at which the metaphysical self loses magic. When an Empath uses their transference ability, they channel the free magic that is slowly seeping out of an animate donor target into a concentrated mass and gently easing it into the recipient target. This free magic merges with the magic or essence in the recipient target and strengthens it. The concentration of the free magic seeping from the donor target causes physical damage to the donor.

When an Empath causes fear or sleep, they are concentrating free magic and forcing it into a target just like a "channel" except it is more targeted. It is a precise strike to the psyche of the target. In essence, what an Empath is doing is channeling free magic into a host in various ways. In this way, the Empath fuels the Arcane.

Alchemy

The Alchemist uses both the natural properties from a component as well as some of its magic to create a potion. These properties are used to shape the "One Magic" already within a target. Potions change the magical fields to mutate the target or one of its properties much the same way magnets affect each other's fields when brought close together. Alchemists do not use free/wild magic nor do they release magic from items;

they simply use the magic stored in components to disrupt or direct other magic. Some components are stronger than others and they each affect the magical fields in different ways. Most potions have a limited duration because living targets digest them and they eventually wear off of inanimate targets.

The Healer

The Healer doesn't deal directly with magic at all. The Healer heals the physical, which in turn allows the metaphysical to repair itself. Most Healers use herbs, bandages, stitches, etc to repair the target. Some use mystical means. Mystic healing is just a use of free or stored magic to help the physical body heal itself. This magic does not mutate, merge with, or affect the "One Magic" stored within the target in any way. It acts as an external force.

The Sage

Sages don't use magic at all. Their abilities stem from knowledge or intuition. The way they gain this knowledge varies by Sage. Some get it from pure book learning where as others divine knowledge from reading mystical signs and omens. The Sage then shares this knowledge with others, thus giving them a tactical advantage. Some Sages may use mystical means or "spells" to impart their knowledge. This is just a way to help the targets recall the information, much like pneumatic devices or hypnotism. They may use a small amount of free or stored magic to aid them.

