

THE MYTHOLOGY & HISTORY OF KULAN

PART 1 — LANDS OF HARQUAL

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INTRODUCTION

I have never reached this point ever in my years of gaming and had never had the ambition. But then I read **The Wyrms Turn** in Dragon Magazine #244:

*"Like most folks, I **imagine** many more campaigns than I'll ever actually run - especially the latest version of my house campaign ...which is, of course, my 'next' favorite.*

*On that note, write me a short letter describing your own house campaign - whether you've actually run it or have just dreamed it so far. We'll print the most interesting in **D-mail**, where everyone can see what you've imagined."*

- Dave Gross

This made me think about one of my own campaigns, Kulan, and how far it has come. And yet I have never truly understood what drives me to keep it going. It doesn't have much history or been played to every corner of the maps I've drawn and redrawn. I've only shared it with three people who aren't the most avid gamers ever known. In fact, it is not even my first campaign world. That distinction will always go to Malecade (i.e. Time of Ages).

It's really a combination of many things.

1) Personal Fulfillment: Too leave a personal legacy, no matter how obscure it might be. Too leave something behind for others to enjoy. Even if it is only some distant relative sorting through old boxes after I'm gone.

2) My Pain: The fact is that *the game* has had more impact on my soul than anyone else could ever know. In the years of my youth it gave me a way to channel the painful emotions of adolescence and doubt. It strengthened me and gave me hope for the future.

3) My Imagination: Ever since I was little, my mind would wander to things out of place in our world. Studying pictures of the myths & legends of other times in history such as Stonehenge and ancient Aztec ruins, as if in a dream. Seeing them come to life in my mind and losing myself to the fantasy of whatever I'm looking at. I didn't pay attention in school very much unless it was Social Studies. It is a powerful gift to imagine something that is beyond reality such as magic and dragons. To feel the wings beating in my mind carrying me higher than one should dare to go. I have always wanted to fly!

4) My Heart: This is hard to put into words but all my campaigns have been a expression of my deepest love for family, friends, and other more passionate hopes & dreams. I guess you could call me the doomed romantic. I can never feel something halfway...it's all or nothing. And usually, that is what brings about my downfall in the end. I have cared very deeply about many wonderful women in this world; most never knew. All because I could never find the courage to express it verbally. Shauna, Carla, Jennifer, Susan, and Samantha.

Samantha, now there's a tale . . .

But I think I'll make you wait for that one. All these women have truly inspired my soul at one point or another. And I thank them all.

THE WORLD IN A NUTSHELL

The **World of Kulan** is the merging of many different ideas and flashes of insight.

The original continent I designed for World of Kulan was only an old coastline drawn in pencil on several pages of scrap paper that was meant for my now defunct Norstic (Sons of Odin) campaign. This coastline became what is now **Harqual** and would be only vaguely similar to the original coastline if compared today (not that I have the original sketch anymore).

It would be impossible to describe the whole world in one document. So this will happen in a series of documents laid out in stages (continents might be a better way to describe it). Thus, this document details the mythology and history of Harqual only. Others will follow, as soon as I can find the time.

DMs should read through the entire document and get a feel for the continent and its history. A lot of details have been fleshed out but a lot more is simply an overview of the major events throughout history. DMs should be able to modify any details that they don't like or to fit their own campaign world if they so choose. However, the World of Kulan is meant as its own campaign world and, thus, everything I write for it isn't designed to be incorporated into another campaign setting. The World of Kulan is the campaign setting.

DMs should also limit how much of the following information they allow the players to have. Very few characters should be aware of this much detail. A PC might have heard legends of the Divinity War but they shouldn't know everything from that time period. In fact, most of this material isn't available to even medium level PCs.

If you've downloaded this and want to be a player and not the DM then you should find someone who wishes to DM and have them read the entire document.

THE ERAS OF HARQUAL

This is the only place where I could possibly start. Before anything else about Kulan existed there was Harqual. Born out of barbaric beginnings, Harqual is a land rich with wild tracts of land, untamed peoples, and strange magical phenomena.

A lot of what is being written here is being created as I write it. I am using a few other word documents that I created for the World of Kulan but most of them material detail powers, calendars, and my current campaign timeline. The bulk of this I am thinking up as I go along. Thus, errors are bound to crop up from time to time. Any comments, questions, or suggestions should be sent to rblezard@telusplanet.net.

THE FIRST ERA

Out of the Mists

The first god to come to this great land was **Cronn**. It is said that Cronn was born out of the mists of the far north, Cronn is the Great Lord of the People of the Northlands.

Mirella, The World Goddess, recorded his birth in the **Book of Time**. The goddess of time and history, Mirella has existed on Kulan before any other god or goddess, no matter what they claim.

Cronn instantly realized her power and knelt before her in the heavens. "Ask what you will of me, milady, I am your servant!"

She was touched by the barbarian god's gesture but shook her head. "No Great Cronn, your destiny is not with me but with the land that bore you. You are its master and slave, you must guard it for all time against those that would destroy it."

With that she left him. So great was his sorrow that he could not serve the lady, tears streamed from his eyes to shatter the earth. Thus the first of Cronn's barbarian children were born. Cronn led his people into the wilds of the Northlands where they still exist today as they did thousands of years ago.

Mirella was also the goddess of all magic on Kulan at this time. But she did not have the desire to keep such a gift from others. She soon passed on her power to several other powers across Kulan, including **Immotion**, Patron of Magic. Immotion is one of the early children of Cronn. Or at least, she is a direct result of his creation.

It is known that **Xuar**, her brother, was and still is her rival for the arcane. Xuar was jealous of her power and attacked her in rage when he found out that Mirella had gifted her with the power that he desired. He plunged a wood spear into her heart and drank her divine blood in order to steal some of her magic. Thus he holds power over the Necromantic Arts.

Cronn was enraged by Xuar's actions and banished The Jealous Arcane from the Northlands. Thus is it that **Necromancy**, also known as **The Forbidden Art**, is a taboo of all followers of the North Gods.

Immotion's encounter with her evil brother had left her in a broken state. She had not the power to heal her wound with sorcery and was on the brink of losing her immortality. Thus it was that a young tribesman, who loved her dearly, sought for a way to heal her. He begged great Cronn to raise part of the Northlands up high enough for him to touch the sun and use its light to keep her warm. Thus were the Greystones formed and so to the God of Healing and the Sun, **Jalivier**.

Cronn praised Jalivier for his wisdom and compassion and offered him anything he desired. "I have only one wish great Cronn, to be at Lady Immotion's side for all eternity."

Cronn could see that his daughter was smitten with the new, young god and whole-heartedly agreed. "Let it be so!"

And with their joining came five children – **Kuil**, **Larea**, **Ramara**, **Sanh** and **Tok**. Kuil was the oldest and a master of stealth. He was destined at an early age to become the God of Rogues and Illusion. Larea came next and was born wild. She is the Goddess of the Wilderness, The Hunting Princess. Ramara was the third child to bless Immotion and Jalivier and had a beauty beyond anything Cronn had ever seen. "Truly we are blessed to have such a child born amongst us."

She was made the Goddess of Love, Beauty and Joy. Sanh, the second youngest was wilder than even Larea. He had his father's spirit from birth and strove to become as strong as Jalivier. And his father was proud, despite his chaotic nature. Sanh was appointed God of the Wind and Sky and Lord of Thunder.

And then, then there was Tok.

The Calling

Tok was one of the North Gods' greatest tragedies. Tok was born as a mad, monstrous hound with huge tusks and six limbs. Xuar placed a curse on Immotion during the birth and Tok was the result. Tok ravaged the Northlands for over a decade killing tribesmen and destroying the forests of his people. Worse, those he killed did not truly die but became undead creatures that stalked the land alongside him.

Cronn loathed the idea of killing one of his own for Tok was not naturally evil, simply mad. He knew that Tok's soul would evaporate into nothingness without some form of release from his madness. Instead, he called through the planes for a god that would cleanse his grandchild. Many came to help but none could end the creature's pain.

Then came a strange god, named **Issek**, from an unknown, distant plane of existence. This god possessed power over those that must endure torture and hardship. Issek confronted Tok on the Plains of the Long Divide without fear or malice. Tok charged towards Issek as if to slay the alien god but all Issek did was stare the creature down as it came closer. A sudden change came over Tok and he stopped abruptly. He tilted his head like a lost pup and blinked at the strange off world deity. Issek turned to Cronn and smiled. "He must come with me to my home in the planes and must never leave my side or he will revert to his madness."

"So it must be." Cronn was saddened to see his grandchild in such a state. "But you must come and visit us from time to time so that we may see him. He may be mad, but he is family."

Issek agreed without pause and did indeed come to visit the pantheon every chance he could spare. Thus it was that a divine chair was set at **Cronn's Great Table** for Issek, as Lord of Tortured Souls.

This event left Cronn with a dilemma.

All the undead creatures that were created by his grandson had to be destroyed and set to rest yet they were still his people, even if corrupted by Necromancy. Thus it that Cronn again called through the planes for a god to cleanse their tainted souls. Many vile gods and goddesses answered his call and he was appalled by their bloodthirsty nature and sent them away.

Then came **Hades**. He was dark and foreboding, there was no doubt about that. But he possessed a certain peaceful and honorable quality that Cronn admired. "Your people are welcome in my realm if you choose. But you must understand that most of those that enter will simply fade away into the realm and cannot be raised."

"Perfect." Cronn was most pleased, as those that die should not be brought back to life by any means. Thus it was that Hades was given a seat at Cronn's table, as the Lord of the Dead, and those of Cronn's people that had died at the hands of Tok found eternal rest in **Hade's Underrealm**.

Thus, it was that Cronn began **The Calling**. Issek and Hades were the first to answer the call, but they were not the last. Soon Cronn had dozen's of desperate powers trying to escape death or increase their own power. The gods and goddesses that came to his summons overwhelmed Cronn.

He called out to Mirella and asked, "Great Lady, what am I to do! All seem eager to sit at my Great Table but I cannot choose between them!"

Mirella spoke to him. "Great Cronn, I am pleased by your humble wisdom. They can not all sit at your Table for their isn't room. I suggest you choose those that are in need and noble of being."

Thus these new gods and goddesses were given a seat at Cronn's Great Table. **Aegir, Anacoro, Bast, Cull, Daghdha, Damh, Inanna, Lokun, Rel, and Santè**.

These gods brought with them a desire to truly be part of Cronn's growing family and beget several other lesser gods and demigods as a sign of solidarity. Thus, the **Hall of the Northlands** filled with the laughter of the **Divine Children: Anon, Euphoria, Hansa, Hela, Jaeger, Mayela, Nesus, Sialic, Thorn, Truce, Tulle, and Zealot**.

From the Unknown

It was around this time that a strange supernatural event shook the heavens. In the middle of a cold fall night a bright cosmic light flashed in the heavens.

This great supernatural event caused the night to become day for one evening. This event was soon followed by hundreds of meteors raining down to the earth for two solid days. On the third day, three bright meteorites streaked through the night sky and came down near one of the southern lakes. They hit the ground with such force that the tremors could be felt north of the Greystones.

Cronn instantly was concerned that this dark omen might mean hardship for his people. If only he had know the truth.

Fallen Avatars

The three meteorites were actually avatars of another planet in **Kulanspace** called **Trel**. Trel had been a small, arid world

that suffered greatly due the influence of over two dozen dark gods. The people lived in fear of their dark lords. The worst of these were *Alhark*, *Mussin*, *Nether*, and *Vall*. Of these four, Mussin was the most despicable and depraved.

The gods schemed and plotted against one another and took any chance to steal one another's power. This went on for endless centuries with the Trelan people caught in the middle. However, it soon reached a boiling point when a Spelljamming vessel made contact with the small world.

A wandering priest of *Ptah*, whose name is lost to history, and his small crew crash-landed on Trel. He was horrified by the way that the groundling gods treated their people! He instantly went underground in Trelan society and incited the good people that still remained to rebel. Within 50 years he had destroyed three of the smaller evil sects and was leading hundreds of thousands of crusaders across the barren world against the evil masters of the world.

Ptah was overjoyed by the young priest's drive and appeared to the man in a vision. He granted the priest limited divine power, making him a demigod-proxy of Ptah. The new fledgling power instantly appeared to his people and told them of his great gift from Ptah. His devoted followers praised him and Ptah with joy and reverence. The god swiftly gained power on Trel and destroyed dozens of lesser evil powers. In less than twenty years he had become an intermediate god.

Only eight evil powers remained and they were all hard pressed. Only Mussin and Nether saw the long-term prospect of remaining on Trel. Utter destruction. Nether wanted simply to flee into the planes but Mussin was too much of a vengeful god and braggart just to leave the world to the enemy. If he could not have it, then no one would.

Thus it is that Mussin set in motion the *Dark Purge*. He sought out four of the lesser dark gods and destroyed them, stealing their power. With Nether at his side he took as much divine power as he could. Then he entered the very core of the world to unleash the dark power he had stolen. In his rage, he destroyed several avatars of his remaining rivals and drew the new god into direct conflict.

They fought for a year and a day and the world suffered endless natural disasters; floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, waterspouts, hurricanes, etc.

The people sought for any way to escape their dying world. Very few actually made it. In the end, Mussin broke the young god and the world exploded in a divine fire. Three gods survived the destruction of the world, Mussin, Nether, and another dark god named *Zae*. The same three that fell into the atmosphere of Kulan propelled by the shear force of the planet's explosion.

Zae was a lesser power of little importance on his world and didn't survive the impact. Mussin and Nether barely survived themselves. The two would have faded out of existence if not for the help of Xuar. He found the dark pair struggling to survive like mortals in the wilderness.

"I will save you, dark brothers. But I demand a boon from you if I do. You must promise to aid me in destroying my kin and help me conquer all of Harqual."

"It will be as you say, Xuar. We shall aid you as long as our power grows. And I will teach you the purge so that you may steal your kins' power." Mussin was desperate and readily agreed for both he and Nether, who was too weak to deny Mussin's words.

"Vengeance shall be mine!" Xuar felt *the Balance* shift in his favor.

But another sensed the shift in the Balance as well.

Mirella had instantly been aware of Mussin and Nether, after their fall, but she had not sought them out hoping they would simply fade away into oblivion. But when Xuar made his vile pact with them she knew she could not wait for the Balance to weed them out. The dark trio was abhorrent when she came, and Mussin sought to destroy her and steal her power. It was a pathetic attempt.

"You are curs and twisted dogs but I cannot banish you. The alien nature in you limits the control the Balance has over you but don't think for an instant I can't destroy you if I so choose. I will be watching." Mirella turned to Xuar. "You most especially. You seek to control the Balance for your own ends, Xuar. You may sway some of Cronn's people, but in the end you will be defeated by your own jealous nature."

"We shall see, Mirella." Xuar spit the words like a rabid dog. "You underestimate me!"

With that, Xuar shifted the dark trio to his hideaway on Teverroot Island, where even Mirella's followers feared to tread.

THE SECOND ERA

The Children of Tu

The end of the First Era came with the dawn of a new civilization in the southern region known as *The Storm Peninsula*. Before even Cronn walked the land of Harqual, there were the animals. Great cats stalked the southern plains and savage

wolves hunted mastodons in the north. The most powerful of these races of animals were the tigers of *The Storm Jungle*. These beasts were larger and more intelligent than most of their wild cousins. Some believe that the *Cat Lord of the Beastlands* blessed them.

However, they reached their status, the tigers evolved into something more than just beasts. They gained a spark of intelligence. The first of their kind to achieve this state called himself *Tu*. This massive male was confident and proud of his enhanced abilities. He strove to dominate his entire race and make all the animals bow down to him. He would have succeeded, if not for Mirella.

"You have yet to prove yourself capable of wielding such power as that which you seek. You must encourage your people to grow strong in the mind as well as in the body. Only then will you understand that which you seek." Mirella appeared to him in all her divine power and he was in awe of her.

"It will be so World Queen, I swear it. My people will be the greatest in the world." Tu bowed his head reverently his voice strong and clear.

Mirella could not help but admire his pride and strength.

"Yes, but if you are to compete with the other gods that have come before and to come still, you will need your own 'gift' to bring to the world." Mirella blessed Tu with the right of divinity over his people, as their master and protector. "Yet, you must tread carefully, Tu. For I shall be watching you and how your people interact with the Balance."

"They will make you proud, All-Mother."

Thus did Tu ascend to godhood, amongst the other Gods of Harqual equal to them yet their rival. And the *Children of Tu* spread over the southern lands from The Storm Jungle to the *Savanna of the Sun*. They competed with the followers of the North Gods, especially the rakasta of the south.

However, Tu was still not satisfied.

"I will have it all. It is my divine destiny to lead my children across the world." Tu knew he could not yet challenge the people of the North Gods for dominance of Harqual. "I must wait and allow my people to grow, as the All-Mother suggested. Only then will I bring order to Harqual."

The Challenge of Friendship

The Second Era of Harqual brought great change to the land. Contact was established with both Janardûn and Margoth-Nal and magical flying 'constructs' appeared in the sky. These alien constructs brought the first of the *Mei'neav* or 'new people' to Kulan. Dwarves, elves, gnomes, halflings, and countless races of humanoids appeared every year.

At first, Cronn and his people welcomed the Mei'neav but soon they became concerned as more and more of the newcomers spread across the land. Not only that, the newcomers worshiped strange alien gods that appeared as omens and visions.

Cronn had no control over these new gods and soon saw them as a threat to his people. "How can I respect those that will not even visit my Great Table. I beseech you, come and feast with me!"

The greatest of the Elven gods, *Corellon*, spoke for the races of *Ne Mei'neav* or 'new races'.

"Great Cronn, it is not our way to appear directly upon the Mortal Plane. Such show of power is frowned upon amongst our kind and may leave us defenseless against our enemies." Corellon spoke to Cronn as a father would a stubborn child.

"What cowardice is this? You speak like a small child, afraid of his own shadow. Mighty Hades will sit at my table, why not you?" Cronn words were meant to stir the elf god's spirit.

"You uncouth barbarian! How dare you accuse me of cowardice, you who have never left the mortal plane. I challenge you, Cronn, to face me in the planes for the honor of your people." Corellon's words shook the Northlands.

"So shall it be! You choose the place, I'll choose the challenge."

"Agreed!"

And so Cronn went to the Outer Planes and faced Corellon on the *Pillars of Koth* in the deepest wilderness of the Beastlands.

"You choose well, Lord Corellon. Now let's see if you're up to my challenge. Ours will not be a contest of battle. Ours will be a test of strength, honor, and trust." Cronn gave the elf god a wry smile.

"What do you have in mind?" Corellon stared in shock at Cronn. Had he underestimated this savage god?

"Each of us must bear the other's divine weight on his back and jump from pillar to pillar until the last one is reached. The bearer must keep the other from falling at all cost, even at the risk of his immortality." Cronn's words echoed across the Beastlands.

"You surprise me Cronn. But I am up for your challenge. I'll even go first if you like?" Corellon already knew

what the result would be.

"So be it."

Thus, Corellon bore Cronn's divine weight as he jumped from pillar to pillar without a single misstep or pause. The elven god's quick reflexes and sharp mind sought out the most direct path from one edge to the other. And thus did Cronn, when it was his turn for honor, carry the elven god without misstep or pause. Each had matched the other perfectly and both had convinced the other of his strength, honor, and trustworthiness.

"You have taught me a most valuable lesson this day, Great Cronn. My power flows not only from my people but from here on the Outer Planes as well. Yet you were willing to risk your divine power for the honor of your people without any such claim. I will be honored to sit at the Great Table and feast with you and your people. And I'm sure I can convince the other gods of the Ne Mei'neav as well."

The two sealed the friendship with divine blood, with the *Warrior's Greeting* of the barbarian people of the Northlands. A drop of this blood fell to the land of the Beastlands, mixing with its essence – creating the noble yet savage *Seraph*, The Bloodbrother, half elf and half barbarian.

Corellon greeted his new godchild with open arms. "Welcome, we are your fathers, this place is your mother. Its creatures are your friends and allies. Come, meet both your families and we shall celebrate together in Arvandor."

"Yes," Cronn beamed at his new son. "Truly, now the elves and my people are brothers in friendship and blood."

Thus, it was that Corellon and Seraph were given a special place of honor at Cronn's Great Table. And Corellon was true to his word and convinced the Great Gods of the dwarves (*Moradin*), gnomes (*Garl*), and halflings (*Yondalla*) to sit with Cronn and his kin at the Great Table.

And all was well, for a while.

A Call to Council (Prelude to the Divinity War)

In the centuries that followed, Harqual grew in strength and civilization came to the regions south of the Greystone Mountains. The Mei'neav spread out into the regions that matched their homelands on the countless worlds they traveled from.

The dwarves spread throughout the mountain ranges, the elves settled in the Great Forest, and the halflings put down roots in the dales and the meadows in between. The many humanoid races set about carving out a place for themselves either alongside the rest of the Mei'neav or in competition with them.

This left the wild coasts of the north, untamed savannas of the south, and the boiling deserts in between for the last of the Mei'neav, the new humans. Now these humans weren't much different than Cronn's people in appearance, except maybe their skin and hair color, but their habits and mannerisms were very different. Most spoke languages that were hard to understand, relying on magic for day to day life.

Soon, these people were quarreling amongst each other over land, of all things, and building large, fortified dwellings five times the size of a Barbarian's long house. They divided the land amongst themselves in things called kingdoms and pushed into the fringes of the lands of the other Mei'neav.

Such a thing was unacceptable to Cronn and he called together the members of the Great Table to set things right. He accused those that warred with each other of upsetting the Balance and demanded that the hostilities cease.

"Do not forget that you are here at my Table only by my grace and will. I will not tolerate the current behavior of those that look to you for guidance."

Now most of the gods and goddesses of the Great Table understood Cronn's words to be true, and were shamed by their petty quarrels, but a few remained defiant of the Lord of the North.

"Bah, why do we listen to such nonsense!" Lokun was the most vocal of them.

"Choose your words carefully Lokun, this is a place of honor!" It was Hades dark voice that rose above the clamor of the Hall of the Northlands.

"Thank you Hades." Cronn had rose from his seat and stared down the God of Mischief and Strife. "As for you Lokun, do not question the integrity or honor of my Hall again or-"

"Or you'll what, Cronn." This time it was Inanna. "Lokun has a point. Without strife or conflict where would he be? And what about me, hmm? Without conflict, what good is the Goddess of War?"

"What Cronn means is that there is a time and place for conflict and there is a time and place for respect."

Cronn could not help but grin at the words of his grandchild.

"Exactly Ramara, it is not honorable to war amongst each other. We are supposed to be allies, not enemies. How are we supposed to stand against those who would defile this place, not to mention protect the people we are

sworn to protect? Every turn of the seasons, more and more of our people are lost to the temptations of Xuar and his followers. There is nothing gained by fighting amongst ourselves, but the losses could be staggering if Xuar has his way."

"Yes, even now he tries to corrupt my people as well!" Cronn nodded in agreement with Corellon's words. He could always count on the Elf Lord's support.

"Bah, all you do is talk and debate while Xuar becomes stronger and stronger. Maybe I should go and see if he will let me into his alliance, hmm?" Lokun propped his feet up on the Great Table.

Silence.

Cronn crossed the hall before Lokun could move and proceeded to kick the chair out from underneath the Trickster. "Do not joke about such things Lokun or I just might send you to him myself, head on a platter!"

Now Lokun is a vain god and took Cronn's action and words as a threat to his dignity. Looking up at Cronn from the floor, his eyes burning red with anger, he vowed to all that he would break the Hall of the Northlands asunder when he returned. Then his Avatar blinked out of the Hall as he transferred that part of his mind back to Hougard.

"He always been a hot-head," Aegir shook his head at the actions of his fellow Asgard. "I don't know why Odin puts up with him."

"Well, I'm not Odin and he is not welcome here ever again. I've had it with his whining and pathetic attempts to trick my people with his immature jokes. Do you here me Lokun, you bastard!"

"Calm yourself father," Seraph had never seen Cronn so upset. "You know how Lokun is, he'll rant and rave, brooding for months in Winters Hall, then he'll come back, pleading for your forgiveness."

"Seraph's right, "This time it was Kuil's turn to speak. "He may be a hot head like Aegir said but he's no fool. If he tried to join the dark gods, Xuar would destroy him and take his power."

"Even I hate to admit it," Cronn shook his head in disbelief at his own words. "He does have his uses. But if he wants to come back, when he comes back, I want a real apology."

"Agreed," Moradin stood up beseeching Cronn to sit down. "Now if we please get back to the matter at hand, I have some disturbing news for you my friend."

"I have a feeling I'm not going to like this." Cronn moved back down to the head of the Great Table patting Tok on one of the beast's heads as he sat down. The God Hound wagged its tails and curled up near Cronn's feet. "So Moradin, my dwarven friend, what troubles you so?"

"My people have heard rumors that another dark god might be trying to gain power here on Harqual. It concerns me because I've heard of this god's reputation. He lives and breathes hate, caring nothing for those that enter into his evil service. And his power is great, my friend. As great as yours or mine."

"Hmm, so who is this dark god we must be wary of? And why haven't I heard of him before this?" Cronn scratched Tok's ear as he listened to the dwarf god's words.

"While both generous and wise my friend, you have a lot to learn about the universe and the gods in it. Not all are so visible as say the Olympians or the Asgard. Although I do believe that the Finns are related to the Asgard somehow, I'm not sure. Hmm, it could be worth looking into."

"Moradin, I'm sure it is but could you please tell me who this defiler is." After dealing with Lokun, the last thing Cronn wanted to talk about was the Asgard.

"He is known as Hiisi, Lord of Darkness." Moradin said it without any change in his tone but the murmurs from the around the Table, from the Old Gods present, indicated to Cronn this was indeed serious.

Inanna stood with her hands on the table. "Moradin are you sure of this?"

"I am sure." Always monotone, that's Moradin for you.

"Inanna, do you know this god?"

"Not personally, Lord Cronn but I've heard of him. He is most vile and if he is trying to gain power here, it can't be good. Not even I would want to face his Avatar in battle alone. It is said he can strip away a god's power just by touch, maybe even one's essence."

"That doesn't sound like something I want to go through." Rel turned to Hades. "What say you Lord of the Dead, have you heard of this vile one?"

"Yes, I have," Everyone held their breath, for when the Death God speaks all should listen. "He has no honor, no redeeming qualities, he cannot be bargained with, I assure you, and he will kill anyone that gets in his way. I know this for a fact, he's killed dozens of gods, absorbing their power like Inanna said; he even killed a Olympian once."

"Unbelievable," young Anon seemed shaken by the Death God's words. "I didn't think it was possible to kill an Olympian. I wrestled Hercules once and he whipped my butt and he's not even a full-fledged god."

"I only wish that were true, young one," Hades looked at his adopted nephew. "No Anon, no god is indestructible."

"Who was it?" Nesus, one of Cronn's young grandchildren, sometimes had a tendency to speak without thinking.

"Nesus, it is not polite to ask that!" Rel chastised his young son. "I'm sorry Hades, he's still very young."

"No apology is necessary, my friend," Hades looked down the Table towards the young godchild and smiled, a rarity for the Death God. "The boy meant no harm. It was an innocent question." Hades looked around the table stopping at Aegir. The Old Man of the Sea had a grim look on his face. "Besides, Aegir and the other Old Gods here know who I'm talking about."

"Aye." The old sea god spoke up at the mention of his name. "Hiisi killed Achelous, the eldest son of my old friend Oceanus. I'd never seen him so sad as on that day." Aegir looked up at Hades, a question on his mind. "How is that old Titan been lately, I haven't heard from him in some time?"

"He and Tethys are fine, I guess. It's not like they come to Olympus very often and I hardly ever visit there myself."

Hades felt a tug on his dark robes and looked down to see young Hela, one of Cronn's youngest grandchildren, looking up at him with an inquisitive look on her face. "Uncle Hades, what's a Titan?"

It was what the room needed to break the sour mood, as Hades laughed for one of the few times in his existence and picked up the little goddess and sat her on his knee. He looked over at Cronn who was trying very hard not to laugh. Then he noticed Hela was still waiting for her answer, kicking her feet back and forth in anticipation.

"Well you see little one, a Titan is sort of like an Olympian but much older. They have been around for so long that some would say they're as old as time itself."

"Oh, so there like my grandpa," Hela pointed to Cronn. "Old, wise, and stronger than anyone else, is that right?" Now the entire Hall filled with laughter and Hades shook his head. "Not exactly, little one."

Hela scrunched up her face and shook her head. "I don't understand, explain it to me again. I have all day."

Hela's mother, Larea, came across to Hades chair and picked up her daughter. "Come along dear, I'll explain it to you after we are finished. You shouldn't pester you elders at the Table, you know that."

"Oh mother!" Hela's face looked like she was being punished in Carceri.

"I'm sorry if she bothered you, Hades. I know you like to come here to relax, not be pestered with questions by little girls."

"Oh but I am relaxed, Larea," Hades looked across the Table at Cronn. "My friend, have I told you how much I enjoy coming to visit with you and your family?"

"Several times."

"Well I do. Mount Olympus is never like this. Zeus would never let children into his Temple like you do your Hall. It would drive him insane."

"Aye, Odin is the same way," Aegir smiled. "Can you imagine Hades, dozens of godchildren running around Odin's throne, Hlidskialf, while the All-Father holds council with the rest of the Asgard."

All the Old Gods laughed at the thought of Odin losing his composure in such a situation.

"Speaking of children," Cronn looked across the Hall and noticed that the younger children were getting fidgety, having to sit around and listen to all this talk. "Anyone who wants to go outside and play, is free to do so."

"Yippee," Hela jumped out of her mother's arms and headed for the door of the Hall, with Hansa, Nesus, Seraph, Sialic, Thorn and Tulle not far behind. Only Anon asked to be excused, not to play – to go and practice with his sword.

"I think I'll go and watch the children, just to make sure they don't run off." Damh never did like meetings. "Euphoria, I would be honored if you joined me?"

Cronn smiled at his beautiful granddaughter as she turned red at the sylvan god's obvious interest. She hesitated and Cronn decided it was best to push this relationship forward.

"Go on child, he won't bite."

"Grandfather, please," Euphoria sat there with her mouth open in disbelief. "You're embarrassing me."

"Well if the lady isn't interested, then I'll have to sit and watch the children alone," Damh sighed, shuffling his feet, and moped towards the door. "All alone."

Regaining her dignity, Euphoria got up from the Table and came up beside the Fey One. "I didn't say that, now did I?"

He offered his arm and the two walked out of the Hall together, closing the great, heavy doors behind them with a resounding clank.

Inanna rolled her eyes and tapped her fingers on the Table. "Well, its about time. I thought those two were never going to get together. All that mewing and shuffling about was starting to get on my nerves. You were right to

push the matter forward Cronn."

"I think we were all getting tired of it," Cronn smiled pouring himself some Ambrosia. "Hades, you will have to remind me to thank Dionysus for this wonderful Olympian drink. It's fantastic."

"Actually, it would be best to keep it quiet. Zeus would become incensed to learn that Dionysus had gave you some of his personal stock."

Cronn looked in his cup and then at Hades who was grinning at the thought of Zeus seeing a prime world pantheon drinking from one of his barrels of Ambrosia. "I believe you are right. That would not be good."

Cronn picked up his cup, drank a little and then cleared his throat. "Now, can anyone else tell me anything more about this dark god, Hiisi?" His tone clearly stated that the rest of this meeting would be serious.

"I'll tell you this, if the Lord of Darkness has come to Harqual, it is with one goal above all others." Corellon's tone was just as serious as his blood brother's had been and he sat there with his head bent low.

Cronn took another drink, not want to let Zeus's personal stock go to waste. "And what is that, my friend?"

Corellon looked up staring at Cronn.

"I see, he's come for me." Cronn had never felt fear before but he was sure that's what he was feeling now, from somewhere deep inside.

"What, you can't be serious!" Jalivier stood up and shook his in disbelief. "Not even this Hiisi could be that bold. Father is a greater god, in the place of his power, Hiisi wouldn't stand a chance."

Jalivier calm yourself," Cronn did not appreciate his son-in-law's tone towards his elven friend. "Corellon is one of the Old Gods, if he think that this Hiisi is a serious threat to my life then I will listen. And so will everyone else at this Table, understood?"

Jalivier slumped down into his chair and closed his eyes. "Corellon, I am sorry. I know what you is say is true, it's just I am worried. Not for myself, but for the children." Jalivier opened his eyes and a look of terror spread across his face. "If this Hiisi can challenge Cronn on his own world without fear, then I shudder at the thought of what he would do if he got a hold of any of the children."

All eyes strayed to the door.

Cronn turned to Issek. "You know I think it would be good for Tok to go outside for a while, don't you agree?"

"Indeed," Issek stood and called Tok from his place next to Cronn's chair. The great God Hound bounded down towards the Lord of Tortured Soul and the two quickly headed outside to *really* watch the children.

"Now the question is, what do we do about this dark one?" Kuil looked at his grandfather with concern.

"What can we do," Cronn took another drink of Ambrosia, staring down towards the end of Great Table at the God of Rogues and Illusion. "But wait?"

The Hall became deathly quiet and no one said anything again about the matter, as the Pantheon of the North moved on to other concerns.

THE THIRD ERA

The Uniting of the Sword Gods

Hiisi did come to Harqual to steal Cronn's essence and increase his own power as a result. He appeared on the edge of the lands of the North Gods, laying waste to the mortal barbarians who stubbornly stood in his path. He cut them down like worthless chattel striding towards the Hall of the Northlands. The North Gods came out to meet the Lord of Darkness as one.

"You shall not pass, dark one!" Jalivier stood shoulder to shoulder with Cronn daring Hiisi to face him in a fair fight.

"I have not come for you, whelp. But I will go through you if I must." Hiisi's words were calm and calculating.

Hiisi rushed the God of Light and their godly weapons clashed. Hiisi knocked Jalivier back to the ground. He rose his greatsword, Caller of Darkness, to destroy the young god. His sword never came down as Kuil sneaked up behind the Lord of Darkness and skewered him with Shadowstealer, his godly dagger.

"You shall all pay for your impudence." Hiisi screamed. "None may stand in the way of the Lord of Darkness."

"Nay, dark one." Cronn brought his huge greataxe up into the chest of the Lord of Darkness, cleaving the dark god nearly in two. "For the North Gods stand united against you, Hiisi. And not even you will prevail against so many."

Hiisi watched as the North Gods surrounded him. He would not win this fight. At least, not yet. The Lord of Darkness shifted away to his realm, **The Nether Lands**, to brood in silence. He could not force the rest of the Finns to battle this new foe, even though he led the pantheon. No, he would need other allies.

"You will never beat my kin on your own, Hiisi." The voice spoke to him from across the planes.

"Who are you?" Hiisi was curious but angry at being disturbed. "You dare violate the boundaries of my realm."

"Forgive my intrusion, Hiisi." The voice congealed into the form of the Jealous Arcane. "I am Xuar, first son of Cronn and an outcast amongst my kin. I offer you fealty and a better chance to take my father's place, as the dominant deity of Harqual."

"How can you help me, North spawn? Convince me or you will discover oblivion." Hiisi doubted the godling could do anything for him.

"It isn't 'me' who can aid you, but 'we' who can aid you." Xuar moved to the side as Mussin and Nether appeared before Hiisi. "This is Mussin, God of Decay, and Nether, known as the Black Tyrant."

"You all come to offer me fealty," Hiisi could feel the power of the three gods together. "Why should I accept?"

"Here me Hiisi, I come to offer you an alliance." Mussin's words were dank and full of filth. "Both Nether and Xuar will call you liege but they will also pay homage to me. Together we can destroy the North Gods and rule Harqual as we see fit. Together we could conquer all of Kulan."

"While your power impresses me, you have yet to show me what you can do." Hiisi could sense something more that they weren't telling him.

"I will teach you the secrets of the purge." Mussin knew he had already won. "A way to take a deity's godsoul as well as its essence."

"That is not possible! The structure of the outer planes forbids it. The essence of a deity is hard enough to take. But to take its godsoul is unbelievable."

"I will prove it to you, Hiisi." Mussin turned his head towards the edge of Hiisi's realm. "Bring him forth."

Another of Nether's avatars appeared dragging the half-destroyed form of Santé, the North God of the Quill. He forced Santé to the damp, earthen floor of the Nether Lands. Hiisi felt a strange bond with the Black Tyrant, as if the deity was his own kin. His name matched Hiisi's realm, which was unusual in of itself. This one would require watching.

Mussin stood over the form of the beaten North God. He reached down into Santé's body and began to draw out the godling's godsoul. Santé's screamed in agony as his life force was taken from him. Hiisi watched in dark satisfaction.

"Here is my proof." Mussin turned to Hiisi holding up the God of Quills fiery godsoul for the Lord of Darkness to see. "Do we have an agreement?"

"Give it to me and it will be so," Hiisi licked his lips at the thought of consuming another deity's godsoul.

"Nay, you and I are to share this godsoul as a form of solidarity. We will each consume half and Nether and Xuar will pay us homage." Mussin held the godsoul just beyond the reach of the Lord of Darkness.

"Fine," Hiisi was still not satisfied so he raised the stakes. "But all must swear loyalty to each other, regardless of fealty, as must any other who wishes to join us."

Hiisi withdrew Caller of Darkness and thrust it deep into the ground of his realm. The ground shook and a ring of stone swords rose up around Caller of Darkness. Hiisi placed one hand upon the pommel of one of the stone swords.

"This ring is binding to all that agree, even myself. If you doubt me Mussin then feel free to test the magic anyway you please." Hiisi waited for the God of Decay's answer.

Mussin tested the boundaries of the magic for several mortal hours, but the time was only moments to the dark gods.

"The magic is binding to all, I am satisfied." Mussin placed one hand upon the pommel of the sword directly opposite of Hiisi. "I am your equal in this ring, Hiisi."

Next went Nether. He took his place by Mussin's side, laying his hand upon the stone sword next to Mussin's. He did not speak.

Xuar went last. He surprised Nether by standing next to Hiisi, opposite of the Black Tyrant. His words surprised Nether even more.

"I am your equal in this ring, Nether." Xuar had tested the magic as well.

"What is-?"

"Never mind, Nether. I explain it to you later." Mussin cowed the Black Tyrant with a single thought. "Now, as for this."

Mussin held up Santé's godsoul and split it into two. He consumed one half while Hiisi consumed the other half.

"It is done. We are one pantheon now." All spoke in unison. "We are the Pantheon of Swords."

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The news of Santé's death hit the North Gods hard. Cronn swore vengeance for the lost of his friends. However, the *Pantheon of Swords* grew to include several other dark gods. First came *Druaga*, God of Vile Summoning. Then came a dark being known as the *Mother of Monsters* and the *Circle of Sword Gods* increased to six.

Hiisi joined with this goddess to spawn his own twisted godlings known as the *Dark Children – Amand, Ces, Deltum, Emcey, Enduma, Shoku, Teve, Thera, Vespín, and Zell*. Thus, the Circle of Swords Gods increased once again, too challenge the strength of the North Gods.

Note: The Dark Children's mother was as evil an entity as the Lord of Darkness was. Yet, she remained in obscurity, as Hiisi demanded. No one would know why until much later.

The Wars Begin

The Sword Gods corrupted the hearts of men and turned brother against brother, father against son, and nation against nation. War soon ravaged across the countryside and Cronn knew great sorrow as Hiisi's evil spread. This endless conflict would become known as the *Mortals War*.

A dark empire rose and dominated all that stood in its way in the name of Hiisi, their dark patron. They spread as far south as the desert known as the Great Expanse and darkness ruled the land. This despotic land would become known as the *Empire of Swords*. The Ne Mei'neav stood their ground against the dark hordes praying that their human allies would not surrender to the minions of the Lord of Darkness.

Meanwhile, the Sword Gods attempted to break the North Gods' alliance by any means possible. They attempted to turn brother against brother and daughter against mother. However, the North Gods continued to stand together in solidarity. Actual open warfare didn't occur until after the fall of Zell.

Zell had been the God of Frustration and the youngest of the Dark Children. He was considered the runt of the litter, constantly put down and tormented by his siblings. Thus, he earned his title as the God of Frustration, as he doggedly tried to gain Hiisi's favor and always found a way to fail.

"You are a pathetic excuse for a god and a son. Get out of my sight." Hiisi refused to coddle the boy.

"Yes, Dark Father." Lost without his sire's approval, Zell took to roaming the countryside of Harqual causing frustration wherever he trod.

He spent his nights lost to melancholy for many years until adolescence came upon him. He tried in vain to tempt mortal women, failing in frustrated rage. He would lose his mind and control, after trying to fight his evil nature. Thus, the objects of his affection would always die brutally at his hands.

It was this conflict of evil and the desire to find true acceptance and affection that destroyed the Lost God.

One evening, on a warm, clear night, Zell wandered from the safety of the Ragik Peninsula and into the lower reaches of the Northlands. He did this unwittingly, as he was lost in his melancholy. He came upon a lake shining under the moonlight, as clear as fine crystal.

There he saw a sight that would tear the evil from his heart and crush it under the power of desire. Hela, the Peace Goddess, bathed nude under the moonlight with sylphs and nymphs to wash her. He was transfixed with her beauty and all thoughts of pleasing his Dark Father left him.

Frustration had fallen in love with Peace.

His arrival didn't go unnoticed by the gentle goddess. She refused to show fear believing that Zell had come to steal her godsoul. Her entourage including centaurs and other sylvan creatures moved to defend their goddess.

Zell made no motion to stop them falling to his knees, his head bowed, at the edge of the lake. He accepted his fate whatever it might be. He could meet oblivion at peace with his own dark soul.

"Wait," Hela was many years older than Zell but still an adolescent compared to most of her fellow North Gods.

She sensed the change in Zell. In response, his form shifted. Gone were the hard lines of his frustrated existence and the bleak armor of the Suffering Soul. In the place of darkness came the hope of light and salvation.

"I love you, Peace Goddess." Zell looked up into his heart's hope praying that she would not reject his love. "I will spend the rest of my existence proving it to you. I swear it!"

"I can see the truth in your soul, Zell. I accept and encourage the love you feel inside you, although I can't promise to love you back the way you put all your hope for."

"I will accept that Fate, if it only means that I can serve your beauty and goodness."

"Will you accept my grandfather as your liege, Zell." She knew his answer before he spoke it.

"I will, my love." Zell bowed his head in fealty to Hela. "I will swear it before all of your kin in Lord Cronn's Great Hall."

And Zell was true to his word. He came before the North Gods and swore allegiance to Cronn in front of the

other gods of the Pantheon of the North. They did not doubt his word, as Zell opened his godsoul for all of them to see.

"You truly love my granddaughter, Zell. I hope you will not be disappointed if one day she chooses another."

Cronn spoke alone with the Lost God.

"Her acceptance of my love will last me the rest of my existence, Great Cronn." Zell now wore the trappings of the North Gods, his transformation complete.

"Aye, I know it will." Cronn embraced the newest member of his pantheon. "You are lost no more, Zell. Now, you are the Found God."

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Hiisi was enraged when he learned that his youngest godson had sworn fealty to Cronn. He refused to allow dissension from his offspring. Zell would not be allowed to add his blood to Hiisi's enemies. He forced his pantheon members to attack the Hall of the Northlands, in order to bring Zell to justice.

The battle lasted a dozen mortal years and threatened to sweep away all those living near Cronn's Great Hall. The North Gods took turns watching in the night for the next attack from the Sword Gods.

"This is my fault," Zell felt the frustration weigh him down. "Fate has come for me. I am not meant to find peace."

"Nay Zell," Nesus, The Archer, tried to comfort his adopted brother. "We knew that they would come, brother. You must not give up hope."

"I do not wish to bring ruin and death upon those I love, Nesus." Zell looked back towards the Great Hall.

He knew exactly where Hela was inside the divine structure. He could feel the other young gods and goddesses in the Hall as well. They were resting. Twelve years of constant fighting was hard, even on the divine. Zell had insisted on fighting to protect the Hall, even though he was younger than his new brothers. Cronn had been wary at first, not wanting to lose his new godson.

"Do not put the conflict solely on your own shoulders." the North God of Mounted Warfare's words came out from the night, as he returned from his patrol. "Conflict with the Sword Gods was inevitable, Zell."

"Yes," Anon patted his adopted brother on the back. "Hiisi was just looking for an excuse to start this war."

The night was shattered by godfire as the Sword Gods came out of the darkness. With them they brought an army of evil humanoids and dark soldiers from the Sword Imperium. The North Gods had allies of their own.

The fight would find the end of two gods on that night. The Dark Children surrounded Anacoro and tore him apart, But not before the North God had sent one of them to oblivion first. Zell had mourned the passing of Anacoro but did not shed one tear for Shoku, his dark brother and Sword God of Vendettas.

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The Siege of the Great Hall continued for several more years. However, in the end, the Sword Gods overwhelmed the followers protecting the Hall and Cronn's Realm on the mortal plane was destroyed.

Several of the North Gods fell on that day. Anon was brutally killed by Amand, his godsoul consumed by the Sword God of War. Zell, again, felt that the death's of his adopted kin was his fault.

"No, this will not happen! Not again!" Zell attacked Amand in a rage. "No one else shall die for me on this day!"

Zell smashed his great longsword, Found-Peace, against his dark brother's blade. He would not hide from his dark kin behind the death of his friends. He would end the Siege of the Great Hall, one way or another.

"Ah, little brother," Amand's poisonous words sought to break Zell's will. "Still trying to prove your worth, I see."

"I do not have anything to prove to you, dark spawn." Zell thrust his sword at his older sibling again and again.

"Don't lie to me, Zell. I can feel the frustration in you still. You haven't changed as much as you are trying to convince yourself of. Come back to the Sword Gods. Dark Father will accept you back if I vouch for you. We are your kin. It is where Fate destines you to be."

"No! This ends now! No more games and conniving words, Amand! I would rather meet oblivion than return to Hiisi's dark brood!"

"So be it, runt." Amand crushed Zell back with one stroke from his great bastard Sword, Helldawn. "But you will not meet oblivion. You shall come with me, or at least your godsoul will."

Amand forced Zell to his knees, holding the adopted North God down with all his strength. Zell knew his Fate. He had seen it in his youth. He was meant to die in this way, but not by Amand's hand. He called out with his mind to his

closest brother. "It is time, brother."

"No!" Nesus' head turned on the other side of the continuing siege. "I cannot do it."

"You must, Nesus. Amand must not take me." Zell spoke the words out loud and in his mind. "It is my Fate. Mirella will guide us to our destinies, brother."

"I-I will miss you, Zell." The god known as The Archer drew back his godly bow, Wind Guided, and fired an arrow across the field. The divine arrow flew straight and true, Zell closed his eyes and whispered the thoughts to her as the arrow pierced his soul.

"I will always love you, Hela." With that, Zell met his Fate in oblivion.

This was the first act of the divine drama that would become known as the *Divinity War*.

An Aside

Read my Divinity War narrative, which is posted in PDF format (zipped) in my Kulan: Lands of Harqual thread on EN World and on my World of Kulan Yahoo Group. Here is the link to the yahoo group.

<http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/worldofkulan/>

Aftermath

The Divinity War had a huge impact on the mortals of Harqual, as well as their gods. Thousands of priests all over the continent lost the power to cast spells. More importantly, the loss of ones god can shake a person's faith and whole civilizations turned away from them. Cronn's faith disappeared south of the Greystone Mountains and the Empire dedicated to the Pantheon of Swords slowly deteriorated without its patron. This Empire was reduced to a few squabbling city-states on the Ragik Peninsula, as region after region seceded from the Empire.

Entire tracts of farmland fell into disuse and hundreds of rural towns were ruined, claimed by the wilderness. It became more and more dangerous to travel from region to region as Imperial provinces became isolated countries and then even more isolated city-states. Petty dictators and warlords held sway over their isolated regions as few individuals had the power to oppose them.

The demihuman races became isolated from their human allies and in less than a hundred years relations between humans and other races deteriorated so much so, that old treaties and alliances were forgotten (mostly by the humans). Wilderness regions were left to dangerous creatures and the remaining faithful of Larea.

The Interloper Gods

The Aftermath of the Divinity War left huge holes in both the Pantheon of the North and the Pantheon of Swords. Key members were either destroyed or had their power base greatly reduced. Into this void came the *Interloper Gods*, a term used to describe all powers that gained influence on Harqual after the Divinity War ended. This term is still widely used today by priests of both pantheons and is almost always used in a derogatory manner; whether the god being referred to is evil or not.

The first god to come to Harqual after the Divinity War was the Olympian, *Apollo*. Of all the Interloper Gods, he is the most respected by the priests of the Pantheon of the North. Those priests never refer to him as an Interloper, even though he never officially joined the Pantheon of the North. He is looked at as an honored guest like Corellon, Moradin, and the other Greater Gods of the demihumans.

NOTE: The demihuman gods are *not* official members of the Pantheon of the North. However, they are always welcome in any pantheon god's realm on the Outer Planes or in Cronn's godly realm, *The Heart of Ice* in the far north beyond Harqual's northern shores (Kulan's North Pole).

However, the priests of the Pantheon of Swords do refer to Apollo as an Interloper. And he does fall into that category, as his power on Harqual came after the Divinity War. And this is true of all the following gods that came to Harqual as an independent power without ties to the existing pantheons or their traditional pantheons on the Outer Planes: *Ahto, Boccob, Chaeon, Dike, Calphas, Dionysus, Ehlonna, Erythnul, Gruumsh, Hel, Kord, Loviatar, Mielikki, Persana, Ptah, Rán, Uller, Vaprak, and Wee Jas*.

NOTE: Gruumsh and Vaprak have human followers, as well as monstrous followers. These Interlopers are despised by all the gods of the Pantheon of the North and are never allied with no matter what the

situation. Gruumsh's faith is extremely influential on Harqual, while Vaprak's followers have been responsible for the start of both Ogre Wars.

Beyond Apollo, the gods that are somewhat tolerated by the Pantheon of the North, if not completely respected, are Calphas, Dionysus, Ehlonna, Kord, Mielikki, Rán, Persana, and Ptah. Calphas is a strange deity from another prime material world and is venerated almost exclusively in the lands just north of the Great Expanse. Dionysus is considered a good friend of the Pantheon of the North and is often found in Damh's company or trying to cheer up Cronn in his godly realm (he likes the challenge). Another of the Olympians, Dike, has also become a popular deity on Harqual.

Persana and Ehlonna tend to avoid conflicts between the Pantheon of the North and the Sword Gods. However, Ehlonna's close ties with Corellon and Yondalla have allowed her to become a close friend with Daghdha and Larea. Kord is a popular god with barbarians north of the Greystones and even has gained Cronn's respect. Kord's faith isn't as well known south of the Greystones, except for in the Barony of Wolfire and is completely unknown south of the Great Expanse. The Finnish goddess, Mielikki has won over the North Gods, despite her heritage. She is so unlike what Hiisi was that she has become a friend of Larea and the Daghdha.

Ahto and Aegir tend to exist without strife but most of the pantheon would rather not have dealings with the Finnish sea god (because of you know who), regardless of his benevolent nature. Rán is Aegir's wife and is grudgingly accepted by the most members of the Pantheon of the North. Hel, Lokun's daughter is in that same category, but her faith hasn't spread much beyond the Northlands. Immotion dislikes Boccob for his uncaring nature towards those that worship him and Wee Jas for her overly strict and sometimes dark nature towards magic. Erythnul attempts to steal worshipers from other gods, regardless of pantheon or alignment. This has made the followers of Erythnul enemies of almost everyone else on Harqual.

All of the members of the Pantheon of the North hate Loviatar and would love to destroy or banish the Goddess of Pain and Torture. However, she has never sent her Avatar to Harqual and because of her ties with the world of Toril she is too strong in her own realm. Loviatar has swayed a lot of Nether's followers to join her faith, which has made her unpopular with the Sword Gods as well. Loviatar and Nether oppose each other in every situation, even if it means working with another god they usually oppose.

Chaeon, Ptah and Uller are enigmas on Harqual. Very few mortals worship these gods, yet they refuse to leave. Chaeon's worshipers are limited to the desert elves and the dragonnes of the Great Expanse and the god never interacts with other deities unless these followers are at risk. It's thought that Ptah might be after Mussin's head because he destroyed one of Ptah's favorite followers. Why Uller insists on taking a stake in trying to find followers on Harqual is anyone's guess. He seems determined to try and sway Larea's followers whenever he can. It is whispered that he might be trying to prove himself to her to try and convince her he'd be a suitable consort. (However, no one is stupid enough to ask one of Uller's faithful about this, as they'd likely get a crossbow bolt in the forehead.)

Sidebar 1: *The New Interloper Gods*

As time has past, more deities have become aware of the divine climate on Harqual. This has attracted several new gods to the continent from other part of Kulan as well as from other worlds. Below are those that have become known as Interloper Gods on Harqual.

In the Verdalf Forest, there lies a gateway to the world where the hunter elves (and the docrae) of that forest originally came from, over 500 years ago. (No one is sure when the hunter elves came to Harqual, but it was over 500 years ago that first contact happened between them and the forest elves of Knotwood.) The hunter elves and docrae brought with them the belief of several unique deities: **Faunus, Ordana, Sylvian, and Tilla**. These deities are unknown to most beyond the Verdalf Forest, although many forest elves, formerly of the Knotwood, have become enamored with Sylvain.

Olidammara is a roguish god who has only recently come to Harqual in the last 300 years. His followers are scattered but growing steadily throughout the continent. His followers often butt heads with those of the North God Kuil on matters of "honor" and that the followers of Kuil often accuse the Laughing God's followers of not having any.

Another deity's worship has originated from within the Verdalf Forest within the last 250 years. The worship of the deity called **Hak**, known as The Horselord, has quickly spread out from the Verdalf Forest into the surrounding regions. This Interloper is believed to be a new incarnation of the dead North God Anacoro by farmers and huntsmen. In truth, Hak is simply another deity from the original world of the hunter elves, although the deity isn't an elven god. Hak is quite popular with the few centaurs living in the Verdalf Forest.

Heward is another new arrival to Harqual in only the last 200 years, and he has become a friend of Damh's and is popular amongst bards. His realm is on another prime material world so he rarely does more than manifest on Harqual.

The gods **Halmir** and **Valkar** have only been heard of on Harqual in the last 100 years, yet their faiths have gained quite the following. Many of the North Gods respect these two and the pantheon is debating whether or not to ask them to

join the North Gods.

Another recent arrival, also within the last 100 years, is the wild warrior god, **Konkresh**. He is becoming a favorite deity amongst the more bloodthirsty barbarian tribes of the Northlands. This hasn't endeared him to any of the North Gods.

No one is sure when or where the worship of the being known as **Malotoch** first appeared on Harqual, but most scholars believe the demon lord has only shown interest in Lands of Harqual in the last 80 years or so. Malotoch is known as the Crow Mistress and her worship is rarely found in any civilized land. Her most prolific worshipers are harpies and rooks.

Xan Yae is the most recent arrival, within the last 55 years. This goddess of the mind is also known as one of the few deities to have her realm on the Shadowstar Sea. Mainly those races that have some form of psionic potential – a rarity on Harqual – know of her (i.e. duergar). However, she is also a goddess of shadows and stealth and is slowly gaining followers amongst rogues and assassins.

The Empire of Swords

The Empire of Swords was a militaristic, despotic kingdom that held ultimate power over much of the lands of Harqual. (Not including the Great Forest of the elves, the Greystone Mountains of the dwarves, the Storm Jungle of the tabaxi, or the Far South.) The Empire, at its height, controlled all the lands from the Ragik Peninsula on the western coast of Northern Harqual, to the Spirit Rift near the eastern coast of Northern Harqual, to the northern edge of the Great Expanse in Southern Harqual.

The Empire paid homage to Hiisi's dark pantheon. It is unknown whether the Empire took its name from the pantheon (likely) or if it was the other way around (not so likely). All that is known is that the Empire of Swords was the largest human empire to ever exist on Harqual. Its ruins can be found all over Northern Harqual, lost to time and the ravages of war. For over 1,400 years, the Empire of Swords dominated the continent, no one able to break its dark power.

At the height of the Empire's power, **King-Priests** of Hiisi controlled the Empire of Swords, with each successive King-Priest ruling for their entire lifetime. The power of the King-Priest was absolute and it was rumored that each King-Priest was, in fact, a powerful proxy of the Lord of Darkness. However, this rumor goes against the Dark One's very nature, as he loathed to give out power to anyone. The truth may never be known. What is known is that a King-Priest could destroy entire legions of soldiers with even the simplest spells and granted powers. They were a terror to face on the battlefield and were protected by incredibly powerful magical enchantments and armor.

Most of the names of the King-Priests that ruled the Empire of Swords during its existence have been lost to time. All that is left of their legacy are the ziggurats lining the Empirisk River from the **Imperial City of Yösydän** (now called **Vapaa**) to the town of **Fjærranstade**. These ziggurats are the resting-places of the King-Priests of the **Sword Imperium**.

Hiisi's banishment to Carceri left the Empire of Swords without their patron and the Imperium suffered as a result. The King-Priest was powerless against the combined clergy of the remaining Sword Gods. Nether's clerics of pain took great pleasure in torturing the King-Priest and his followers, while Mussin's clerics spread disease and destruction throughout the Empire.

Mussin cared nothing for Hiisi's mortal followers or the Empire they built and he took great pleasure in tearing it apart. Distant protectorates broke away from the Empire one by one and the **Old Sword Imperium** collapsed beyond the **Ragik Peninsula**. The throne of the Empire passed from one petty dictator to another, along the lines of might makes right. However, ruthless warlords held sway over the remains of the Empire and the Emperors had little real power beyond the walls of Yösydän.

These **Dead Emperors**, as they were often called by the masses, usually didn't rule long. Assassins loyal to the dead god Vespian slew Emperor after Emperor, as none of them were "*right for the throne*" in the eyes of the followers of the Sword God of Thieves and Assassins. The Dead Emperors lived in fear for centuries of the group that would become known as **Vespian's Lost** and most went mad. Most of their edicts were simply ignored by the populace, as the Emperor that proclaimed them would soon forget all about it.

Vespian's Lost weren't the only ones that opposed the Dead Emperors, as dozens of ex-priests of the Pantheon of Swords banded together to form the society known as the **Yosyntya** or the **Dark Reborn**. Dedicated to raising the fallen gods of the Imperium, this society had little luck regaining worshipers for the dark gods. They still exist to this day but are hunted by the priests of the remaining gods of Pantheon of Swords, not to mention everyone else. Of all of the dead Sword Gods, only Vespian's loyal families of assassins refuse to convert to worship another god.

In current times, the Imperium Royal House was seen more as a bunch of squabbling fools and had little power

over the Ragik Peninsula. The last Emperor (now deceased) was quite mad and had been known to ride backwards through the imperial city on a donkey laughing, *"I am all powerful, tremble before me!"*

Unfortunately, an elite force of mercenaries known as the ***Blades of the Emperor***, who once protected the Imperial family, still exist in the Old Sword Imperium. The leaders of this force are no better than petty warlords now, but they still hold power in the region, especially in the ***Imperiumi Forest***. They oppose the changes happening in the lands now known as the ***Sword Protectorate***. (See below, under the current events of the Year of the Return: The Transformation.)

Sidebar 2: *The New Sword Gods*

In recent times, say the last 300 years or so, changes have been happening within the Pantheon of Swords. The pantheon's numbers were more depleted by the Divinity War than the North Gods. As a result, Mussin sought new allies to bring into the dark pantheon. Thus, three new gods have come to Harqual, not as Interloper Gods, but as members of the Pantheon of Swords – ***Battus***, ***Belinik***, and ***Math Mathonwy***.

Battus is the spawn child of Thera and a demon of unknown origin. Battus has reclaimed the realm of Amand, Gaoterlog, in the Abyss. He is known as The Bloody Sword and his followers often work towards the final destruction of the faithful of Hela. Belinik is a vile god from an alternate material plane, as is known as the Prince of Terror and the Lord of Strife. He and Nether often compete for the same followers, which pleases Mussin, as it makes the god more vicious to their enemies. Math Mathonwy is an Old God known across the Outer Planes as the Miser of Magic. He was brought into the pantheon by Mussin to add a needed boost of magic to the pantheon. This really made Xuar irate, to say the least.

Whether or not Mussin plans to allow more dark gods into the Circle of Sword Gods is unknown. For now, the circle is eight with a place left open for Hiisi. Mussin does this only to placate Angrboda, Nether, and Xuar.

It is whispered throughout the Sword Lands that the dead Sword God Amand had a dalliance with an alternate material plane goddess of unknown origin. There is a good possibility that a dark grandchild of Hiisi may exist to take the Lord of Darkness' place in the Circle. If so, this god or goddess would likely see Battus' as a violator of his father's realm, which could lead to outright conflict.

THE FOURTH ERA

The Black Wars

While the Empire of Swords self-destructed from within the rest of Harqual's human population fell on one another like rabid dogs. For hundreds of years before the creation of the New Calendar, as well as a few hundred after the rise of the Kingdom of the Jagged Peninsula, the city-states of Harqual battled each other and anyone else who got in the way. This time was known as the ***Black Wars***.

The dark warriors and priests of the Empire divided up the land and warred with each other until nothing was left of the Imperium's legacy. Old alliances and friendships were forgotten and city-state after city-state fell into the bloody conflict. It was almost like the mortal war during the time of the Divinity War never really ended. Human armies simply switched sides, formed new alliances and fought former allies.

New city-states rose to take the place of the fallen and then crumbled after years of war took its toll. The barbarians of the Northlands isolated themselves from the wars as much as possible but even they were forced to defend themselves from time to time. The elves of the Great Harqual Forest watched in horror as humans slaughtered each other for centuries. Most of the warlords were smart enough to not attack the elves but every dark time has its fools and madmen.

Three decades before the creation of the New Calendar a truly vile warlord dedicated to Mussin took 5,000 mercenaries into the forest near what is now modern day Thallin and proceeded to sack the ***Elven Kingdom of Amylonyon*** before being overrun by the combined might of the remaining elves. The lands around Amylonyon were burned and infested with disease. And all that remains of this region now is miles of vile, haunted swampland and the remains of the elven capital, now called ***Caer Amylonyon*** or the ***Ruins of the Gray***.

Amylonyon was the homeland of the gray elves on Harqual and it widely known that the elves were betrayed by one of their own. The betrayer was said to be a vile female necromancer that supposedly made a pact with Xuar, which would grant her eternal life. In return, she would use her influence and magic to distract her kin when the warlord's army attacked.

Amylonyon's people were either butchered or fled to the lands of the silver elves in ***Silverleaf*** or left for other lands across the continent. Some believe that this is how there came to be elves in the desert wastes of the Great Expanse. However, most scholars believe that most of the remaining gray elves left Harqual altogether. Very few gray elves still live on Harqual now and most humans believe that there aren't any left.

The warlord died, yet the elven necromancer lives on to this day, her real name forgotten. In the present era, this elven necromancer is known by many names and aliases. *The Foul soul*, *the Betrayer*, and *the Enigma Sorceress* are the most famous of these aliases. If killed she rises from the dead the following evening by possessing the nearest elf's body, male or female. Thus, she is impossible to recognize based on previous encounters. She is completely loyal to Xuar.

As the Black Wars continued to rage across the land, more and more demihumans fled or isolated themselves from the bloody conflict. The dwarves of the Greystone and Sunus Mountains withdrew into their mountain homes completely, denying entrance to all, even others of their own kind. The silver elves of the Great Forest placed *High Magic* wards at the edge of their kingdom to prevent the humans from attacking their homeland. The forest elves living in the southern half of the Great Forest protected their forest home more militantly than their northern cousins did. Human warriors that dared enter the southern forest were usually never seen again.

The gnomes fled to Southern Harqual (where the fighting was less widespread) while many halfling families joined the silver elves in the Great Forest. In fact, gnomes now exist only in southern lands settling in the *Heverkent Forest* and the *Hinderfall Mountains*. These 'rockwood gnomes' became steadfast allies with the rakasta, against the few human warlords that dared to ride across the savannas of the southern lands. Most hairfoot halfling families, in the north, weren't as fortunate, and those families that didn't seek safety with the elves were either enslaved or killed.

The First Ogre War and the Eastern Council

In 449 N.C., an event happened that would cease the Black Wars and bind humanity together. Hordes of humanoids rose from the deepest swamps and swept down from the desolate mountain peaks, to ravage the cities of the north. Led by tribes of huge ogres loyal to the gods Gruumsh and Vaprak, these hordes of gnolls, orcs, and goblinoids nearly swept humanity from the face of Harqual.

In fact, in some places they were successful in destroying entire city-states in less than a week. So busy fighting each other, the humans were taken totally by surprise. The strange part was that the hordes simply took what they wanted each time they attacked and then continued south past the Great Expanse. It was here that the hordes truly overwhelmed humanity as they wiped out human cities, towns, and fortifications in the Far South.

For a hundred years the *First Ogre War*, as it was called, raged across the land and humanity hung on for survival. Only with the help of the dwarves of the Greystone and Sunus Mountains did humanity survive in north. The dwarves, who knew how to fight ogres better than anyone, helped organize the human city-states and scattered soldiers into a force to be reckoned with. Soon the humanoid hordes found themselves outmatched; they had spread their forces too thin and retreated to out of the way places to gain strength and seethe in anger (the First Ogre War officially ended in 551 N.C.).

The dwarven people had hoped that all of humanity would reunite and bring stability back to Harqual. Instead, most of the humans retreated to the coasts to distance themselves from the humanoid hordes and started to build and fortify new militant city-states. The dwarven Thanes shook their heads in disbelief and returned to their mountain homes, vowing that humanity would stand alone the next time the hordes came.

Only a small group of city-states on or near the eastern coast of Northern Harqual realized that an alliance amongst themselves would protect them all from another humanoid horde. Thus, in neutral lands in the west near the shores of an (then) unnamed lake did the city-states sign the *Treaty of Lake Nest* and form the *Eastern Council* (555 N.C.). Binding them in honor and war against any that would threaten even one of them (including other members). No one knows why the lake was given that name by the council or why other city-states near the lake were not offered a chance to sign the treaty.

As time passed, the members of the Eastern Council became more like countries than city-states and the *Kingdoms of the Eastern Shores*, as they are now called, has been one of the most civilized areas of Northern Harqual since the end of the First Ogre War. Once dominated by a few kingdoms — *Minar*, *Stonn*, *Thallin* and *Wolffire*, the power base of the Eastern Council has changed significantly over the last ten years. (See under the *Fifth Era* section for more details about this change.)

A Strange, Uneasy Peace

The end of the First Ogre War brought peace to the continent, for the first time, for as long as even the elves could remember. Everyone knew it wasn't going to last. The demihumans knew that the ogres would come again and the humans knew that if the ogres didn't come soon they would start to fight amongst each other again. It was inevitable — for 150 years it was inevitable.

No one thought that the ogres would wait that long and that humanity would war with each other way before that much time had passed, rather than live in peace. Yet, for a century-and-a-half the continent was a quiet, tranquil

place (for the most part). Still divided, yes, but peaceful. Old soldiers itched for battle, while younger ones wondered what all the fuss was about. If the ogres did come, they'd be ready for them. Why waste valuable resources and time fighting with each other? This was the viewpoint of the young and it should be remembered that the young decide the future.

In the Eastern Shores, harsh stability was the rule. As noted above, council members that did try to conquer the others were quickly defeated, their city-states annexed as a warning to other council members not to violate the Treaty of Lake Nest. Soon city-states banded together to form countries and marriages between nobles of different countries cemented the Eastern Shores together.

In the western lands known as the Sword Gulf Region, it was a little less stable. Over a dozen minor skirmishes happened in 150 years but these conflicts never lasted long. No one wanted to fight a war in the middle of winter and there was always the threat of the ogres. Several city-states rose to prominence in this region at the time, completely oblivious to the civilization that was growing in the Eastern Shores.

Avion City, Onaway, Halandra, and Steins still stand to this day even though their names have changed countless times since the end of the First Ogre War.

Even the decadent Empire of Swords lay quiet during this time. Yes, they back-stabbed and betrayed each other but they never invaded the surrounding lands once or fought any internal civil wars. It was eerie to behold if you lived south of the Imperium in one of the many struggling city-states. It was like the Imperium dogs were taking a long nap. And in the lands of the elves and the dwarves, they waited. 150 years was nothing to them. If the humans south of the Greystone Mountains stood together then they would join the fight. If not, they would mourn the passing of a barbaric people they once called friends.

The Second Ogre War

When the hordes came, they came in the thousands. In 701 N.C., ogre scions led the hordes of humanoids once again, descending on the remaining city-states and countries of Northern Harqual. And while places such as the Wild Plains and the Imperium were devastated by the war, the Eastern Shores held on, for dear life. They pushed back the ogres to the fringes of civilization and refused to give in as more humanoids poured out from desolate plains, high mountains and the desert known as the Great Expanse.

A group of heroes rose to fight the hordes. A young paladin of Jalivier named **Jacard Winternight**, a family of rogues and mercenaries named **Tigerstorm**, a stanch soldier named **Travathian Dragonguard**, a sorcerer named **Heward Tallinson**, a dwarven fighter-priest named **Brekk Thunderstone**, a silver elf priest named **Menkhar Silversun**, a humble forest elf named **Minonus Redwater** and a barbarian chieftain named **Recmair Hault**.

These adventurers turned heroes were key to stamping out the hordes of humanoids and the **Second Ogre War** lasted for less than a decade in the Eastern Shores. However, the war did not end in the western lands until 713 N.C.

The ogres and their followers fled back to most inhospitable regions on Harqual but some (most notably gnolls and orcs) stayed behind becoming regional bandits, whose descendants still raid the surrounding lands to this day. In time, the heroes would become prominent citizens of the Eastern Shores. Some would even become the rulers of their homelands.

NOTE: Jacard Winternight rules Navirosov, Travathian Dragonguard became **King of Thallin**, Menkhar Silversun was crowned **High One of the Silver Leaves**, and Recmair Hault built the **Barbaric Lands of Wolfire**. Of all these heroes, only Travathian Dragonguard has passed away. It is believed that he was murdered by his own son, Varath, who is now King of Thallin.

In the west, all but Onaway and Steins fell to the ogres and the area is just starting to recover from the war. Cut off from the east for almost 200 years, the west is now reconnecting with the Kingdoms of the Eastern Shores and other eastern lands. Elves are not as welcome in the west, as in the east, due to the fact that the city-states of the Wild Plains didn't stand together against the ogres and the elves left them to their fate as a result.

The Imperium suffered the most from the Second Ogre War or one should say the citizens did. When the ogres attacked the rulers and nobles of the remaining city-states herded the people out into the countryside to sate the ogres' blood-lust. In return, the ogres didn't sack all the cities of the Imperium. Even some of the remaining dark gods turned away from the Imperium, fearing that the vile humans would drag down the Pantheon of Swords with them.

Several ogre tribes also tried to conquer the gnomes, Torin dwarves, and rakasta of the south but met heavy resistance and were forced to flee north into the Great Expanse. However, once there they had to flee the mysterious desert dwelling elves of the Expanse, moving further north into the Sunus Mountains or across the waters to one of the

many islands that dot the region.

For years after the war ended, the civilizations of Harqual rebuilt and fortified their lands, building new kingdoms and forming trade alliances with new neighbors. Hoping that the conflict and strife would finally end. They were wrong.

The Year of the Dawn (748 N.C.)

The year 748 on the New Calendar was a year rife with rumors and change. The spring began like any other over the previous decades after the Second Ogre War, a wild peace waking from its slumber. Into this peace came rumors that the Empire of Swords may be on the move again and that a third war against the ogres loomed on the horizon.

The **High Thane** of the **Kingdom of the Greystones**, **Ulfgar Blackforge**, was killed by a small band of ogres leaving his young, inexperienced daughter, **Sanni Blackforge**, as his successor. Brekk Thunderstone becomes the unstable child's sole confidant and advisor as she refuses to listen to anyone else. Eventually, she seals off the dwarven kingdoms from the humans and elves, trusting neither race to the point of paranoia.

In the capital city of **The Kingdom of Thallin**, a young band of adventurers is chosen for a mission to travel to Onaway in the western lands and try to solidify a trade alliance with whoever might still be living there. This group of adventurers faces orcs, ogres and a mysterious foe during the journey. Once through the Wild Plains they reached the city-state of Onaway, make a pact with its ruler, **Than LaMarche**, for an alliance with The Kingdom of Thallin, and uncover a plot to assassinate him.

Then the forest elves in **The Knotwood** shocked their northern cousins and the people of the Eastern Shores by sealing off the southern half of Great Forest from all other races. All those forest elves that were currently away from the Knotwood were ordered to return or become outcasts in the eyes of their people. Some did return home but others did not.

Decades earlier, a wild-eyed old priest of the Pantheon of the North preached the coming of an old evil back to the lands of Harqual. Very few listened or even cared. The people were tired of listening to the old stories, now was the time for change and peace. They should have listened because change was the least of their worries.

THE FIFTH ERA

The Year of the Return (749 N.C.)

This name, for the year 749 N.C., was assigned years after by scholars in the Eastern Shores. NPCs won't refer to the name 'Year of the Return', as the campaign story line unfolds. As far as anyone knows it is just another year.

The Tabaxi Return

1,001 years have come and gone since the end of the Divinity War and the continent of Harqual is about to go through a shocking change. A young, charismatic barbarian-priest of Cronn, living in **Twilight Valley**, is shown the true nature of the tabaxi through dreams sent to him by the Lord of the North. The young priest tries to convince his elders of the truth. Unable to sway them, the young priest sets off on a journey to warn the rest of Harqual of the return of the tabaxi. (He changes his name to **Taith-El** or **Teller of the Past**.)

This journey leads Taith-El through The Kingdom of the Greystones, The Kingdom of Thallin, and onto The Kingdom of the Silver Leaves. When Taith-El and a group of halfling followers arrive in Silverleaf, the barbarian-priest tells Menkhar Silversun of his dreams. The High One tells the young barbarian-priest that he had heard rumors of a city appearing somewhere in the south. It could be the city of the tabaxi that Taith-El was warned of by Cronn. Silversun and Taith-El pray together in the temple of Corellon together for the entire day, seeking the Creator of the Elves' consul.

And indeed, the tabaxi have returned to the Storm Jungle along with their powerful and vengeful god Tu, from parts unknown. Tu has vile-hearted revenge on his mind and has set his sights upon the communities just north of the Storm Jungle. From **Avion City** to **Valora** the cities of the **Monarchy of Avion** find themselves under constant attack by tabaxi led forces including orcs, ogres, and a new creature loyal to the tabaxi. The **City of Ilasi** takes the worst of this assault, barely managing to hold on. Valora is not so lucky as the tabaxi laid waste to the city dragging its residents into the Storm Jungle in chains.

East of the Monarchy, no word comes from **Nasundria**, and **Lady Felicia, Queen of Avion**, worries that the city is lost. She sends a rider with a message to the City of Nasundria.

At dawn on the 27th of Zealot, Silversun and Taith-El both receive the same vision from Corellon. Tu is planning to conquer Harqual for his people. Taith-El is warned not to go further south than Onaway by the Elf Lord. No reason is given for this but the barbarian-priest accepts it as the will of Cronn. News spreads through the elven lands of this new

threat. Hundreds of silver elves flock to Silverleaf to meet this *godtouched* barbarian-priest of Cronn. Many of them pledge to follow him in his quest to warn Harqual.

The next day, the High One contacts Lord Than LaMarche of Onaway to tell him of the tabaxi threat. He is shocked to learn that the southern lands have already had violent conflict with the tabaxi. Taith-El insists that he must go to Onaway and confer with Lord LaMarche. Dozens of silver elves go with him and his halfling followers.

Taith-El and his followers arrive in Onaway immediately being brought to see Lord LaMarche. The barbarian-priest shares his dream, from Cronn, with the Lord of Onaway. Lord LaMarche magically contacts Lady Felicia in Avion City and tells her of the barbarian-priest's arrival and dream. Intrigued, she immediately sends an emissary to Onaway to meet with Taith-El.

News of the barbarian-priest's dream soon spreads through the populace of Onaway. The citizens start to panic and rioting breaks out in the city, as well as the city of Onaco, down the coast. Taith-El goes out amongst the populace of Onaway to calm them down. The charismatic barbarian-priest preaches a steady hand and patient attitude and wins over many converts to Cronn's faith. Many of the faithful start calling him **Cronn's Chosen**. The small, local shrine to Cronn becomes a popular place to pray overnight. (Unrest continues to be a problem in the city of Onaco, however.)

Lady Felicia's emissary reaches Onaway and meets with Taith-El. The barbarian-priest's prophetic dream from Cronn accounts the destruction of Valora and warns that if preparations aren't made, all of the Monarchy of Avion and the lands of the Onan Territory will fall. The envoy asks Taith-El to come with him and meet Lady Felicia in Avion City. Taith-El tells him that cannot – that Corellon warned him that he must not go any further south than Onaway or disaster will befall them all.

Taith-El assures the envoy that he would be honored to meet with **Avion's Great Lady**, as he refers to her, but it would have to be in Onaway. The Queen's emissary journeys back to Avion City to tell her of his meeting with the charismatic barbarian-priest. Several of Taith-El's loyal followers go with him, as an escort, and to spread his words amongst the populace of Onaco, in order to calm that city. The emissary arrives back from Onaway, on the 22nd of Sialic, and recounts his meeting with Taith-El. To her surprise, the escort of followers proclaimed that they were sent to ensure the Great Lady's protection – it was Taith-El's will. They would stand by her side from now on as loyal guards of honor in Cronn's name.

Lady Felicia was touched by the barbarian-priest's concern for her welfare and decides to journey to Onaway with a full escort of soldiers and Taith-El's followers **Cronn's Pride**, as they now call themselves. The caravan is attack by a tabaxi war party and several of her closest advisors are killed. Several members of Cronn's Pride die, heroically, protecting the Monarchy's Queen. Lady Felicia's caravan arrives in Onaway. She immediately goes to see Lord LaMarche and meet the barbarian-priest.

Lord LaMarche informs her that *"Taith-El is currently preaching at the new Temple of Cronn being built where the Lord of the North's shrine use to be. His devotion is unlike anything I have ever seen before."*

Intrigued even more, Lady Felicia goes in secret to the new temple and listens to Taith-El preach the word of Cronn. She finds a barbaric, yet intelligent young man, quietly addressing Cronn's new flock of followers.

"He speaks with such conviction, such passion, I must meet him."

She walks through the crowd, stopping near the simply wooden bench that Taith-El sits upon. Taith-El noticed the woman approach and stops speaking to the crowd. He immediately knew who she was, through the power of Cronn, and knelt before her on the ground like his god Cronn had done with Mirella in the beginning.

"Ask what you will of me, milady, I am your servant!"

Everyone present knew the words from the **Legend of Cronn and Mirella** and a murmur rises through the crowd. Lady Felicia is shocked, no one knew she was one of Mirella's faithful. Yet to address her in this fashion left no doubt in her mind that this young barbarian-priest was chosen by Cronn himself. And she instantly knew the response she must give in return.

"No Taith-El, your destiny is not with me but with the land that gave you life. You are its master and slave, you must guard it against those that would destroy it."

With that she left him. So great was his sorrow that he could not serve the lady, tears streamed from his eyes to dampen the ground. And thus, a great place of power was created in homage to both Cronn and Mirella. The two would never meet again, as Lady Felicia left for the Monarchy that same day.

And in the months to come, the news of the tabaxi spreads out from the Onan Territories to the rest of the states of the Wild Plains, while rumors circulate through the Eastern Shores about trouble brewing in the southwest. The question on everyone's mind is where and when the tabaxi will attack next.

The following dates detail events related the major tabaxi activity during the Year of the Return:

- On the 1st of Thorn, an army of tabaxi and strange humanoids appears out of the Storm Jungle, laying siege to the **City of Anthmoor**. The city's defenders hold off the attacking army but the tabaxi refuse to surrender or retreat. They camp several miles from the city, raiding the surrounding countryside for supplies and slaves.
- On the 14th of Thorn, the combined might of the tabaxi, their strange griffon-like humanoid slaves, mountain orcs, and ogres attack on three fronts – **Anthmoor**, **Hutmallia** and **Tallawan**. The army attacking Hutmallia breaks through the city's defenses, captures the city and its residences. Tallawan holds its ground with the help of several powerful adventurers. Anthmoor knocks back the invading army, destroying hundreds of enemy soldiers with powerful magic and the aid of the **Majestic Bronze Dragon of Harqual**, **Nethmalinor**. The great dragon warns the attacking army: *"You threaten my home and the Balance, evil ones. Continue your onslaught on this city and I will make you pay... personally!"*
- On the 16th of Thorn, the tabaxi armies attacking along the coast of the Storm Peninsula pull back into the Storm Jungle, its leaders unwilling to face the epic power of Nethmalinor. The tabaxi occupying Hutmallia refuse to leave, however, entrenching themselves into the city. They watch the sky, praying to **Sa**, the tabaxi god known as **The Tolerant**, for protection against the great **Majestic Bronze**.
- On the 23rd of Thorn, a huge army of tabaxi and their allies attack the City of Ilasi. The defenders barely hold off the attack hordes. Tabaxi shamans and sorcerers use powerful magic to block the ability to *teleport* in or out of the city or cast *sending* spells beyond the city's walls.
- On the 1st of Truce, in the **City of Eversink**, several of the city's night watchmen notice several strange humanoids skulking through the darkness, in the swamp, outside the city. The humanoids, which appeared to look cat-like, don't attack but the city remains on guard none-the-less. The humanoids might be tabaxi, or even rakasta, but the watchmen could not be sure what they saw.
- On the 8th of Truce, a tabaxi raiding party is spotted outside of the **City of Shaule**, east of **Lake Nest**. The tabaxi seem to vanish from sight, as if by magic, before any of the guards can inform the city's ruler, **Prince Winston Hallet**. Prince Hallet triples the guards on the walls of his city and the number of patrols sent out each day.
- On the 2nd of Hansa, outside of Avion City, a tabaxi army, which arrived in the night, begins assaulting the Capital City of the Monarchy. The fighting is brutal and hundreds die, on both sides. By the end of the night, the tabaxi are entrenched around the city. No one is able to leave the city by land, although the sea is still controlled by the Monarchy.
- On the 14th of Hansa, in Eversink, several high ranking officials are found dead, their throats slashed and the victim's scalps taken. The local authorities are sure if tabaxi assassins are to blame or if it is simply home spun assassinations.
- On the 25th of Hela, an advancing army of the tabaxi and **Cronn's Regiment**, as it is later named meet on the field of battle just west of the **Hills of the Holds**. The battle is short and brutal, as the tabaxi overrun the small regiment of Monarchy soldiers. Two dozen humanoids die for every member of Cronn's Regiment whom falls. The remaining Monarchy soldiers, no more than 50, divide into two groups. One group retreats back towards **Nidbor Keep** and the other retreats southwest to the **Town of Jalmur**. The conflict is later named the **Battle for the Hills**.
- On the 30th of Hela, the advancing tabaxi army arrives at Nidbor Keep. They lay siege to the fortress with everything they have including foul Necromantic magic, animating the fallen from both sides to fight on in the army of the Priests of Tu. The tabaxi use every sneaky and dirty trick they can think of including summoning monsters upon the walls of the keep and ethereal assassins. The **Battle of Nidbor Keep** continues on into the night.

The Fall of the Knotwood

On the 9th of Hansa, the High One of Silver Leaves notes during the crisis with Ahamudia that there isn't word from the forest elves of the Knotwood. He has this feeling that something is wrong by the wind in the air and the smell of the forest. He can feel darkness passing through the branches of the trees weighing down upon his soul. He sends a small patrol of silver elves to check on the forest elves of the Knotwood.

On the 20th of Hansa, a few surviving member of the patrol return to Silverleaf battered and bruised. They couldn't find any forest elves but what they did find chilled their bones. The Knotwood had become deformed and twisted. The local denizens have become a mockery of nature; flesh-eating bears, poisonous lions, undead treants, and worst of all, demons. The High One falls into a state of shock at the news. His advisors order the blockade of the southern half of Great Forest until it can be decided what to do.

Then on the 7th of Euphoria, a hundred or so forest elves are discovered lying in the *Sacred Plains* severely wounded or crippled. There aren't any older elves in the group, which is made up of mostly children. They are all unconscious and most of the warriors are near death. The priest of the Sacred Plain does what he can but dozens die before the day is over. A week later, few of the stronger forest elf males finally recover enough to explain what happened in the Knotwood.

After the *Therani Clan Elders* cut off the Knotwood from the rest of Harqual, they started using High Magic to place powerful wards near the edge of the forest to warn of human encroachment into the woods. However, some of the more radical members of the clan took matters into their own hands and placed wards of their own using the Forbidden Art. This was against everything that elven-kind stand for and was kept secret. Then a truly insane elven wizard, named *Weikir*, summoned a powerful vrock demon directly to his home. The wards placed over a thousand years ago to prevent this sort of thing fizzled due to the powerful dark magic he used.

He then bound the demon to his service and started using his new ally to destroy his rivals. When word of this came to the attention of the *Clan Council* they were shocked. Even more so when they realized how far the corruption had spread. They immediately sent several sorcerers to destroy the defilers. Most of the evil elves were wiped out but Weikir wouldn't be taken alive or dead. He cast two powerful necromantic spells to ensure his survival. The first one caused a dark *fog of corruption* to spread out amongst the tree homes of the surrounding clans and reshape anything it touched. This allowed him to exert his will on the other clans and he set them loose on the council. By day's end, most of the council members had either been slain or transformed into what would become known as *Blood Elves*.

Then he used the most powerful Forbidden Art spell he knew, *dark wish*, to merge with the summoned demon. The two minds struggled for control and eventually merged into one mind. This being named itself *Wyrknari Vok*. It then started summoning other powerful demons into its service and started conquering The Knotwood. It slaughtered or devoured all that opposed it and corrupted half the clans in less than a month.

Those that survived the first wave decided on two courses of action. The youngest elves of all the remaining clans were taken north towards Kingdom of the Silver Leaves with a contingent of the best warriors and priests remaining. The very old were allowed an honorable death to keep them from the demons (luckily there weren't many left) and the rest of the clan members would stay behind and protect the rear. A *contingency* spell was placed on the rearguard that would *disintegrate* a 5-ft radius when a member was killed. This way the rearguard could hopefully destroy those that killed them after their death.

The elves that fled towards Silverleaf were fifteen hundred strong when they started out, but they were decimated by demons, blood elves, and summoned undead. Those that survived past the shores of *Lake Loch* were the lucky ones. The wards protecting The Kingdom of the Silver Leaves saved them. The survivors warn the silver elves that the current wards protecting the kingdom may not be strong enough to hold back the darkness.

The High Wizards of the kingdom immediately strengthen the wards in the southern part of the forest. These layers of additional wards are placed every 5 miles for 30 miles towards the Knotwood. The High One then orders the High Wizards to place wards on the fringes of the forest near the human lands surrounding The Knotwood. Heward Tallinson, the man known as The Sorcerer, aids them with the casting of several powerful epic spells. The powerful spells keep the demons at bay for the most part but many of the communities along the isolated western edge of the Great Forest find themselves constantly under attack by blood elves.

The Transformation

Change has come to Harqual in other ways than just these events, however. From the 4th to the 9th of Thorn, a strange magical fog engulfs Harqual from the *Isles of Ice* beyond the frozen lands of the Northlands all the way to the *Isle of Ghosts* beyond the Far South. It is a time of fear and strange occurrences, which alters Harqual in unbelievable ways. Entire tracks of land either disappear into the sea or are transformed. In the region south of the Sword Imperium a new range of mountains appear out of the fog. In other places, new city-states and ruins appear across the land, some benign some not. The event becomes known as *The Transformation*.

The Transformation introduces several new kingdoms and races to Kulan including the *Kingdom of Ahamudia*. In the chaos that follows, Ahamudia is attacked by the Sword Imperium, a conflict which goes on for several months before the new kingdom is able to push the aggressive Empire of Swords back with the help of new allies: Avion, Navirosov, Onaway, the elves of Silverleaf, and the dwarves of the Greystones. The Sword Imperium collapses under the weight of war, as the allied kingdoms and cities lay siege to the Imperial Capital, *Yösydän*. In the aftermath, the region of the Sword Imperium is renamed the Sword Protectorate and Yösydän is renamed *Vapaa*, in honor of the last known peaceful Emperor who ruled over the Empire of Swords. New treaties are forged with the formation of the *Eight Cities Alliance* between Ahamudia and several of the allied countries (not Silverleaf or the dwarves).

Just north of the Great Expanse a new city-state appears out of the fog. This city, *Tschaja*, is inhabited by a strange race of bird-like humanoids that call themselves the *Kha*. Unlike with Ahamudia, the Kha are fortunate to meet the good people of the *Sovereign City of Yuln* and *the Barony of Liran*. The citizens of those lands welcome the Kha and several trade agreements are reached. However, the Kha do not understand the nature of magic and soon find their city hard-pressed to deal with the dangers of magic. As well, the orcs of the *Black Kingdom* view the region that Tschaja appeared in as theirs by right of the will of Gruumsh. This has led to an increase in tension in the region.

The strange magical, fog warps the lands east and northeast of the Greystone Mountains. Miles and miles of barren wilderness instantly become inhabited, as half a dozen city-states and strange ruins appear throughout the region. Chaos reigns throughout the *Lake Gem Region*, named after the large lake that dominates the region, for many months (years, really) after the Transformation. The city-states come from various different Alternate Material Planes and soon begin bickering amongst each other as races and cultures clash. The city-states now vie for control of the ore-filled hills and mountains against the dwarven Kingdom of the Greystones.

Three new races, besides the new human cultures, appeared in the region: the *Niomus of the City-state of Stonevale*, the *Siarrans of the City-state of Alithton*, and the nomadic *Illonis* who have quickly spread as far south as the Lands of the Cities of the Wind. The siarrans and niomus, along with several of the other new city-states, quickly, banded together into a loose alliance, which has becoming known as the *Kingdom of Jewels*. Besides Alithton and Stonevale, the other new city-states, which joined this new land, are *Felyer, Halle*, and *Vull*. This land is a kingdom in name only, as who should be king or if there should even be a king remains in doubt.

In the Far South, beyond the Great Expanse, the changes to Harqual have been less noticeable physically. The land has remained as it was, for the most part, but many new cities, ruins, and other strange structures dot the landscape. No more so is this apparent then around the coast of the *Nebral Peninsula*. In ages past, the peninsula has been a wild place with only three major city-states: *Bandontown* on the shores of *Lake Therse*, *Mt. Song* in the *Carillon Mountains*, and *Livaley* on the peninsula's southeastern coast. Bandontown and Mt. Song are dominated by demihumans such as elves, forest gnomes, and halflings. Livaley is a city-state of mainly human, elven, and half-elven arcane spellcasters. Note that humans, beyond those living in Livaley, have been extremely rare in this region.

Now, not so much as before.

Eight new city-states dot the coastline of the Nebral Peninsula: *Aatente, Belinay, Cardamere, Echostone, Hathmathia, Rhamsandron, Vhine*, and *Vilonia*. Of these cities, five are dominated by a human culture: Belinay, Hathmathia, Vilonia, Vhine, and Aatente. Stranger still is that, except for Aatente, Cardamere, Echostone, and Rhamsandron, all these city-states come from the same plane of existence. The citizens were part of a grand kingdom called *Belinar* and the City-state of Belinay was their capital. The region where this Belinar was supposed to have existed was barren with little water so you can imagine the shock to awakening from their dreams to find that they had been transported to paradise.

While the Nebral Peninsula is definitely not paradise, it is now dominated by a united human culture determined to learn everything they can about this place called Harqual. The *Belins*, as they call themselves, often refer to their new home as the *Land of Dreams* for many believe that they have been transported to a place they could have only dreamed into existence. Belin peasants are somewhat superstitious by nature and they refuse to go anywhere near the *Merewood*. They believe the *phanatons*, who call the forest home, are spirits to be honored and feared. Many of their mystics believe it was the phanatons who brought them to Harqual. (The phanatons don't seem to mind the adoration, as, in the past, most outsiders normally wish to cut down the trees for timber or firewood.)

The City-state of Aatente is home to a culture of dark-skinned humans who call themselves the *Aate*. These humans are from the other side of Kulan and are shocked to discover they have been stolen from their homeland by what they perceived as a demonic fog. They have remained isolated from the phanatons and other newcomers of the Nebral Peninsula for the most part. They have had some contact with the *Breshidi* of Cardamere but formal relations are moving slowly. They find the citizens of the City-state of Rhamsandron distasteful, refusing to have dealings with them. A state of tension already exists between the two city-states.

The Breshidi of Cardamere are a race of blue-green skinned fey-like folk. They have had almost no contact with outsiders beyond the Aate, the phanatons of the Merewood, and a man from *Xcellian* named *Randolph Baer*. The story of how Baer came to gain the trust of the Breshidi remains cloaked in secrecy. It is known that he use to be a vizier for the *Merchant Lord of Xcellian, Anders Carrin*, but beyond that, no one really knows or is willing to tell the tale. What is known is that Baer is a devoted follower of Immotion and that he has broken all ties with his former home. He and Carrin are now bitter rivals.

The City-state of Echostone is a strange place, which has adapted quickly to the area known as the *Whispering Stones*. Original named something much harder to pronounce Echostone is home to a strange, insubstantial race of

humanoids called the *Anaema*. These wispy humanoids are hard to effect unless magic is involved and the superstitious Belin stay as far from Echostone as they can, thinking the anaema are ghosts. The demihumans of Mt. Song originally believed this as well but soon came to realize that these *Spirit Humans* are indeed a living, breathing race. Anaema rarely travel beyond the Whispering Stones, although a few have visited Mt. Song and are intrigued by demihuman culture. The anaema come from a demiplane on the edge of the Ethereal Plane, which cannot be pronounced in the normal languages of Harqual.

The ***City-state of Rusthallow*** is a strange city filled with amazingly diverse citizens including not only humans and demihumans, but also goblinoids and even stranger peoples. The key feature of the city-state is its more advanced technology than that found on Harqual. Flintlocks are common amongst its people and alchemy is fused with technology in their citizen's lives and on the city-state's streets. (In many ways, Rusthallow is similar to Sharn on Kanpur but less magical and more industrial.) The citizens of Rusthallow love the new world they've been brought to not for its beauty but for its resources. Their world (Ekunar) was a desolate place full of badlands and scrub plains. True trees are rare on Ekunar, which makes the Merewood a gold mine of opportunity for them. This has brought them into conflict with the denizens of the forest, as well as the leaders of Mount Song in the Carillon Mountains. The citizens of Rusthallow have a near insane lust for gold and gems.

East of the Nebral Peninsula several city-states have been affected by the Transformation – most notably the ***City-state of Adabrilia***. Once the thriving metropolis of the Far South, Adabrilia is now a ghost. Its streets are deserted and a touch of magic hangs in the air. When the Transformation ended so did the citizens of Adabrilia. Entire families and noble houses gone with the fog. Whether they were killed or transported to another plane of existence, no one knows. And only the foolhardy enter Adabrilia and try to find out.

Most don't return but those that have come back tell tales of seeing people at the edge of their sight reaching out to them in horror then fading from sight as one turns to get a better view of them. Beyond these 'ghosts' Adabrilia is home to only dangerous monsters and wild creatures. Only creatures with an Intelligence Score of 5 or less can be found stalking the streets of Adabrilia. Surprisingly, this also keeps most intelligent undead out of the city as well. There are rumors of an insane vampire living in Adabrilia but none have ever seen this evil creature.

Farther east past the Heverkent Forest and Hinderfall Mountains is the Savanna of the Sun and the lands of the ***Republic of the Thorn***. Shortly after the magical fog dispersed a group of warriors from the republic came across an unknown ruin on the southern shore of Harqual. The ruin soon became the bane of the republic's existence in the Year of the Return. Powerful undead monsters swarmed out of the ruin to lay waste to the lands of the republic. The clerics of Erythnul were powerless against the undead and, in desperation, betrayed the republic to the undead to save their own lives. For years the warriors of the republic had fought for the Interloper God known as The Many, having turned away from the grace of Jalivier many decades earlier. Now, betrayed by their god and faced with a deadly foe, all seemed lost. But then in her inner sanctum, ***Yuinii Bazgal***, the half-orc ***Consul of the Republic***, hears the divine voice of Jalivier in her mind.

"You have been betrayed by the Interloper Erythnul just as I warned you all those years ago. You did not listen to me then and your people are now suffering for it. However, it is not too late to save the souls of the dead and the lives of the living."

"Tell me what I must do, Defender, and I will do it."

"You must ride with your men, fight alongside them as an equal. You must share their battlefield and their fate, whatever that may be for not even I can predict this outcome. But if you go with no malice in your heart or trickery in your mind then I will be there with you. Now go!"

"It will be as you say, Defender! I swear it!"

With that, Consul Yuinii Bazgal dons her full plate armor, a simple warrior's sword and exits the Inner Sanctum. She gathers her remaining warriors to her and tells them of the Defender of the Light's words. They are skeptical but she persists.

"Great Jalivier has sought to bring the Republic of the Thorn and its warriors back into the Light! I am going, alone if I must!"

She mounts a great white steed that appears out of the mist engulfing the Fortresses heart. It is clad in the symbols of Jalivier. The awed Warriors of Thenin bow down before the messenger of the Defender, as the Consul rides towards the gate.

"Open the gate!"

The Warriors jump to their feet, grab their weapons and follow their leader into the darkness to battle the waiting horde of undead. As they go, it could be heard that clarion horns could be heard in the distance and that the Consul of the Republic shone with holy brilliance. Indeed, Jalivier was with them.

In unison they shouted the words of decades past.

"For the Defender, for the Light, for the People!"

The Consul and her warriors rode out into the night and won the battle, driving the undead back into the depths of the ruin. However, the cost was great, as the Consul died that night leaving the Republic of the Thorn was left without its most powerful leader. The Republic's Senate bickers amongst themselves while the warriors of the Republic, now called the **Soldier of Light**, fight a continuous battle against the undead of ruin, which has become known as **Hathenmoor**.

Many other strange ruins and cities came out of that fog including the **Ruins of Tarquay** and **Caer Tih'bin (Ruins of the Mist)**, in the northern reaches of the Northlands, and the **City of Christopherson** (inhabited by the strange red-skinned four-armed humanoids called the **Jiltan**), the **Twined Cities of Anaree & Sariae**, and the **Ruins of Araluople**, in the Far South.

The Transformation Gods

With the many cities and kingdoms that became part of Harqual due to The Transformation there came the many faiths and religions of these new lands. Not all of the new gods referred to as the **Transformation Gods** have took root beyond the deity's origin point, after The Transformation. Thus while the **Ahamudian Gods** are a powerful pantheon they are rarely worshiped beyond the Kingdom of Ahamudia. The same is true of the many deities that are worshiped in the City-state of the Invincible Overlord.

The **Pantheon of Ahamudia** is made of eight deities: **Aladius, Aphulaen, Helek, Maldar, Satiria, Vafar, Volrai**, and **Zyrcek**. These gods are more of a loose pantheon of deities based solely on the worship of the citizens of Ahamudia. They aren't always allies and their followers often argue over ideology. Helek is the closest there is to a state god in the Kingdom of Ahamudia, while Aphulaen, Maldar, and Vafar are the patron deities of the Aphranaen elves, the Bitran, and the Hutaakans, respectively.

The Transformation Gods of the "City State" includes, but isn't limited to: **Arghrasmak, Harmakhis, Manannan mac Lir, Nephthys**, the **Gods of Pegana, Thoth**, the **Toad God**, and **Wotan**. Of all these deities the most powerful in the "City State" are Harmakhis, Nephthys, Thoth, and Wotan. Arghrasmak is a quasi-deity that has had its essence split between its home world and the World of Kulan. The Gods of Pegana are a pantheon that has retained some influence in the "City State", but whose worship isn't likely to spread beyond its walls. The Toad God is a demigod that still resides on its home world, and its followers have been greatly reduced in power within the new incarnation of the "City State". Of these deities, it is Manannan mac Lir and Wotan whose worship is most likely to spread beyond the walls of the City-state of the Invincible Overlord.

Another group of Transformation Gods that seem connected to a specific region, if not to a specific city, are the deities of the Kingdom of Jewels. That kingdom has many several unique races as part of its makeup and, thus, has its own unique faiths and religions. The most notable of these are the following: **Allasyrain, Dy'Madra, Oghma, Tyche**, and **Untamo**. The first two deities are the patron gods of the Siarrans and Niomus, respectively. Oghma and Tyche are important deities to the many humans of the Kingdom of Jewels, while Untamo is a fringe deity that is more popular with the non-human races.

The last known group of Transformation Gods that are worth mentioning are the **Gods of the Titans: Cronus, Gaea, Rhea**, and **Uranus**. These **Immortal Titans** are related to the **Olympian Gods** and are very powerful deities. Their worship has sprung out of the many new giants and human tribes scattered across the Northlands. These giants and savage humans are often belligerent towards the native populations of giants & barbarians, and their worship of the Immortal Titans is often fanatical.

There are many more **Small Faiths** on Harqual than there was before The Transformation, and it isn't inconceivable that many of these new deities will grow in power as the years pass. However, it is also just as likely that most of these Small Faiths will become integrated into the North Gods, Sword Gods, or Interloper Gods. The Anaema of the City-state of Echostone have many of their own Small Faiths, but they are quick to point out that their gods aren't that different than the Gods of Harqual. The Belins have abandoned their old gods, preferring to worship any of the Gods of Harqual. The Belins have also begun worshiping the phanatons of the Merewood, as powerful nature spirits. The ruins of Hathenmoor, in the Far South, are said to be home to a powerful demon lord who is either a Quasi-Deity or Demigod, while the Jiltan of the City of Christopherson are said to worship several unique Small Faiths.

NOTE: In game terms, a Small Faith is dedicated to a single deity no more powerful than a Demigod. Demon Lords from the Abyss may fall into this category, but more often a Small Faith surrounds the worship of a Quasi-Deity whose

essence was divided in two during its transference to the Lands of Harqual. their former worlds, and it is rumored that an unknown, unnamed suffering from complete amnesia.

A lot of these *Torn Gods* don't remember Torn God roams the lands of the Far South,

OTHER IMPORTANT DETAILS

THE CALENDARS OF HARQUAL

There are three distinct calendars on Harqual. Each one is described below.

Gabriel Stonn and the New Calendar

The continent's most widely used calendar, *The New Calendar*, as it's called, is Harqual's most important one. Two hundred and fifty two years after the end of the Divinity War, a man named **Gabriel Stonn** came to power in a city-state, called **Ariag**, on the Jagged Peninsula on the eastern shore of Northern Harqual. Gabriel was the first man to have a vision of what Harqual's future should be without also wanting to oppress its peoples.

He reformed Ariag's failing political and justice systems and introduced widespread change throughout the city's military to weed out corruption. He put the power of rule in the hands of the citizens of the city-state. Women and even those over the age of fifteen had the right to voice their opinion, although one still had to be at least eighteen to vote. It was a radical change that would reshape Harqual's history in the region. It was this that brought about the creation of the New Calendar.

Stonn knew his growing kingdom, known then as *The Kingdom of the Jagged Peninsula*, needed a new calendar to track the seasons and the days. And since Gabriel was a humble man, he refused to name it after himself or the city-state he ruled. He would simply call it the New Calendar and be done with it.

The New Calendar spread through the lands of the eastern coast and eventually to the west and even to the **Far South**. Only the barbarians of the Northlands have never adopted it fully, as it is not in their nature to write things down. They simply track the passage of time the way they had since Cronn built the Hall of the Northlands. The barbarians of the Northlands do honor Gabriel Stonn for the pious life he lead and honor the celebrations and cycles of the calendar when visiting the southern lands beyond the Greystone Mountains.

As for Gabriel Stonn, the man ruled Ariag and the kingdom that was built around it for his entire lifetime. At his death in 52 N.C., the city and the kingdom were both renamed Stonn in his honor by the people that had grown to love him. Stonn's kingdom still exists and is the oldest human kingdom on Harqual. (The silver elf kingdom, *The Kingdom of the Silver Leaves*, is the oldest.) Stonn's birth is celebrated every 100 years from the 1st year after Gabriel's death to the present. The next celebration is in 752 N.C.

The New Calendar follows a 12 months (365 days) per year cycle. Each month is broken down into roughly 4 weeks made up of 6 days per week. Each month is made up either 30 or 31 days. The year has 4 seasons that follow the same basic seasonal patterns of Earth – *Springdawn*, *Summerfall*, *Autumnwind*, and *Winternight*.

The New Calendar, Jaeger, and the Honorbound

Jaeger's death has great religious significance to all of the priests of the Pantheon of the North but none so much as his own. It was Jaeger that brought about the end of the Divinity War by sacrificing his life force and divine power, to the multiverse, to save all of Harqual from Hiisi's evil.

His former clergy now call themselves the *Honorbound* and refer him to as Jaeger the Saint. As a result of Jaeger's sacrifice a new, bright star was born in the heavens above Kulan called *Jaeger's Rest*.

In honor of Jaeger's death and sacrifice the second week of his month is celebrated by every faith in the Pantheon as the *Time of Honorbound*. Many treaties have been ratified and reworked during this week of celebration and remembrance.

This week is also when all the companies of Honorbound gather for the annual rites of passage for new members and to honor those of the company that have fallen over the last year. It is considered blasphemous to miss your companies gathering unless you are a prisoner of a military power that doesn't worship the pantheon. All faiths of the pantheon will release a Honorbound to be at his gathering. This helps prevent vendettas and blood feuds between the faiths and independent companies.

The New Calendar and the Divine Children

Gabriel Stonn was a pious man and was true to the gods of the Pantheon of the North when so many others were not. He honored the gods by naming each of the months for one of the Divine Children that fell during the Divinity War against the Pantheon of Swords. Thus, the twelve months of the New Calendar are named Anon, Zealot, Sialic, Thorn, Truce, Hansa, Hela, Seraph, Nesus, Euphoria, Tulle, and Jaeger, in that order. (See below for more details on the structure of the New Calendar.) All, but three, of these Children were lost to total oblivion. Jaeger's legacy is noted above in the section on the Honorbound but more details are needed regarding Hansa and Hela.

Sidebar 3: Pronouncing the Different Names of the Months

Anon (eh-‘nän)	Truce (‘trüs)	Nesus (‘nes-ahs)
Zealot (‘zel-eh)	Hansa (‘han(t)-sah, ‘hän-(.)zä)	Euphoria (you-‘for-ee-ah)
Sialic (si-‘al-ik)	Hela (‘hel-ah)	Tulle (‘tül)
Thorn (‘thÓ(eh)rn)	Seraph (‘ser-ehf)	Jaeger (‘yeh-gar)

Hansa was buried under the earth during a battle with Hiisi’s godsons, Deltum and Enduma. It was the cat god Tu that sent Hansa spiraling down into ground forming what would become the Twilight Valley. To this day, he struggles to free himself from his underground prison, which causes seasonal earthquakes that plague Harqual. The third week of his month is known as **The Shaking** due to high number of quakes that occur during that time period. Clerics of Hansa gather in the Twilight Valley during this time to pay homage to their god.

Hela’s tragic tale, of Thera binding Hela’s essence to the sea of the Sword Gulf so that the Peace Goddess could never rest, is honored during on the first day and last day of her month. Her clergy gather on the shores of the Sword Coast, on the first day, throwing peace blossoms into the sea and singing sad dirges for the release of their goddess. On the last day, they come again along with the faithful masses, this time in brightly colored clothes, to sing and dance and feast in Hela’s name, to bring the Peace Goddess love and merriment.

Also, when the violent storms of Autumnwind begin to break against the Sword Coast near Gillian and Avion, it is said they are the storms of Hela’s sorrow, raging to be free of her torment. This time is also sacred to her followers and to sailors of all faiths, up and down the Sword Coast.

The New Divine Children of the North Gods

While the gods of the Pantheon of the North grieved a long time for the fallen Divine Children, many of them found comfort in each other. The god Rel and his wife Ramara soon beget another godson who they named **Draven**.

After Bast lost her last godson, Truce, she fell into despair. Without a husband or any children to tie her to the pantheon, the North Gods worried she might leave them. The god Cull was chosen to watch over her and protect the interests of the pantheon, in keeping her from leaving. What resulted was a tryst between the two deities, which resulted in the birth of their first child, **Brenna**. The goddess **Casiia** was beget soon after, as the two deities formalized their union.

These new Divine Children have been a godsend, if you’ll excuse the pun. They have kept the North Gods close and in recent years the deities have begun to feel like a family again. The other North Gods have yet to beget new children, as Larea is deciding if she really wants Uller to be her new husband, and Cronn and Inanna are unwilling to bring more children into such a dangerous universe, for now. It is wildly known that the Daghdha has recently been visiting Persana’s Godly Realm, Shelluria, in the Outlands. Whether or not something will come of this is still unknown.

As with the Sword Gods, there are rumors that some of the Divine Children may have had children of their own. If so, these births would have most likely been amongst mortals, as the Divine Children were very close to mortals in all respects.

The most interesting rumor is that Hansa had a relationship with a mortal silver ‘wild’ elf and that a child was born of the union. The interesting part is that this half-god is still alive and often visits the Twilight Valley to be near Hansa.

Not a rumor, but now a known fact, is that Anon had a secret relationship with Dike. They were fast friends and may have been more. Dike is now a well-known Interloper God, as her followers are seeking a way to restore her companion. It is doubtful that Dike has had a child by Anon, however, as their relationship was more martial then anything else.

Another group of deities, related to the North Gods, are those children beget by the Old Gods in their traditional pantheons. These include the **Nine Daughters** of Aegir and Ran, and Lokun’s sons, **Narvi** and **Vali**, beget by his Asgardian wife, **Sigyn**. These other gods are the adopted Divine Children of the North Gods, although they aren’t truly bonded by blood. In reality, knowledge of these gods is hardly known beyond the Aegir and Lokun’s Godly Realms on Harqual.

It isn’t widely known but Sanh fancies one of the Nine Daughters. As of yet, Aegir has refused to let the Stormmaker court his daughter. Narvi and Vali often fight over who should have the right to court Cronn’s daughter, Mayela, but the truth is the Lady Judge find them both lacking.

The New Calendar and the Elements

The elements are also linked to Harqual’s calendar by way of the names of the days of the week and the moons of Kulan. The days in order of first to last are **Moonsday**, **Earthday**, **Fireday**, **Seaday**, **Windday**, and **Starday**. The four middle days are of course directly linked to each of the four **Prime Elements** - **Air**, **Earth**, **Fire**, and **Water**. (Other elements exist, such as the Para-Elements and the Element of Wood, but they aren’t linked to the New Calendar.)

Elementalists all across Harqual perform special rites and prayers, each week, on their associated day of the week. If this is not done, then the elementalists loses one spell level for the remainder of the week. If the rites are missed again the next week the elementalists incurs a -1 penalty when casting any spells from their **Elemental School** (this continues each week until the elementalists performs the rites on the proper day (this is cumulative, -2, -3, etc.).

The first and last day are also linked to the elements but hold less daily significance to elementalists.

Moonsday, of course, refers to Kulan's two moons – **Novan and Lithe**. Novan is a Water World and is considered the source of power for Water and Air Elementalists. Lithe is a bare, mineral rich airless void that is considered the source of power for Earth Elementalists.

Starday is named for both the stars and Kulan's sun. It is considered a special day for astronomers, especially during an eclipse or other celestial event (such as a comet). This day is also important to Fire Elementalists as it denotes the sun and the source of their power. Solar eclipses are considered 'bad' by these elementalists as this lessens their power for the duration of the eclipse [reduced by one level for 1d4+1 minutes before eclipse, full duration of eclipse (including partial), and 1d4-1 minutes after the eclipse].

Calendar of Swords

Before the time of Gabriel Stonn and the calendar he created the only method of tracking the days and seasons of the years was by using the archaic **Calendar of Swords** designed by the Imperium. The **CoS**, as it was abbreviated, was designed for recording historic and military achievements of the Imperium. It was never used to track the birth dates of the masses, festivals, or the changing seasons. The only birth dates ever recorded on the CoS were those of the King-Priests and a few of the more ambitious Dead Emperors.

Another problem with the calendar was that only a few individuals on Harqual knew how to decipher it. The CoS was written with strange archaic symbols that are still etched into the ziggurats. (The current year is 2,460 CoS.)

The Third Calendar

The third calendar is not really a physical calendar at all. The abbreviation **D.W.** refers to the time that passed from the end of the Divinity War to the Year of the Dawn. Thus, it only spans from **1 D.W. to 1001 D.W.** No one ever uses it to refer to events before or after these years and most never use it regardless.

This abbreviation only came into use after the tabaxi returned to Harqual in 749 N.C., the Year of the Return. After that had occurred, there was finally a way for scholars to note when the Divinity War actually ended and important D.W. dates are usually noted on The New Calendar. (The 1,001 years correspond to -252 N.C. to 749 N.C.)

THE DRAGONS OF KULAN

The dragons of Kulan are a little different than dragons on other worlds. Now, you're probably saying *"I've heard that one before!"*

Ah, but you see, they are.

You see dragons are linked to the Gods and the Elements. Dragons epitomize the four Prime Elements and the union of the beneficial powers of these elements. They also represent the paradox at the heart of being the mutual dependence of light and dark, creation and destruction, male and female. Dragons are the unifying force underlying these opposites and symbolize magical energy, neither good nor evil, that supports the physical world and which can be used for either good or evil purposes.

All this makes the dragons of Kulan an important part of the cycles of life and passing seasons. Dragons are considered part of the natural world just like any other intelligent race or member of the animal kingdom. Thus, they are not hunted as monsters and are even considered special children of the gods. Druids will help dragons fit into the **Tenets of the Balance** and will even teach abandoned newborns, of any color, to live in the bounds of the natural world. It is considered a great honor to have a dragon as a patron or to be given the title of **Dragon Friend**.

Note that not all Chromatics are evil and not all Metallics are good. In fact, most dragons of Kulan are either neutral in alignment or simply leave the world, if possible. Many of the more radical aligned dragons (such as Black, Gold, Red and Silver) don't even exist in great numbers. Those that do are either young neutral dragons in the company of druids or older dragons that are hiding from the outside world. However, all colors of dragons do exist on Kulan, even Gem, Shadow, Yellow, etc. Almost all of them follow the Tenets of the Balance and it is considered a good omen to spot one soaring through the sky.

Alignments for Kulan Dragons

The chart below shows the difference in alignment between the dragons of Kulan and the dragons on most other D&D

worlds. It also shows the typical alignments for a rogue dragon of each species. For example, a black dragon that lives within the boundaries of the Tenets of the Balance is normally chaotic neutral but could be any other alignment that is partially neutral (i.e. LN, NG, N, or NE). Thus, even a neutral evil black dragon lives within the Tenets of the Balance and is considered an honored child of the gods. Clerics of Mirella do not take kindly to self-righteous Paladins, Blackguards, and Clerics who take it upon themselves to hunt down dragons living within the Tenets of the Balance.

Note that this protection doesn't apply to rogue dragon. Thus, if that same black dragon had an alignment of chaotic good or chaotic evil then it would be considered a rogue dragon living beyond the boundaries set down by the Tenets of the Balance. Clerics of Mirella have been known to petition evil mercenaries or adventurers to hunt down lawful and chaotic good dragons living outside the Tenets of the Balance, just as often as they petition good characters to hunt down lawful or chaotic evil dragons. This can, and often does, lead to open conflicts between Mirella's Church and those faiths that follow 'extremism' thinking.

TABLE: DRAGON ALIGNMENTS

DRAGON TYPE	D&D STANDARD	KULAN STANDARD	ROGUE DRAGONS
<i>Chromatics</i>			
Black	Always CE	Usually CN	Usually CG or CE
Blue	Always LE	Usually LN	Usually LE
Green	Always LE	Usually NE	Usually LE or CE
Orange ¹	Always NE	Usually NE	LE, CE
Purple ¹	Always NE	Usually NE	LE, CE
Red	Always CE	Usually NE	Usually CE
White	Always CE	Usually N	LG, LE, CG, or CE
Yellow ¹	Always LE	Usually LN	LE, NE
<i>Felldrakes</i>			
Crested	Always NG	Usually NG	Usually LG or CG
Horned	Always NG	Usually NG	Usually LE or CG
Spitting	Always NG	Usually NG	Usually LG or CE
<i>Gem</i>			
Amethyst	Always N	Usually N	LG, LE, CG, or CE
Crystal	Always CN	Usually CN	Usually CG or CE
Emerald	Always LN	Usually LN	Usually LG or LE
Sapphire	Always LN	Usually LN	Usually LG or LE
Topaz	Always CN	Usually CN	Usually CG or CE
<i>Metallics</i>			
Brass	Always CG	Usually CN	Usually CG or CE
Bronze	Always LG	Usually LN	Usually LG
Copper	Always CG	Usually NG	Usually LG or CG
Gold	Always LG	Usually LN	Usually LG
Silver	Always LG	Usually N	LG, LE, CG, or CE
<i>Wrack</i> ²			
Firewrack	Always LE	Usually LN	Usually LE, CE
Seawrack	Always NE	Usually NE	LG, LE, or CE
Woodwrack	Always NE	Usually NE	LE, CG, or CE
<i>Other Types</i>			
Brown	Usually NE	Same	Usually LE or CE
Deep	Always CE	Usually CN	Usually CG or CE
Dragon Turtle	Usually N	Same	LG, LE, CG, or CE
Fang	Always CN	Usually CN	CG, CE

Half-Dragon	Varies by Color	Usually N	LG, LE, CG, or CE
Psuedodragon	Always N	Usually N	LG, LE, CG, or CE
Sand	Always CN	Usually CN	CG, CE
Shadow ³	Always CE	Same	Same
Wyvern	Usually N	Same	LG, LE, CG, or CE

1. A dragon described in *DRAGON Compendium, Volume 1*.
2. A dragon described in *Creature Collection Revised*.
3. Shadow dragons are always rogue dragons. In World of Kulan's Cosmology they make their home on the Shadowstar Sea

The Dragons of Harqual

The oldest dragon of each color on Harqual is called ***The Majestic***. Thus, the great blue dragon of the Great Expanse is known as ***Adamanditar, The Majestic Blue Dragon of Harqual***. The Majestics are always true neutral and are the greatest protectors of the Tenets of the Balance on Harqual. The Majestics gather once every 5 years for the ***Wyrmtide*** on the first day of Summerfall to celebrate the passing of the seasons and to discuss recent events that are endangering the Tenets. These meetings are the draconic version of a ***Druids' Circle***. [The last Wyrmtide was three years before the Year of the Dawn (748 N.C.).]

It is considered blasphemous to kill a dragon that lives within the Balance, but not so if the dragon is considered ***Rogue***. The Majestics have often sponsored adventurers to hunt down rogue dragons endangering the Balance and have just recently (in the last 20 years) commissioned an elite group of adventurers known as the ***Knights Majestic***. These groups of knights never refer to themselves as dragon slayers and will be insulted by any that call them such.

The Knights accept fighters, rangers, druids, sorcerers, rogues and bards. They do not accept paladins and most wizards into the Order due to those individuals' extreme ideals. This includes elementalists because they rely on one or two particular elements instead of a balance of forces.

Now you are probably wondering *"Where in Hade's Underrealm were the dragons during all this war and death?"* The answer is simpler than it seems at first. They were protecting the Tenets of the Balance during the wars that raged across Harqual. It was not their duty to get involved in the conflict but to minimize and repair the damage that was done during the wars to nature and its creatures.

Not even the few rogue dragons through the centuries would dare form an alliance with the Empire of Swords. For if they did, the Majestics would have got involved and wiped the evil mortals of the Imperium off the face of Harqual, as well as the rogues. The Pantheon of the North knew that widespread devastation would be the result from the dragons entering the wars and forbade them to get involved. It would not have been good for the Tenets. Thus, the dragons remained on the sideline, helping the Priests of Daghdha and Larea protect the Tenets of the Balance from the ravages of war. This is why the land rebounded so quickly and the civilizations did not.

LEGAL

VERSIONS

Version 2.56

(Newest to Oldest)

- Added a Table of Contents, Header, and Page Numbers for the final document.
- Updated Interloper Gods again to add deities from Dave Arneson's Blackmoor and the adventure, Aerie of the Crow God. Added the section for the Transformation Gods to this document. Updated the Bibliography section.
- Fixed some inconsistencies under The Transformation section. Added the City-state of the Invincible Overlord to the new "Transformation" cities of the Nebral Peninsula. Added Xan Yae to the Interloper Gods.
- Fixed some general errors that have crept into the document. Made these changes to the Interloper Gods – Added Dike, Halmyr, Hel, Heward, Konkresh, Mielikki, Valkar, & Wee Jas. Added the three 'new gods' boxed text sections.
- Finished the Fifth Era section. Folded in the Dragon alignment document into this one.
- Added Calphas to the Interloper Gods (with the permission of Kevin "Piratecat" Kulp). Added Olidammara to the Interloper Gods to give Kuil a rival beyond Vespín, the dead Sword God of Thieves and Assassins.
- Made these changes to the Interloper Gods – Added Ehlonna, Erythnul, & Kord; removed Grankhul, Hruggek & Yeenoghu; replaced Math Mathonwy with Boccob. Updated headings to conform to a proper layout under the Document Map option under the View menu.
- Completely reworked the document. Moved sections on Calendars, Honorbound, and Dragons to the end of the document under one section. Incorporated other Calendar document completely into this one. Changed font to Arial Narrow and added bolding of key people, places and events.

Previous changes from version 1.x

Added the Norse goddess Rán to the Interloper gods; changed Mulcrow to Minar; changed Rockforge to Sunus; major changes grammatically, altering of portfolios for some gods, updated Bibliography; updated for consistency between web page and document, added Chaeon to the Interloper Gods.

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