

# Fiendscape

*"Let the echoes of doom resound across this wretched world, that all who live may hear them and despair."*

It was four generations ago that the fiends began to walk the earth. The Elves were the first to encounter the Demons, first finding a few Quasits within the groves of their ancient forest. Within days Babau gangs had begun to terrorize the nearest villages, and the Hordes only increased in number and might from there. The destruction ravaged the Elven lands first, but they were only the first to feel the might of the Abyssal Hordes.

As the invasion spread, empires began to retract and close their borders, for fear of the Demonic armies. All but a few societies (notably the nomadic Halfings and their caravan-cities, and many smaller human settlements) began to resort to the primal state of xenophobia, with religious leaders taking the place of nobility as the people turned to the divine to find peace.

In the decade after the invasion, Abyssal incursions began to replace the natural terrain, spreading out from the portals and transforming the landscape into a demonic wasteland. Dark palaces and grotesque flora and fauna erupted across the land.

One full (human) generation after the first attacks, ancient hatreds and grudges began to dissolve, with races and religions embracing each other, standing together to combat the Demonic forces. Vast armies were amassed to drive back the hordes, with the generals from all of the humanoid races leading the charge.

The Elves fielded their finest archers and mages, and the Dwaves committed their stalwart footsoldiers and magical war machines. The Halfings served as elite scouts and provided overland transportation en-masse, while the Gnomes great magesmiths and merchant lords equipped the soldiers of every race. Humans filled the ranks of every position within the army, from footpad to general, warrior to scout.

Of the humanoid races, only the Orcs, Bugears, and Goblins (known now as the Black Three) did not join with the allied forces, their lands being isolated and mostly spared from the abyssal incursions. They did their part when the hordes threatened them, but did little to assist when diplomats, even those of the shunned half-orcs, came to call. Resentment and outright hatred of these ancient foes spread quickly through the alliance, fueling rumors that the Black Three were responsible for the original demonic breach.

The great armies were successful, for a time. The Abyssal hordes were confined to their planar breaches, and were driven back where ever they turned. The Hordes were most content to wages endless war at their borders, and rarely attempted to use subterfuge (magical or otherwise) to bypass the occupying armies. Military scholars of the time noted that those Demons caught outside the battlefields were rarely of beings of great power, and were performing reconnaissance missions, as though they expected a second wave of the Great Alliance to arrive at any moment.

There was no such second wave, however. The forces of the alliance were fully committed to the battlefields along the abyssal borders, and were only barely able to hold the Demons in their place.

Even the greatest of the Elven & Human mages could do little to stem the tide of the demons, and with each passing year, the alliance was losing ground.

The dawn of the second generation saw tensions rising among the people of the Alliance. Old hatreds began to push towards the surface as each race began to blame the others for the losing battle they were fighting. The population had seen great decline, with so many lost at the onset of the invasion, and an equal numbers committed to (and losing their lives on) the battlefield.

It was in this time of tumult that the Abyssal scouts would find all that they had been looking for, and their Demonic lords made their decisive strike. Coupled with a massive push along the front lines of the war, the Dark Three, using the goblin built galleys, the bypassed the ancient Dwarven mountainlands and plunged directly at the heart of the Alliance. Fueled by newly granted abyssal might, the Dark Armies dominated the coast, and raged across the continent, destroying everything in their wake.

Unprepared for the onslaught of Orcs & Bugbears, nor the crafty & malicious assault of the Goblins, forces from the alliance front lines fell back to help defend the core of the new society. Although successful in keeping chaos from totally gripping the population, the Alliance lost much of it's territory, and was cut off from the Dwarven & Gnomish homelands. The Alliance lost more than half of it's holdings, and for the first time, shrank to a size smaller than the largest empire that stood before the invasion.

It was in this age, before the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation had come into it's own, that the Dragons began to flee the world, along with their Kobold spawn. It was the first omen of many read by the seers of the Alliance, all predicting that their troubles had just begun. The great (natural) powers of the world had abandoned it, and even the faith of the people had begun to falter. Many of the old gods grew weak as their worshipers abandoned them, and those whose flock remained true were especially concerned with War, Vengeance, and Retribution.

The war saw a drastic turn when the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation finally struck back at the armies of the Dark Three. Without warning, the Dwarven armies struck, backed by their Giant and Gnomish allies. They fought with fever not seen in decades, and the alliance was quick to send forces to aid their old comrades in arms. In their haste to join this new battle, the Alliance turned a blind eye to the tactics employed by the new army of law.

It was again the Elves who first recognized the nature of the Dwarven armies new power; and pulled out of the alliance. The Dwarves weapons were not only infused with the power of law, but forged in hellfire furnaces. The giants hurled not boulders, but burning hunks of brimstone. The gnomish sorcerers summoned legions of infernal beasts against the Dark Hordes.

The Elven nation, declaring that the Dwarves had join forces with the Tyrants of Hell, broke from the alliance and returned to their homeland, despite it's infestation of demons. The Alliance, having lost another of it's strongest allies, approached the new Dwarven army with the intent of bringin them back into the fold and clearing any doubts as to their loyalty and the source of their power.

The Dwarves brazenly admitted that they had not only signed an infernal pact with an Arch-Devil, but it was in fact they who had come out ahead in the bargain. They would be supplied with infernal power to drive the Demons from the world, and the Devil demanded only their allegiance in return. Boasting further, the Dwarven general declared that the soul of any dwarf lost in battle with the

demons would be taken directly into Hell, to become a new Devil in service of the great Blood War.

Infuriated, the remaining leaders of the Alliance cast out the new Infernal Dwarven army, and in doing so, sealed its own fate. Seeing the might of Dwarven army, alliance members defected in droves, pledging that they would serve in the Blood War in exchange for protection for their families & friends, and even for lesser things, like temporal wealth and power.

Alone in their tainted homeland, the Elves renew their ancient traditions of magic in an effort to defend themselves from the fiendish world around them. Having broken off all contact with the outside world, the ancient practitioners of ancient Draconic Magic must turn to a new source of power for their sorcery.

The Alliance had totally splintered by the time the fourth human generation was born. Those who remained had scattered into dozens of smaller communities, mostly hidden outposts and enclaves, devoted to fighting this new, two-front war. Scholars and Seers found that the infernal influence of the Devil's had been present in the world long before the Dwarves signed the Pact Certain, perhaps having originated at the same time as the Demonic invasion.

Having subtly manipulated events for nearly a century, the Tyrants of Hell finally began to reveal themselves directly, taking up arms against the Hordes of the Abyss directly. Both sides in the eternal Blood War had found support both directly and indirectly from the humanoid races, and in doing so had created a new battlefield for the darkest war every to rage across the cosmos.

As the 4<sup>th</sup> generation comes of age, there is only hope left to cling to. The fiendish armies have decimated the landscape, and the humanoid supporters of both sides have consolidated their seats of power...

The surviving members of the Dark Three races rally in the thousands of abyssal encroachments that have dominated the surface world since just after the invasion began. They have found willing warriors in the many disillusioned former alliance members. Countless Demon Princes' are backing the splintered, but numerous forces of Chaos.

The new Infernal Dwarven armies, along with those that turned to them from the Alliance, have formed a new Iron Empire, in the name of the Cult of Dispat, Lord of the Second. The Iron Throne has consolidated its power and leads the Infernal charge, along side the forces of other Arch-Devil's.

All that remains of the once mighty alliance, (Humans & Halfings, along with refugees & castaways from the other humanoid races), now struggle to survive in the midst of an epic war, and cling to the last bastions of the world they once knew.

*"From this seal shall arise the doom of men, who, in their arrogance, sought to wield our fire as their own. Blindly they build their kingdoms upon stolen knowledge and conceit. Now they shall be consumed by the very flame they sought to control."*

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## *A Summary of Religious Practices*

Amid the disarray & chaos that the world has come to, religious worship still drives many people. Although the churches are, for the most part, totally dissolved, there are still those who cling to their faith and organize for worship. Many small communities all revere one specific god, or a small (often haphazard) pantheon.

The following gods from the PHB do not exist in this world: ***Erythnul, Hextor, & Nerull.***

The other gods may be presumed to exist exactly as written, unless noted below.

***Corellon Larethian:*** The supreme ruler of the Elves is still venerated, but much of his faith has been abandoned in favor of pursuit of magical traditions deemed to be “more productive” during this time of struggles.

***Garl Glittergold:*** Since the Gnomes have allied with the forces of Hell, the worship of Garl is confined to the few gnomes who live outside of that pact.

***Gruumsh:*** The Orc god exists as described, but is a Demon Prince, not a true god.

***Moradin:*** As with the god of the Gnomes, Moradin's worshippers consist almost entirely of Dwarves outside of the Pact Certain. Interestingly, many human settlements include Moradin in their pantheon and worship him as a symbol of the strength of the old world.

***Pelor:*** Though still worshiped by humanoids everywhere, Pelor has been surpassed as the most-worshiped god.

***St. Cuthbert:*** Owing to his status as an ascended human, and powerful executioner justice, St. Cuthbert has risen to new heights since the Demonic Invasion and the Infernal Revelation decimated the world. St. Cuthbert is included in nearly every pantheon, and is venerated directly by human enclaves the world over. His domains have expanded to include War, as his clerics & paladins are faced with a great plight.