

# THE DIVINITY WAR (NARRATIVE)

By Robert Blezard

## ***To the Planes***

Cronn watched from Jalivier's Citadel of Light in the Seven Heavens, as the war on the mortal plane raged on. He had become less amiable as the years past, more sad, more grim. After the pantheon had lost the Great Hall of the Northlands Hades had suggested that the Pantheon take the fight with the dark gods to the Outer Planes.

*"If we go there, the dark gods will follow. Yes, the Mortals War will continue but less damage will be done to Harqual without us battling in the sky, balefire descending on the lands below."*

Cronn was loath to leave his people and to let them fend for themselves against the dark followers of Hiisi. But he knew that Hiisi would follow him into the planes, afraid that his prize would escape him. Thus, the Divinity War shifted to the Outer Planes.

"Enough! I've seen enough," Cronn smashed the mirror that showed his people suffering under tyranny. "Will this madness never end!"

Corellon looked at the broken mirror. Cronn had become more and more unstable in the last few decades. His pain was great; he truly did love his people, as much as he boasted. "It's hard to watch, I know. But it is the way it has always been so, since time began."

"I don't care, it's not my way!"

Corellon tried not to smile. Not at Cronn's pain, but at the image in his mind of a neophyte elven god raging in pain at the site of his people being butchered by orcs and goblins. Forced to watch helplessly, while the Olympian Thunderer, Zeus, gave the same speech. It felt like only yesterday, but was in fact many eras ago. Cronn reminded him so much of himself at the beginning of his godhood.

"Well, maybe Jalivier will return from Baator with good news. There must always be hope."

As if on cue in a great celestial drama, Jalivier came through the giant oak doors of his Citadel. He was battered and bruised, but whole. He knelt in front of his Father and began to speak. "Great Cronn, we have won a great victory this day."

"Stand Jalivier, and tell us of this great victory." Cronn's voice was slightly passive. Jalivier was the ultimate optimist and always said the same thing, no matter what the outcome was.

"We took Gaoterlog." Jalivier stood, beaming with pride.

"Yes!" Cronn's voice shook the heavens and his heart soared. Gaoterlog was Amand's realm, Hiisi's oldest godchild, in the third layer of the Nine Hells. "At last Anon, you are avenged!"

"Indeed this is good news." Corellon knew that Hiisi wouldn't care about losing his godson, but he would care about losing the power that Amand wielded – a pantheon that loses its God of War usually didn't survive long.

Soon the Citadel was filling with other pantheon members as the news quickly spread around the Outer Planes.

"My Lord," Inanna appeared next to the Lord of the North and embraced him. "I came as soon as I heard. Is Hades here yet?"

"Here," Hades appeared out of shadows. "I am happy for you, my friend. I respected your grandson very much and I am glad his godsoul is finally at rest."

"Uncle!" Hela appeared from her realm in Arborea.

She was growing up so fast and had become very beautiful, so much so that the god Apollo petitioned Cronn to court the goddess. He had told the Olympian god that his granddaughter's heart was her own and that if he wanted to court her that he'd have to ask her himself.

The Olympian did just that, after he recovered from the shock, begging Hela to be his consort. Being a strong willed goddess she put him off for a while but he persisted, following her around like a lovesick puppy. Hela had cared for Zell more than she had known and would not accept the Olympian's advances, at first.

Hela's heart had healed and Ramara had helped her pluck Apollo's love strings. Hela had been so good at it that Zeus had originally thought that she must be Ramara's daughter. When he found out that Hela was in fact, the Hunting Princess's daughter he had exclaimed that Apollo was out of his mind with love for sure.

"I heard you were back, is it true, your army took Gaoterlog?" Hela glided on the marble floors like a elemental princesses through the air. She hugged Cronn, Inanna and then her uncle.

“Yes child, Anon was avenged today. As were all of our kin lost because that butcher and the Dark Children.”

“Zell... Nessus... Sialic... Thorn... Tulle...” Cronn spoke the names of the fallen. “Meet brave Anon in the Twilight. Take him to Anacoro’s side in the peace of the oblivion.”

Hela became sad at the mention of the fallen, but then she smiled running back towards where she had first appeared. “I must tell mother, she will be so happy that Anon’s pain is finally over.”

She vanished as quickly as she came, leaving for her mother’s realm, Hunter’s Rest, in Elysium.

“Still the same joyful girl, even after all these years of war.” Moradin had spoken the words. He and Garl entered the Citadel of Light, appearing near the oak doors. “Jalivier, I here you kicked some Sword tail today. Why didn’t you tell me you were going, I would have gone with you.”

“It never came up, I was gone so quickly this time that I didn’t even have time to bring Cull with me.”

“You laid siege to Gaoterlog without the God of Strategy. You did perform a miracle, didn’t you?”

Moradin was inspired by his friend’s dedication to the cause.

“You could say that.” Jalivier had become aware that he was a mess and quick replenished his power so that his armor gleamed and his skin looked untarnished. No one said anything, allowing the Sun God his one vanity. “However, that battle might be won but the War is not. I lost some of my best followers today, celestial and mortal.”

The mood sobered a little and the Gods started to shift back to their own realms until only Cronn, Jalivier, Inanna, Hades, Corellon, Moradin, Garl, and Rel were left in the Citadel.

“I’m sure we can find the time to honor the dead,” Cronn put his hand on the Sun Gods shoulder. “But first we must be prepared for a counterattack from Hiisi’s brood. He won’t take this lightly and will probably send his troops into the Upper Planes to enact his revenge.”

“Demons and dark warriors attacking the Upper Planes.” Hades words echoed through the Citadel. “The rest of the Olympians are not going to like that one bit, except maybe Ares. He’d love to test his troops in such a battle.”

“Do you think he would throw in with Hiisi?” Cronn didn’t like the idea of facing both the Lord of Darkness and the Unfortunate One.

“No, he’s not likely to trust Hiisi or any other god with an agenda. More than likely, he’d send his troops in on no one’s side and simple fight for the love of it.”

“Ugh, Ares! No strategy, no honor, and no brains!” Inanna stared at the ceiling shaking her head in disbelief. “How any war god could just throw away good troops, for no other reason than the love of blood, is beyond me!”

“Cronn looked at his beloved and smiled. “Not every war god has your good sense, my dear, or your beauty.”

“Flatterer.” Inanna and Cronn had originally joined together and beget children to solidify her joining the pantheon. Eventually, they became friends and now, had become much more than that. So much so that Inanna’s realm had shifted over the years, from Baator to Mechanus then from there to Arcadia.

She had then renamed it the Heart of Battle and left Enlil and the Sumerians altogether, tired of being ignored by her former husband. Cronn was much more to her liking. He was passionate treating her with the respect he knew she deserved. Of course, Enlil had been incensed. But Inanna did not care she was in love. How could she deny her very nature? “I’d hardly call Ares a good comparison, my love.”

“How true, he’s not much to look at is he. Hades?”

“No comment.”

“I guess your right.” Cronn roared with laughter. “Zeus would probably hear about it if you degraded his son.”

“It’s not Zeus that concerns me.”

“Ah yes, I seem to remember hearing that Hera has quite the temper.”

“Again, no comment.” Hades let a small smile creep onto his face.

This time, they all laughed.

“You keep this up Hades and the denizens of the planes might learn you have a sense of humor.” Cronn was beside himself with mirth. Hades could always make him laugh and he really appreciated the Death God’s dry wit. “But let’s not forget why we’re here. Do you think you can keep Ares and his troops out of the battle to come?”

“Yes, he owes me a favor. I can’t say more than that.”

“Good enough,” Cronn was satisfied. He then turned to address the God of the Rakasta. “Rel, how do your people fare in the southern lands of our homeland? And where is Euphoria, I haven’t seen her in over a cycle?”

The cat god held up his head with pride. “My people have held the followers of Hiisi to the northern side of the Expanse, Lord Cronn. The darkness will not spread to the southern lands, I assure you. But it is not Hiisi’s minions that I am worried about, it’s the blasted tabaxi!”

“The tabaxi! Not again! I thought we settled this dispute. They can have the Storm Jungle and settle in the southern parts of the North but the savannas of southern lands are for your people. If only Tu would see reason, I don’t understand why he won’t speak with me regarding this matter.”

“No offence Lord Cronn but you are not a cat god.”

“Really, he doesn’t think I’m good enough for him? Is that it? Well you tell this cat god, no offence to you my friend-”

“None taken.”

“You tell Tu that if he makes trouble, I will personally skin the hide off his back.”

“It will be a pleasure.” Rel bowed to his patron then straightened himself smiling at Cronn. “And... Euphoria has been at the Seelie Court. Damh took her to introduce her to his queen. Titania absolutely adores her.”

“Damh wishes to make Euphoria his bride in the Seelie Court. It’s getting serious.” Corellon smiled at the mention of his Sylvan friends.

“Ah yes, young love. It is wonderful to here of such bliss in such troubling times.” Cronn’s mood brightened at the mention of his granddaughter. “Rel, you be sure to let Damh know that Titania and Oberon are welcome here anytime they want to visit.”

“Yes, Great Cronn.” Rel lifted his arms as a signal that he was about to transfer his Avatar back to his realm, the Savanna of the Rain, in the Beastlands but Cronn raised his hand and spoke once again.

“Just remember to tell Damh that Oberon’s little trickster friend Puck must be kept on a short leash, if he comes along. I’ve heard too many tales to let him roam free around here. The last thing I need is for him and Lokun to get together and cause mischief.”

“I will.” Rel dropped down his arms to his side in a flourish transferring his Avatar to his realm.

“If you will excuse me Father, Mother,” Jalivier had become fond of Inanna and when she had left the Sumar Gods he had told her that he would be honored if she would let him address her as his Divine Mother. Inanna had agreed wholeheartedly and would have probably cried if she had been a mortal woman. “I must find Cull and prepare our defenses for the battle to come.”

“Of course my son.” Cronn was happy that his godson and new wife had learned to respect and care about each other.

Jalivier bowed to them both and then turned and addressed Moradin and Garl. “I take you two are going to want to come as well.”

“Ha, you just try and stop us, my boy!” Moradin rubbed his hands together and elbowed Garl. “We’d been wanting a crack at those Hiisi spawn for cycles! Ain’t that right Garl?”

“Damn, right! Those Sword bastards have been giving my people nothing but trouble since they showed up on Harqual. It’s time for some major payback.”

Jalivier turned to Corellon. “What about you Elf Lord, do you wish to join in on the strategy session?”

“Unfortunately, no,” Corellon looked at Cronn. “I have matters to attend to in Arvador, if you will excuse me, my friend.”

Cronn nodded and Corellon’s Avatar vanished.

“All right then,” Jalivier stepped to one side and beckoned for Moradin and Garl to proceed ahead of him. “Gentlemen, after you.”

Moradin and Garl tromped out the door with the clomping of their heavy boots reverberating throughout the hall. Jalivier followed closely behind, telling them all about the taking of Gaoterlog, and how he had led the final onslaught himself.

“It was glorious.”

Cronn watched them go and wished his godson would boast a little less about such things. Yes, the battle was a great victory but Hiisi’s forces were bound to pay it back in blood. Boasting too much can make one careless on the battlefield the next time round.

“I must go,” Hades walked back towards the shadows. “I must speak to Ares and cash in that favor he owes me.”

After the Death God had gone, Inanna wrapped her hand in her husband's. Then the two gods wandered out of the Citadel of Light, seeking a quiet place to be alone.

### ***The Nether Lands***

Hiisi started to tear apart everything in sight when he learned that Amand had let Jalivier defeat him. The God of War hadn't been Hiisi's most intelligent godchild, but had been the strongest of the brood.

The Gods of Swords stood back, near the stone Ring of Swords, as Hiisi tore roots out of the earthen ceiling screaming and ranting about 'that stupid bastard' and 'I should have killed him myself.' There wasn't any reasoning with him when he was like this. Of course, he was almost always like this.

Thera, the Goddess of Violence watched her father with hate and scorn. He was wasting valuable time brooding over her inept brother. Amand had been terrible as the God of War, and she was positive that eventually Hiisi would grant her his place. There was no one else strong enough in the pantheon, and if he did give it to someone else, she'd just kill the unfortunate godling and take it. Yes, Thera, Goddess of War and Violence. She liked that; the universe would tremble at the mere mention of her name.

The dark goddess smiled at the thought of the joy it would bring her to add her father's power to her own. He wouldn't be able to stop her. None of them would. Not even Mussin or Nether would stand against her after that. She'd have to kill them both eventually, of course, just to consolidate her power in the pantheon.

The God of Decay would be the first to feel her wrath. Nether could wait. She might even be able to use him when the glorious day came. Yes, the God of Hate and Tyranny could be useful, as long as he remembered his place.

"Hiisi, darling."

Thera glared into the dark alcove where Hiisi's black consort, Thera's mother, sat. Hidden by the shadows she always remained distant from the rest of the Sword Gods. Thera hated her, of course Thera hated everyone, but the cow would die a slow and painful death. Thera would drink her mother's godsoul, slowly.

"Amand is gone. There's no sense ranting about it. We must prepare to strike back a Cronn's brood before they have a chance to prepare."

Hiisi turned to look at the red eyes staring out from the darkness of the alcove.

"I will decide when it is time to strike!" He continued to stare her down, as he slowly moved towards her. "Do not forget your place!"

"My humblest apologies, dear one. You are right of course."

Hiisi smiled, believing he had won. He turned his head toward the rest of the Sword Gods. "Does anyone else wish to make a suggestion?"

His tone stated simply that the next being to suggest something would lose their head and, perhaps, their godsoul as well. No one spoke, no one even moved. Not even Mussin would openly defy him when he was like this.

"Good," Hiisi turned his back them all. "We will attack Cronn and his vile pantheon of weaklings but only after prying into their affairs. I'm not going to just thunder into the Upper Planes without some sort of plan. Vespín, come forward!"

"Yes, Dark Father." The God of Thieves and Assassins stepped forward and knelt in front of Hiisi.

Thera hated how submissive her other older brother was. He'd have to die as well.

"Send your best proxies into the Upper Planes and have them locate where each of Cronn's brood is hiding. I want to know where they all are at every moment from now on. No more surprises. No more incidents like Gaoterlog, understood?"

"It will be as you command, Dark Father." Vespín immediately shifted his Avatar back to his own realm, eager to please Hiisi.

"Teve, step forward."

The Dark Warrior knelt in front of his father, as Vespín had done before him.

Thera didn't like the looks of this.

"I need a new War God," In Thera's mind Teve was already dead. "You will take Amand's place on the field of battle."

"I will make you proud Dark Father, I swear it!"

Hiisi was proud of his choice, unlike Amand before him; Teve was totally loyal to him. He noticed that Thera was visibly upset.

“I see you think I choose wrong, my dear. Do you wish to make a suggestion.” Hiisi’s eyes burned with anticipation at how Thera would respond.

Thera ground her teeth turning away from her father looking at her brother’s former place in the Ring of Swords. She made no sound, however.

“As I thought,” Hiisi snarled in triumph so that everyone could see and hear. “Never forget your place Thera or I will pass your power to another and demote you to the Goddess of Scullery Maids! Now get out of my sight!”

Thera was seething inside, humiliated. As she shifted to her realm in the Abyss she swore to herself that she’d make him pay for this.

Teve moved back to his place amongst the Sword Gods. Hiisi continued to call his servants forward.

“Druaga, I want an army of fiends! Hordes of them! I don’t care if you have to steal larvae from the Dark Eight themselves, I want an army not even the Old Gods would want to face!”

“It will be done, Dark One.” The God of Vile Summoning left his master’s realm to do as he was bid. Nothing would stand in his way.

“Emcey!”

The God of Lawbreakers stepped forward and bowed to his father. “I am at your service, Dark Father.”

“Always,” Hiisi was especially proud of this one. He was both loyal and yet loved to cause trouble. “Send whoever you can throughout the planes and have them recruit the most vile revolutionaries and mercenaries they can find.”

“As you command, Dark Father.” Emcey stepped into the darkness vanishing to his realm.

“Deltum, Enduma! Hiisi turned to his twin godsons. “I want you to go to Harqual and cause as much mayhem as you can. I want Cronn’s people scurrying around confused like ants without a hill. Destruction and fear, understood?”

The Gods of Disaster and Suffering smiled at each other swearing an oath to their Dark Father, that when they were done, the lands of Cronn’s people would be unlivable. They then shifted out of the Nether Lands to Harqual to start their evil playing.

“Teve,” Hiisi addressed his godson again. “Prepare your followers for battle!”

“Yes, Dark Father.” Teve saluted shifting to his realm in Baator.

All of his lesser gods now had something to do, or think about, and Hiisi’s rage had subsided. Only the more powerful dark gods were left in his presence: Mussin, Nether, and Xuar.

Xuar, the only one of Cronn’s kin that he could stand. The Jealous Arcane, the greatest ally in his pantheon. Of course, being the God of Jealousy and Forbidden Magic meant that Xuar would give anything to keep his place amongst the dark gods, even tolerating Hiisi himself. Yes, Xuar wanted his power, Hiisi knew that – they all did. But Xuar was so jealous of everyone else that he would do almost anything to please the Lord of Darkness.

It was this thought that gave Hiisi an idea.

“Nether! One of my spies has told me that Cronn’s grandchild Euphoria is currently residing with Damh in the Seelie Court.”

“What do you want me to do?” Nether bared all his teeth and then licked his lips in anticipation.

“I want you to bring her here.” Hiisi looked at Xuar and saw his jealousy rise; he had wanted to take Euphoria for his own. “She is to be a prize for my consort to do with as she pleases.”

“Can I hurt her a little first?” Nether grinned like an evil feline about to taste a helpless canary.

“Whatever you wish, just make sure her godsoul is still intact when you get back.”

“It will be as you command, Hiisi.” Without moving, Nether shifted away to find the location of the wandering Seelie Court.

“As for you Xuar, I have no use for you at this time. I will call on you when I need you.” Hiisi noticed that the Jealous Arcane was fuming inside at what he was being denied.

“As you wish, Hiisi,” Xuar felt as though someone had torn out his godsoul. What had he done to deserve this dishonor? He must try to make amends to the Lord of Darkness. “I have something that I need to take care of anyway.”

A small smile crept over Hiisi’s face. He knew that Nether would never get a chance to bring Euphoria to him. Xuar would find her first and present her to Hiisi before Nether even knew he’d been duped. And Xuar would hurt her even more than Nether would. This was something that would not sit well with the Nether; more than likely he’ll take his frustration out on Damh or one of the other Sylvan Gods.

“Brilliant,” Mussin knew him better than either would ever admit. “Playing one against the other like that. I am glad that we are allies Hiisi, I hate to think what you’d try to do to me if we weren’t.”

“Yes, Mussin, be glad I tolerate your wagging tongue.”

“Do not forget Dark One that I am not one of your obedient children. We are allies; I am not your servant. Xuar might be loyal to you now, but Nether is totally loyal to me. If I told him what you just did, he’d swear revenge. Druaga would also follow me if I promised him the magic that Xuar wields. And your daughter would gladly betray you just for what you did to her.” Mussin’s eyes burned red, as the Lord of Decay challenged Hiisi’s words.

“Tell me why do I put up with you? At every moment you challenge my power and spit in my face in defiance when doing so. Why shouldn’t I just take your godsoul and be done with it?” Hiisi locked eyes with the God of Decay, his eyes burning with hatred.

“You are welcome to try Hiisi. But never forget that without me you’ll never drink from Cronn’s godsoul and corrupt his brood. Never forget the secret, relating to the purge, that I withhold from you.” Mussin vanished from the Nether Lands leaving Hiisi alone with his consort.

The Lord of Darkness immediately started ranting and tearing things apart again. His consort left him to his tantrum.

### ***Hunter’s Rest***

Larea, the Hunting Princess, walked the untamed, misty forests of Hunter’ Rest in solitude. The realm was covered in winter to match her mood. She often spent such time alone. The beasts of her realm could sense her pain, but none would attempt to console her. She was the Huntress, Goddess of the Wilderness of the North Gods; judging her moods was impossible, she was as likely to kill a beast as she was to accept comfort. No the beast knew to stay away.

Another did not fear her. He was her divine son, Hansa, God of Soldiers. He watched and waited for her to acknowledge him. Fore he too knew her melancholy, for it was his own as well.

“Hansa, my son.” Larea stopped next to a huge oak sitting down upon a fallen log. “Come and tell me what it is you have to say.”

She motioned for him to sit with her as the log turned into a finely crafted rustic-looking wooden bench. Not that a mortal would find it so, as the divine energy that had reshaped made it more than masterwork in quality.

“Mother,” Hansa walked over and sat down next to his still grieving matron. “I bring great news. Jalivier’s armies destroyed Gaoterlog. Amand is dead, Anon is free!”

“Joy! Oh joy!” Hansa watched as his mother’s godly spirit lifted for the first time since Anacoro and Anon died, so close together. Her realm brightened and the cold winter broke. The realm’s sun shone through the clouds for the first time in cycles. “Can it be true. Oh Anon, be at peace. Finally, be at peace.”

Hela appeared in her mother’s realm a moment later.

“No fair, I wanted to tell her.” Hela crossed her arms and began to pout.

“Hela dear, it doesn’t matter who told me. The joy we feel alone should be enough.” Larea had prayed for this day to come for longer than she could remember. Her godson was free of Hiisi’s evil godson. “I only wish Anacoro were here.”

“Father,” Hela’s face became painfully sad at the mention of her father. She had watched in horror as Hiisi’s Dark Children had torn him apart. Losing both him and Anon had hurt so much, but not as much as it had hurt her mother.

“Anon, is with him in the Twilight. They will comfort each other now.” Hansa put his arm around his twin sister, as sat down next to him. “We must remain strong for them, Hela.”

“And for each other.” Larea spoke the words but her heart wasn’t with them. She had lost her husband and eldest godson in a mere moment, for a god. Hunter’s Rest had become so forlorn after they had died. She had tried to remain strong for her followers and for Hansa and Hela. However, as time passed her heart had grown more cold and sorrowful.

“Mother, you really should come and visit with the other’s in Citadel of Light more often. It would do you good and grandfather misses your wise council.” It was a touchy subject, as Larea had almost completely isolated herself.

“I couldn’t in the past. Anon was so on my mind. I couldn’t let it go that Amand had his godsoul. But now, now things might be different. We shall see, my son.” Larea patted Hansa on the knee looking around at her realm.

The snow had stopped falling and the sky was clearing. The beasts had moved in all around them, but still hesitant to come closer. The warmth was slowly returning. Larea smiled at a faun that came up next to Hela. Her Huntress instinct was more at peace now. Anon was free.

“Take care of our son, Anacoro.” Larea thought the words inside her heart.

Mother, daughter, and son sat in silence, for nearly a mortal’s hour, holding each other.

A branch snapped as the God of the Wilderness appeared out of the mist. His arrive sent the more timid beasts scurrying back to their holes. Seraph was half elf, half barbarian. He was wild and untamed in manner and appearance.

“She already knows, Seraph.” Hansa did not see the dire expression on his cousin’s face.

“I’m not here about Gaoterlog, Hansa.”

“What is it, Seraph? What’s wrong?” Larea stood to greet the Bloodbrother.

“Huntress, there is trouble on Harqual.” Seraph’s tone was grim.

Larea’s heart sunk in anticipation of what was obviously bad news. Seraph spoke, Larea sighed, and it began to snow again.

### ***In the Grey Waste***

Druaga looked out upon the mass of demons and fiendish mercenaries gathering at the edge of his realm, Retreat of the Fallen. He felt a sense of pride and grim satisfaction in his ability to gather so many fiends in the service of the Lord of Darkness.

The fields in front of him were filled with demons, as well as daemon mercenaries. Their services bought with hard earned larvae from Druaga’s personal horde, as well as a great deal paid for in coin and blood. The God of Vile Summoning was proud of his followers for helping compile the army of fiends.

All was set for the invasion of the Upper Planes. Hiisi’s plan was bold and fierce. Many lives would be lost, on both sides. Druaga believed in the Dark One. So much so he had all but severed his ties with the Gods of Babylon. They were a dying pantheon anyway, a fate, which Druaga was inclined to avoid.

He had petitioned to join the Sword Gods, having to prove himself loyal to Hiisi, over and over again.

“Druaga, I see you’ve been true to your word.” The Lord of Darkness appeared behind the Dark Conjurer.

“Lord Hiisi,” Druaga turned bowing to the Dark One. “Your fiendish army awaits your command.”

“You will lead these fiends into battle, Druaga, not me. I will come to the field of battle once the North Gods have been properly cowed by our strength. Then I will tear the godsoul from Cronn’s dying form.”

“Where am I to take them?” Druaga had known his liege would not risk himself so early in the battle. To Druaga, it was a good tactic. He would do the same thing and not just out of self-preservation.

“The conflict will be on the shores of Lunia.” Hiisi watched, as Druaga’s personal daemon commanders and proxies put the more disciplined yugoloth mercenaries in charge of the multitude of demons. “I have discovered a unique portal, which links the Outlands to Lunia.”

“I have many portals leading from my realm to the Outlands, Dark One. You but need point me in the right direction and I will set your army loose upon the Upper Planes.”

Hiisi silently sent a mental picture of the Outland portal’s location, as well as his instructions for the Dark Conjurer. Druaga howled out to his yugoloth commanders to move out. The army began to shout in anticipation. Hundreds column of fiends began to move, in broken unison. Hiisi shifted away, as the first column of fiends reached and past through the portal to the Outlands.

Druaga shifted his main Avatar to the Outlands to supervise the amassing of fiendish troops on the other side of the portal. Hiisi’s captured portal was less than a day away, even for the army of fiends. He knew that once there, he and his army were to wait until Teve and Emcey came to the field.

The two Dark Children would meet Druaga near the portal to Lunia, their best followers in tow, as well as an army of mercenaries brought together by Emcey’s followers. Then the three of them would lead the first vanguard through the portal to capture a foothold on the shores of Lunia.

Druaga smiled at the thought of his fiends pouring through the portal to Celestia. The denizens of the Upper Planes would not soon forget the battle to come.

### ***In the Seelie Court***

“I absolutely love it here!” Euphoria was giddy as a mortal.

Damh had introduced her the wonders of the Sylvan Court over a cycle ago and she had not left since. Titania had welcomed her with open arms and had called her lovely and charming. She was thrilled by Damh's choice for a consort.

When Titania had first learned that Damh had fallen in love with a barbarian princess, she was mortified. She had envisioned some uncouth goddess that would have growled and spit at anyone who came near her. Not some beautiful little spring of a girl with laughter like sunshine and full of such happiness. Yes, Damh had chosen a fine goddess as his bride.

Titania watched as her knew step-goddaughter danced with a group of fairies and was amazed at her stamina. She was actually wearing them out. Little Kip, one of Titania's dearest pixies was leaning against a tree trying to catch his breath. The little pixie huffed and puffed a few times and he looked like he had just crossed the Outlands in less than a single moon that mortals called a day.

"Again, Kip, again!" Euphoria ran up to Kip bouncing up and down gleefully.

The little pixie's eyes rolled back as he toppled over into a little heap, exhausted and quite unconscious. Titania started giggling at the sight. Even her dear Oberon was having trouble keeping his dignity.

"Ooh, hoo hoo, he passed out!" Puck was literally roaring as the scene unfolded.

"Oh poor little Kip." Euphoria sighed and went back to playing with the others, chasing the fairies through the trees and meadows of the Seelie Court.

Puck and Euphoria danced together for hours before Puck finally let someone else cut in. He ran up to Damh standing next to Oberon's throne.

"Damh, where did you find this enchanting young thing?" Puck was bouncing up and down in excitement.

"I told you, she's part of the new pantheon I joined." Damh couldn't understand why Puck couldn't seem to remember anything he told him.

"Does she have a sister?" Puck was grinning from ear to ear.

"No," Damh wasn't surprised. Puck loved beautiful goddesses, not to mention mortals. "But she does have a cousin, Hela. Unfortunately she is already pledged to an Olympian, Apollo."

"It doesn't matter, I'm having more fun since she's been here than I've ever had before!" The Jester God of the Seelie Court was literally bouncing up and down with joy.

"Pace yourself, Puck," Oberon had never seen him like this – ever. "She's going to wear you out like she did little Kip over there."

"She already did, I'm just starting to get my second wind." Puck looked at Kip and started laughing.

"Puck!" The Jester God turned to see Euphoria run up to him trailing exhausted fairies behind her. A few of the more worn out ones hit the ground and didn't get up. "I'll race you to the edge of the Seelie Court."

"You're on, one, two..." Without saying three the Jester God took off on Euphoria, laughing the whole way.

"Why that little cheater, I'll show him." Before Puck was out of sight, Euphoria had passed him.

"Amazing," Oberon shook his head in disbelief. "I've never seen anyone outrun Puck before. I'm literally in awe of your consort Damh."

Damh smiled to himself and felt his heart soar at the approval of his Lord. It was almost impossible to please Oberon in any way.

"She has become everything to me. Titania my queen, I am planning to spend more time with her kin, if that's all right?"

"Of course my son. Whatever makes you happy."

### ***The Hordes of the Sword Gods***

Teve watched as his army of dark soldiers marched, across the Outlands, in unison with the pounding of rhythmic sound of war drums. He wondered at the flowing pennants showcasing his standard, a black great helm with red glowing eyes on a blood-red field.

The god known as The Dark Warrior licked his jagged teeth at the thought of laying low the gods of the Pantheon of the North. He laughed at the thought of burning away the flesh of his enemies' followers, especially the celestials. He would torment them all.

"What is so funny, brother." Emcey, Teve's chaotic brother stood next to him looking disgusted.

"Just imagining eating the heart of a deva while the creature looks on. I take it that look on your ugly face is meant for my followers." Teve glared at the Lawbreaker with intense loathing.

Teve and Emcey were like opposite sides of the same coin. Both were capable generals with hordes of devoted warrior followers. However, Teve believed in order on the battlefield, while Emcey relished carnage. One lawful, one chaotic, but both loyal, dark gods to Hiisi. That loyalty was the only thing that kept them from each other's throats.

"You have to ask," Emcey felt sick just looking at the orderly lines of soldiers marching in unison. "How you hope to strike fear into the hearts of our enemies with this rabble, is beyond me."

"Do not forget your place, Emcey!" Teve growled at his younger brother. "I am the War God now, as Amand was before me. Dark Father chose me because he believes in the order I will bring on the battlefield. My order!"

"You delude yourself, brother." Emcey had at least respected Amand. "You were chosen for your dog-like need to please your master."

"Silence!" Teve began to draw his dark, divine weapon.

"Hold!" Druaga's Avatar appeared between the two Dark Children. "Remember you fools, you are suppose to be allies. Hiisi would skin you both if he caught you bickering like this."

"I am the War God, Druaga!" Teve stood defiantly in front of the God of Vile Summoning. "You and your chaotic horde of demons and daemons are mine to command. Although, I would much rather have the services of army of devils. Now, that is true power and order."

"Do not push your luck, whelp." Druaga stared down the newly appoint War God of the Sword. "You haven't proven anything yet."

"Ha, you tell him Druaga." Emcey laughed.

"You shut up, you smug little bastard." Druaga cuffed Emcey for his insolent tongue. "You aren't any better. Teve is right, you should know your place little god."

Teve smiled but said nothing.

"Now, I do hope you have done as your Dark Father has commanded, Emcey. Where is your army of mercenaries?"

A horn sounded in the distance. An army of the most brutish and vile mercenaries ever seen came into view. They rode huge beasts of war and marched in a ragged mass of chaos. No two sentient beings wore the same colors. It was a beautiful sight to the Lawbreaker.

"My warriors have to go into battle with that ragtag mob?" Teve shook his head in disgust.

"Bite your tongue, Teve. Good mercenaries are hard to buy. And these are the best and most cruel my followers could find. They will follow orders, as long as they are compensated.

"Impressive," Druaga understood Emcey, for they were more similar than the Dark Conjurer would ever admit. "I hope they've already spent their compensation, on the things mortals seem to covet. For many of them won't survive."

Druaga tuned back to the two Dark Children.

"Now, I sincerely hope that both of you and your followers will be at the portal leading to Celestia at the designated time. I would hate to have to report such a... failure to your Dark Father. I will be waiting, whelps." Druaga's Avatar shifted away to perform another task vital for the conflict to come.

The two Sword Gods ordered their generals to push the gathering horde of soldiers and mercenaries to move faster. They would march their followers to death before risking the wrath of their Dark Father.

### ***The Counsel of the Sky Traveler***

Lokun sat in silence on his throne in Winter's Hall. He didn't know what he was going to do. If it was true, it would change everything. It had to be a mistake. She wouldn't betray him like that or would she? Lokun sometimes wished he'd never come to Harqual to petition Cronn to let him join the North Gods.

Several frost giant females moved around the room clearing away the previous night's revelry. They made sure to give the North God of Mischief and Fire a wide berth. He moods had become more and more unpredictable.

Now, more than ever.

Lokun had a good reason but he wasn't about to share it with his mortal followers. He stood up and then stepped down from the ornate throne he had conjured to try and improve his mood. With a thought he sent the throne to nonexistence.

"It cannot be true," Lokun walked out of Winter's Hall into the frigid wind of Hougard, his island realm in the North Sea. The island stood out from the rest of the frozen wastes north of Harqual due to its divine nature. No mortal could set foot on Hougard unless The Sky Traveler willed it.

"Lokun, I must speak with you." Jaeger wasn't a mortal, however.

"What do you want, Jaeger?" Lokun would never admit he liked Cronn's favorite godson. "Can't you see I'm busy?"

"Uh, you've been walking around your realm mumbling to yourself like a mad mortal for cycles. What is bothering you so much?"

"Nothing I care to share with you, boy." If Lokun had a gut, it would have been tied in knots. How could he ever tell any of them? "Now, what did you want to ask me? And make it quick."

"Do you remember when I was young when you told me the story about the Halls?" The God of Honor hoped he was right.

"Are you telling me that you came all the way to Hougard too reminisce about old wise tales? Do not waste my time, Jaeger." Lokun shook his head in disgust.

"Were they true?" Jaeger persisted. "Do the Halls really exist?"

"Why do you want to know?" Lokun stared with concern for his adopted nephew.

"Just tell me."

"Yes, the Halls are real." Lokun hoped Jaeger wasn't planning anything, stupid.

"How do I find them?" Jaeger knew the risk he was planning to take wouldn't sit well with the others. He just had to hope that Lokun wouldn't try to stop him.

"You're not actually thinking of trying to enter the Halls are you? What possible reason-" Lokun stopped as it came to him. "You're nuts if you think I'm going to let you go there alone to see him."

"I know you won't enter the Halls. It is forbidden for the Asgard." Jaeger had to try and convince Lokun. "I know what I'm doing, Lokun. I just need you to tell me how to find it, how to get in, and how to not get obliterated."

"It's crazy! What are you up to?" Lokun was suspicious by nature and could not help himself.

"Nothing I care to share with you, Lokun." Jaeger hated to leave his uncle in the dark.

"The God of Honor with secrets. That is something I would have never have believed." There was more Jaeger than the Sky Traveler had given the boy credit for. "Very well, walk with me and I'll tell you everything you need to know about the Halls. Just don't expect me to come and rescue you if you get caught."

"Agreed." Jaeger walked beside his uncle. "And you won't tell my father a thing. Agreed?"

"It's your funeral." Lokun wondered what the God of Honor was hiding.

They strode through the snow of Hougard, the icy northern winds blowing around them. The two gods walked and talked in comfort, however, as such mortal conditions did not cling to their divine garments or damage their godly forms.

### ***Where the Beastlands and the Seelie Court meet***

Euphoria and Puck were matching each other's stride, step for step laughing the whole way. They moved deeper and deeper into the woods of the Seelie Court losing fairy after fairy to exhaustion or to the occasional tree branch.

They were alone, as they passed through the barrier where the Seelie Court ended and the Beastlands began Euphoria in the lead. The deities turned to face each other, both insisting that they won.

"No way, I beat you fair and square." Euphoria was having the time of her existence.

"Ah come on, no one beats me in a race. I have a reputation to think of. What if Erevan finds out? He'll never let me live it down."

"To bad, you lost."

"Oh all right, I'll struggle by somehow." The two started sauntering back towards the barrier of the Seelie Court.

The two had no idea the danger lurking beyond in the Beastlands. Xuar came out of nowhere slamming into Puck, sending the little Jester God flying.

"Well, well, two for the price of one. How fortunate, for me."

Puck watched in horror as the Jealous Arcane grabbed Euphoria by the throat pumping balefire into her. She screamed.

Puck could feel his heart breaking. Normally, he wouldn't challenge such a powerful god on his own. But there was no way he would just leave Euphoria. She was family now. No, more than that – she was becoming his friend.

“You let her go!” Oberon would be in shock if he had heard Puck's voice. He was mad, real mad. “Don't think I can't hurt you Xuar, I might not be a Greater God, but I'm still one of the Old Gods.”

“You're going to be dead Old God faster than a mortal lives and dies.” Xuar tossed aside Euphoria and pounced on the sylvan demigod.

Puck knew he was no match for Xuar but had hoped that he could buy Euphoria some time to escape the Jealous Arcane. Instead she lay motionless on the ground, her power slipping away. Xuar pounded Puck into the ground once, twice, and then a third time. One more blow would kill him for sure but Xuar hesitated.

“Tell you what you old fairy, I'll let you live. Just so you can suffer along with Damh at the loss of this little one. I'm sure he'll forgive you but the question is, can you forgive yourself?” Xuar grabbed the Goddess of Happiness by her long hair and held her up so that the broken Jester God could see her. Xuar cackled the whole time then shifted away the Beastlands, taking Euphoria.

Puck watched, helpless to do anything. He had never cried before in his existence but tears now streamed from his eyes. “Euphoria, no...” Puck choked the words out rasping horribly. “Damh, I am so sorry.”

A few hours later, the fairies found him lying there his divine body, and spirit, broken.

### ***The Sword Strikes into Celestia***

Kuil had heard the rumors of a planned invasion by the Sword Gods, but not even Cronn would have suspected this. Kuil watched in disbelief as dark soldiers, mercenaries, and fiends came through a portal from somewhere in the Outlands.

Jalivier had asked his son to find out as much as he could about the 'rumored' invasion and where it was to strike. The God of Rogues and Illusion had sent his followers to spy on the Sword Gods followers to gather as much information as possible.

There efforts, as well as the god's own abilities had led Kuil to the first layer of Celestia, Lunia. Now, his primary Avatar watched from behind a powerful illusion, while another stood with Jalivier in the Citadel of Light.

“There are hundreds of thousands of them, father.” Kuil was worried about the many communities located on the edge of the shores of Lunia.

Many of the communities' champions had rode out to meet the initial group of evil soldiers to come through the portal. Soon, thousands of mercenaries had poured through as well and some of Lunia's greatest heroes, both mortal and petitioner, quickly fell to the hordes.

“Hiisi has been busy,” Jalivier stood next to Cull, Inanna, and Cronn in the Great Hall of the Citadel of Light, as well as his son's Avatar. “This is sooner than expected. We will not have time to gather a united force.”

“We cannot just take the field like a bunch of chaotic sellswords.” Cull had been more than a little upset that Jalivier had attacked Gaoterlog without him. “No offense to you Great Cronn.”

“None taken, my friend.” Cronn was the de facto head of the pantheon but he knew the wisdom in allowing the more lawful members of the North Gods to do the strategic planning.

“Normally, I would agree with you.” Jalivier looked over the dimensional strategies floating between him, Cull and Inanna. “However, it seems we are needed on Lunia now, not later.”

“Jalivier is right, we must bring our own followers to the first layer of the Seven Heavens as soon as possible. We will work out strategies as we go.”

“Hmm,” Cull immediately saw the potential of more dynamic, yet well defined strategies. “This could be an interesting challenge indeed.”

“Always the optimist,” Kuil watched both the armies of the Sword Gods and the events in the Citadel, as easily as a mortal would walk the ground. “The armies seem to be in two camps. The fiends present are mainly demons but there are some daemons as well.”

“Yugoloths,” Inanna, with only a thought, added the daemon factor into the dimensional strategies Cull was developing. “We're going to need everyone who can muster up their forces in this battle.”

“Agreed,” Jalivier opened a portal from his realm in the second layer of Celestia to Lunia. “I am taking my strongest followers with me. They will fight to the end.”

“Yes,” Cronn transferred his primary Avatar to Celestia next to the opening portal that the Defender of the Light had opened. “But whose end?”

Jalivier's followers poured from the portal in the hundreds of thousands. Soon the other North Gods were given the word and a multitude of portals opened onto the first layer of Celestia. The opposing portal from the outlands opened again and more Sword followers strode out of the surf and onto the shore. The fiends gritted their teeth as the pure waters of Oceanus burned their bodies but still they came, in hope of blood and chaos.

The followers of both pantheons gathered opposite of each other, as more and more warriors and Outsiders came to the field of battle. The citizens of Lunia scrambled for safety as the dark followers of the Sword Gods advanced to lay claim to as much of the shore as they could possible hold.

"Kuil, help as many of them escape as you can." Cronn would not let innocents be slaughtered if he could help it.

"I will do my best grandfather." Kuil shifted away.

Cronn wondered if the other gods of Celestia would finally take notice of the threat, which the Pantheon of the Swords represented.

"Probably not," Cronn called out to his followers on the mortal plane. "I will not force you to fight. I ask you to come and defend those that cannot."

Cronn knew Kuil and his followers would need the help.

### ***Moments Later...***

The Hunting Princess arrived at the Citadel of Light with her children and Seraph to find only the God of Oaths and Contracts working at Oathtaker.

"Truce, where is everyone?" Hansa looked around at the empty citadel.

"They have gone to meet Hiisi's army massing near Oceanus's edge in Lunia." The scholar god looked up from his desk.

"Already. Damn it, why wasn't I informed of this?"

"I am not a God of Messengers, Hansa – besides why don't you ask your mother why?"

"Mother?" Hansa looked at his mother.

"I've lost a husband and my eldest godson, did you expect me to just stand idly by while my last remaining godson runs off to war with his grandfather?" Tears welled up in the goddess's eyes.

"I don't believe it, you asked grandfather to leave me behind. How could you do that?"

"I-I'm sorry."

"Let it go Hansa." Seraph stepped between the two. "There's nothing you can do about it now. We must go to Harqual at once and deal with Deltum and Enduma. Only we two can stop them now."

"Hmm, what's this you say?" Truce looked up from his writing.

Hansa slammed his hands down on Truce's desk.

"Deltum and Enduma are causing havoc on Harqual. There are tornadoes and volcanic eruptions everywhere. The mortals, our friends, are dying. If you spent more time fighting and less time looking at scrolls you might feel something for the pain they are going through."

"Hansa!" Hela was shocked by her brother's word. "It is not your place to say such things. Truce cares just as much as the rest of us."

"How was I suppose to know that?" Truce had his head down with his arms over his head. Hansa's words had hurt him badly. He was still very young, even for a god.

"I'm sorry cousin. Hela's right, you care just as much as the rest of us. I am a fool."

"It's all right, you simply care more than most. Truce looked up at his cousin, smiling with tears in his eyes. "You are truly our grandfather's grandson. I on the other hand--"

"Enough." Seraph couldn't stand much more of this. "Hansa you are not a fool and Truce you are not a coward. As we speak, mortals are dying. I am going to Harqual, alone if I must."

Seraph walked away from the rest, one thought on his mind – dealing with the Sword God twins. Hansa stepped in behind his uncle looking at his mother the whole way.

"Be careful."

"I will mother, do not worry so. It's just the twins. They may be evil but they're babies at heart."

"I'm coming with you." Everyone was shocked to see Truce get up from Oathtaker and walk to where his cousin was standing.

Truce never left his desk.

"Truce, you don't have to do this." Hansa was genuinely worried about his scholarly cousin.

“Don’t worry about me Hansa. I’m not going to fight. But I am going to help. The mortals that are suffering could use my help. I can heal those that need it. I can ease the minds of those I can’t. Ensuring them that they will find rest in Hade’s Underrealm.”

“Very well,” Hansa was still not sure but if anything did happen, Truce would know to shift back to the Outer Planes immediately.

“I’m coming too.”

“Hela, no I won’t let you.” Larea’s heart sank at her daughter’s words.

“Mother, I am a complete goddess now. I don’t need your permission and Truce will need my help. I am going, period.”

The Huntress backed away in horror, the thought of losing both her remaining children too much to bear. She shifted away without a word.

“Hela, for once I agree with mother. This is not a good idea.”

“You can’t protect me from the universe, Hansa. Anon is gone, there was nothing you could do to save him.”

Hansa remembered it well. Amand had surprised them, attacking from out of nowhere. No honor, no remorse. Hansa had tried to warn his older brother but Amand cut his elder brother down before he could speak, stealing Anon’s essence through the power of his blade. Amand had just stood there laughing at him. Then he shifted away when Hansa had challenged him. He could still hear the dark god laughing at him.

“All right, but stay safe.”

“Excuse me, mortals are dying, mortals are dying!” Seraph was not a patient god. His heritage made sure of that. Quick to react and even quicker to temper. Some said that Seraph was the Beastlands’ incarnate.

The four barbarian gods shifted to the World of Kulan to meet the dark twins and Fate.

### ***Lokun in Niflheim***

“Where is she, Hel?” Lokun confronted his daughter in her realm. “And don’t lie to me, daughter. I’ll know if you do.”

“Father, I don’t know where she is! Stop accusing me of helping her do something you won’t even talk to me about!” Her father wasn’t a patient god, but she wasn’t about to give Lokun anything. Lokun! Even thinking the derogatory version of her father’s true name sickened her. He betrayed her with that name and the form he took as one of the gods of the backwater world he now called home.

“Father, Loki, please, you have to believe me.” Hel knew her foul mother was watching from a veiled portion of Niflheim. “Mother hasn’t done anything to deserve the words you use.”

“Really, you think so?” Lokun’s form shifted to that of the true vision of himself, that of Loki, Trickster of the Asgard. “I know you are here, mate. Why don’t you tell her what you have done, hmm? Are you afraid she will realize you have betrayed her as well as me!”

“This is my realm, father. You will not accuse my mother without real proof.” Hel, despite her inner torment and self-loathing, truly cared for her mother. She was one of the few who she could count on.

“The Dark Children of Hiisi are my proof.” The god Loki shifted back into his guise as the Sky Traveler of the North Gods. “Did you think I wouldn’t find out, wench!”

“W-what?” Hel looked through the veil at her mother. Angrboda, The Mother of Monsters and the mate of both Lokun and Hiisi smiled back at her daughter. “Mother, is this true?”

“I knew you was here, Angrboda.” Lokun broke through the weakening veil his daughter had raised to shield her mother. “I cannot tell you how displeased I am with what you have done. How could you mate with that bastard.”

“He offers true power.” Angrboda was an imposing figure, being an Asgardian giant, a race with the power of the divine. “Something you have forgotten as a member of Cronn’s brood. You talk of betrayal. What about how you betrayed me, betrayed your children!”

“I did not take another mate, wench.” Lokun moved to strike out at Angrboda. “And you are one to talk of betrayal. After all, you are not my wife, you were just my mistress. You betrayed you own kind to mate with me or don’t you remember how irate Surtur was when you first told him.”

“He came around eventually, my love.” Angrboda sidestepped his blow. “You and he have become great allies. Don’t throw that all away by continuing to consort with the enemy.”

“What have you done?” Lokun didn’t care what Surtur or the other Asgardian giants did now. The Asgard hate him and the giants only respect him for what he is to bring to Ragnarok.

The giants agree. You must stop consorting with the North Gods or lose your place during Ragnarok. It was unanimous.”

“No.” Lokun turned his back on his former mate. “I will not betray Lord Cronn. “Tell your kin they can do what they like, I don’t care anymore. If Ragnarok comes I will stand with the Asgard if they’ll have me.”

“You aren’t serious!” Angrboda was in shock. She had underestimated the Trickster’s loyalty. “You will be destroyed.”

“Nay, wench.” Lokun approached his daughter and embraced her. “For I am a North God now. Even if the Asgard fall, a part of me will always live on as Lokun.”

“Father, please don’t say goodbye. You’re all I have now.” Hel glared at her mother with a newfound hatred. Despite how much she wished her father hadn’t joined the North Gods of Kulan, she hated Hiisi and the Dark Children even more. They gave evil a bad name.

“Do not fret, Hel. This isn’t goodbye. You will always be my favorite child. You know where I am and you are welcome to visit.”

“Don’t you dare try to subvert her!” Angrboda screamed in rage. This wasn’t going as she’d planned.

“Do not listen to her, daughter. She is old and bitter. I must go, the north Gods will need my help in the final battle to come. This is my Ragnarok now.”

“I-I understand, father.”

“As for you.” Lokun turned his head back towards the Mother of Monsters. “I swear I will do everything in my power to ensure every Dark Child you have beget for Hiisi, or ever will, dies a horrible death.”

“You cannot win, North God.” Angrboda shifted away back to Hiisi’s realm.

“Father, can I help.” Hel couldn’t believe she was saying the words.

“No, this is our war.” Lokun hugged his daughter tight shifting away to meet his fate on the shores of Oceanus in Lunia.

Hel felt him evaporate away from her, hoping it wouldn’t be the last time.

“He has changed so much,” The death goddess wondered what was so special about these North Gods. What was so great about this land known as Harqual. “I will go to Harqual to visit with him and see this barbaric land he loves so much. I swear it, by Niflheim.”

### ***The Savanna of the Rain***

Rel’s realm in the Beastlands was like ordered chaos surrounded by untamed wilderness. Rakasta, both living and petitioners, moved from camp to camp, hunting antelope and even wilder game. It was always thus, except for today. No, today Rel’s people mourned the loss of his beautiful daughter by the hands of Xuar.

The Seelie Court had come to Rel’s realm the instant Titania and Oberon had learned the horrible news. Damh told Rel what happened and that Puck had tried to stop the Xuar from taking Euphoria.

Rel looked at Puck. Still battered and bruised, the little Sylvan had taken an awful beating. He looked terrible, but Rel could see that it was his heart that was hurting the most. They all felt this way; Euphoria had brought them all great joy. The pixies and sprites were weeping uncontrollably. He wouldn’t have believed it if he hadn’t seen it with his own eyes.

“There was nothing you could have done Puck. Xuar is very strong.” Rel’s own torment was worse.

Both Titania and Oberon were dressed all in black, and the Seelie Court would have depressed a fiend in its current state. Rel was devastated. First Nessus, then Thorn and now this. All his children were gone. “Oh, by the Old Gods, how am I going to tell Ramara?”

“She may still be alive Rel, you must not lose hope!” Damh knew that the chances were slim, but he had refused to believe his beloved was dead. “We must tell Cronn, he’ll figure a way to get her back. I refuse to give up and neither should you.”

Rel admired Damh’s strength of heart. But then, Damh hadn’t watched Mussin rot away Rel’s two sons before his very eyes. But he refused to show weakness, as his people watched – he must remain dignified.

“Yes, there is always hope. Word has come to me that Cronn has gone to the shores of Oceanus on Lunia. Hiisi has acted quicker than we thought he would. You must go and tell him of this great tragedy. I must go to Arborea and tell Ramara.”

Without another word Rel shifted to Ramara’s realm to tell her of their daughter’s fate.

### ***The Shores of Oceanus on Lunia***

Cronn had hoped the pantheon would have more time to prepare. But when Kuil reported that an army of fiends was gathering on the shores of Lunia, he knew that Hiisi wouldn't wait any longer. It was beyond anything he had imagined. Thousands upon thousands of demons, daemons, mercenaries, dark priests, bloodthirsty humanoids, and vile necromancers stretched further than even he could see.

The sight of an army of such size visibly terrified the army of petitioners and celestials brought together by the North Gods. Kuil and Sanh stood to either side of Cronn.

"By the Old Gods, there are so many of them." The God of the Sky spoke to his brother.

"He sees Sanh you don't have to point it out so bluntly. The soldiers might hear you and lose faith. You must remain strong at all times."

"Yes, Father," Sanh had a tendency to speak without thinking. Or as mortals might say, he had a tendency stick his boot in his mouth.

Corellon had not arrived yet and Cronn wondered if his friend would risk his people in the onslaught that was soon to follow. Cronn wouldn't hold a grudge against his friend if he didn't show, knowing that he had a duty to the elves before Cronn's pantheon.

No, Cronn would not hold it against his old friend. That was not his way.

Besides, Moradin and Garl were here. They had stayed with Jalivier during preparations and promised their armies of petitioners and mortals to the fight. Both of these armies were risking a lot, the gnomes more than the dwarves. Petitioners in Garl's army would fade away into nothing if destroyed. Those in Moradin's army would simply dissolve and merge with Celestia.

Even though the gnome army was small, most of those that once lived on Harqual were here. Of course, they didn't remember that but something inside them told them this was important and so they had come. Garl never forced his petitioners to fight away from Bytopia.

Inanna rode a giant, ruddy celestial horse near the front of the gathering armies of the North Gods. As the Goddess of War in the pantheon it was her right to lead the first charge. He worried about her safety of course but she could always take care of herself. That's what he loved about her.

Cronn had insisted that Issek stay in his realm with Tok. Cronn was afraid that if the God of Tortured Souls fell that Tok would return to madness and switch sides without realizing what he was doing. Issek didn't mind. Fighting a war against fiends isn't what he does best anyway. He did send his proxy Aragol, however, with a little extra of Issek's power to help ease the suffering of the mortals that would be wounded. Aragol carried a mortal-sized version of Issek's special jug and would use it to give dying soldiers a chance at least.

Cronn looked across the field for one god in particular. Of course, Jalivier was holding strategy meeting with Cull, Moradin, and Garl. Cronn's warrior daughter Mayela was praying with a group of mortals. He was proud of the Goddess of Nobility; she was ferocious in battle like her mother, yet had his strong unbreakable ideals.

He saw his godson Zealot, the God of Barbarian Rage who had more of his mother in him than he'd ever admit. Zealot was working his followers into a wild frenzy, getting the barbarian-priests ready to rage. None of them would attack until their god told them, however. The first few of the Sword God's soldiers on the front line were going to be in for a big surprise.

Surprisingly, Lokun had come and was preparing himself for battle. The Sky Traveler had appeared late in the preparations but was adamant that he be allowed to 'destroy the spawn of Hiisi' as he called them. He had even bowed before Cronn and re-sworn fealty for all time. Cronn had been more shocked than moved.

Lokun had not brought an army with him, however. He wouldn't risk his petitioners so far away from his realm and probably would stay out of the main fray himself. But he would be useful all the same. He had a tendency to annoy both gods and mortals and would lead fiends into ambushes and death traps. Yes, Lokun would enjoy himself today.

Of course, Hades wasn't here yet, as he was petitioning Zeus to let him raise an army of Olympian mortals to join the battle. Zeus wouldn't allow it, of course, but it didn't hurt to ask. He'd say no, and Hades would come by himself anyway. But probably not until more fiends had arrived from the other side of the portal.

Again Cronn scanned the army looking for his favorite godson. His other children knew he favored the God of Honor. But then again, he was everyone's favorite. His siblings adored him and his mother too. Inanna had heaped praise on her godson, yet he always remained humble. Yes, Jaeger was a fine young god worth his power in love.

"Where is he?" It was not like him to be absent for something so important, and Cronn worried that something might have happened to him. His attention was pulled back to his surrounding as Hiisi's dark horde

roared surging forward. Inanna took the first line of celestials and mortals to meet them. The noise was louder than the surf pounding the shore of Lunia.

The Final Battle had begun.

### ***Jaeger and the First One***

As a boy, Jaeger hadn't believed Lokun's stories about where he was now. Only when the Sky Traveler had told him that the place really existed had Jaeger hoped he was right. If he was wrong, it could cost him everything.

Lokun had told him of the place where Old Gods went to sleep, not to die but to sleep for an eternity. It was said that these Old Gods knew most of the secrets of the universe, if not all of them. However, no one had ever been there and came back to tell about it.

Yes, if he was here then Jaeger had to find him. It could save his pantheon, his entire world.

Jaeger had entered Twilight Hall, to find a god older than the Mirella, Zeus, Odin, or even the Titans themselves. He risked everything.

He crept through the shadows, making sure not to wake the giant, sleeping Old Gods. Kuil would have been proud of him.

They were huge, these sleeping gods and they made no sound as they slept. Lokun didn't know how true the legend was to reality; the Hall was as large any realm and nearly as crowded.

Several ancient reclusive Old Gods were here as well. He didn't know their names but recognized them from descriptions he had heard from such gods. Deities older than even the Chinese and Japanese Old Gods. Jaeger was in awe of their power and size. He felt like a mortal sneaking through a lair of giants.

He made his way past them, one by one, praying he wouldn't accidentally bump into one of them, or worse, the Guardian of the Dead, the old God known as Anubis. That would not be good. The Hall was actually a cavern and dozens of chambers branched off in every direction. He picked his way along one then the other, trying to find the place he sought.

They'd be fighting by now. Of that, he was sure. His father would be wondering where he was. It would all be worth it if he was, indeed here like Lokun said. He just had to convince the Old God to tell him what he needed to know.

"I could get lost in here." Jaeger felt like he was running around in circles.

His words echoed through the cavern even though he had only whispered them. He clamped his mouth shut with his hands and knew what fear was like for a mortal. Yet, none of the Old Gods stirred. 'Don't do that again' he told himself and continued searching.

Just when he thought that Lokun might have been wrong, he came across it. A door as tall as a hundred Greater Gods and almost as wide. It was made out of wood, if you could call it that. It felt like steel or something similar but much older. 'Great, just great, how am I supposed to get in?' Jaeger thought the words but did not say them out loud.

Then he noticed a small opening near the middle of the door. 'It couldn't be that easy could it?' Jaeger climbed up to a giant keyhole and found that he could walk through it without even having to bend over.

What he found was beyond his recognition. He came out into a room, not some monstrous cavern. But a small mortal proportioned room.

"Okay," Jaeger looked around confused. The keyhole was the door. "This is so weird."

"I don't mind, it's comfy." Jaeger turned and looked to see where the voice came from. There wasn't anyone there. "Down here you little whippersnapper."

Jaeger looked towards the floor and standing there was – something. It didn't look like anything he'd ever seen before. It had arms, legs, even a head but-

"Of course I have a head."

Jaeger hadn't spoke out loud; it could read his mind.

"Yes, you're right but it isn't polite for you to point that out. I must say you godlings these days are a strange bunch. Now when I was a New God, things were different. Everything was a little less chaotic, no, no, I don't mean like that. Chaos today isn't even the same anymore. No, I can't explain it to you."

"Uh-"

"My you are a talkative one. Your mind is so full of questions, questions, and more questions. Yes, I'm the one you seek but if you call me the First One again in your mind, I'll bop you on the head. Hmm, that's better, more polite. Now what can I-"

The Old God stopped talking and looked at Jaeger.

“Oh, you want to know about the ritual. You do realize what your asking, don't you? You're asking me to give away their secret. The power you seek could destroy them all if used by the wrong god. Why should I trust you?”

“I give you my word as a God of Honor that I will only use it against Hiisi. If I am lying, you would know.”

“You are a bright young boy.” The Old God smiled. “Yes, I can see that your heart is pure. Now sit down over there young one and I will tell you what you wish to know.”

### ***Love in Sorrow***

While Cronn was wondering where Jaeger was and while Jaeger was in Twilight Hall, two goddesses sat in the Temple of Love on Arborea. Larea had come to find comfort with her sister, Ramara, the Goddess of Love and Beauty. She was sure that her children would not come back from Kulan.

Ramara tried to comfort her, saying it would be all right. But she too felt an odd feeling of dread. Something was not right, she could feel it. Only when Rel appeared before them with a look so long that it could have gone around the Great Ring twice, did she know she was right.

“Rel, oh no, please no.” Ramara had felt this twice before.

“I'm sorry my love, Euphoria is gone.” Rel had only heard Damh's words. He could not take them to heart. His daughter was gone. He would not give his wife false hope.

“How?” Ramara was crying and Larea tried to comfort her sister like Ramara had done for her.

“Xuar took her.” Rel sat down beside his grieving wife and took her into his arms. “She was caught just outside the Seelie Court in the Beastlands. The fairy god Puck tried to save her but he was no match for Xuar.”

“Oh Ramara, I am so sorry.” Larea had never seen her like this. Even when her two godsons had been killed she had remained composed. But that had been different, Nessus and Thorn had died in battle. Euphoria wasn't a warrior, it felt so wrong.

The Love Goddess wept for her fallen child and the flowers around the Temple of Love withered and died as the realm felt her pain.

### ***Rage of the North God***

The battle wasn't going well. Fiends and celestials fought one another, as the Lord of the North waded through them. The Rage had not taken him yet as he pushed through the onslaught of the hordes of the Sword Gods. The Lord of Darkness was nowhere in sight. Not that Cronn was surprised; Hiisi would never lead the first charge. He was too much of a coward.

Zealot was gone. He thought the words again, not believing them.

Mussin, Emcey, and Teve had surrounded Inanna; Cronn had thought his wife would surely fall. But then Zealot had come out of nowhere and taken Emcey from behind. The dark god screaming as his essence was destroyed. Teve had spit foul epithets at Cronn's young godson and charged into him. The two grappled together rolling through battled between the dark horde and Jalivier's soldiers of light.

Inanna had regained herself and Mussin had retreated from her. He had known that going one on one with the Goddess of War would have destroyed him. He sent fiends after her, of course, but he might as well been sending sheep to the slaughter. She cut them down one by one, trying to get to her godson. She came upon them just as Teve put his sword through Zealot's chest. Inanna's scream echoed across the battlefield and Cronn had known Zealot was gone. She avenged her godson before Teve could move sending the dark god to join Emcey in the oblivion of Twilight.

“Receive my godson into your care, Anubis. Keep him safe from corruption.” Cronn grieved for his son he kept his mind on the battle at hand. There would be enough time to grieve later, if there was a later.

The second wave of the dark horde came through the portal from the Outlands sooner than expected. Hiisi was putting everything on the line. Cronn was sure of one thing, a pantheon would fall this day. Another portal opened and Cronn thought for a second that the day was lost.

Instead of dark soldiers, the strangest army Cronn had ever seen poured from the portal. Fairies! Cronn was sure he was seeing things. But then Titania and Oberon came through the portal. Fiends all over the battlefield howled as Titania's powerful magic ran through them. The fiends scattered and a legion of dwarven petitioners took advantage of the distraction pushing them back.

The Sylvan Queen and her Consort walked towards Cronn. Their faces showed sadness and Cronn wondered what could have upset them so. Then Damh came between them and looked up at his barbarian friend with tears in his eyes. He handed the Lord of the North his granddaughter's favorite shawl.

Cronn's eyes grew wide as he felt the rage take hold of him. His cry of anguish thundered over the battlefield and the fiends knew fear. Inanna turned and saw a side of her husband that she had never seen before. He was larger, his eyes glowing with balefire. He thundered into the heaviest fighting and slaughter dozens of fiend with blow after blow of his huge greataxe, North Rage. The celestials parted and let the Great Lord of the North take the battle to the dark ones.

Only when Inanna saw Damh kneeling on the battlefield clutching a shawl did she realize her husband's pain. Euphoria was gone. Cronn had loved her like his own godchild, as he did the entire pantheon. This was different than losing Zealot though, he had been a warrior and knew the risks, but Euphoria, she had only been a child – a joyful, beautiful, wonderful child.

Inanna felt her heart sink as the realization of what had happened. This was not right. Her temper started to take over and she rode into the fray to join her husband just as the third wave of the Sword Gods' followers appeared from the Outlands.

### ***The Northlands of Harqual***

Seraph led the three lesser North Gods through the planes to the Material Plane. What they found was carnage beyond belief. Harqual was dying. Deltum and Enduma had done more damage than any of them had ever seen. Entire tracts of forest lay charred and broken, barbarian villages wiped out by disaster and floods. The land uprooted, laid to waste.

The four gods split up, as Truce and Hela went to help those they could, while Seraph and Hansa went to punish the dark duo for their crimes against the mortals.

Seraph and Hansa didn't have to look too hard. The dark twins had moved further south to near the Greystone Mountains. The twins had conjured dozens of tornadoes and the mortals were scattering in fear.

The rage took Seraph almost immediately and he smashed into Deltum, knocking him out of the sky. Several of the tornadoes dissipated, as a result, and the two gods tumbled to the earth. Enduma turned in time to meet Hansa and the God of Suffering and the God of Soldiers grappled in the sky while the mortals of Harqual looked on.

On the ground, Seraph got the upper hand on Deltum skewering the dark god with his spear sending him to the Twilight in a flash of light. He looked up just in time to see Hansa and Enduma tumble down the mountains to the ground below. Seraph rushed to help his kin and found him down on the ground with Enduma about to take his essence. Seraph roared and Enduma looked up to see the Elf Barbarian God baring down on him. This allowed Hansa to kick the dark god off him.

Enduma saw that he was outmatched but still had enough power to shift back to the Outer Planes. He took to the skies and tried to out run the two gods. He didn't even see it coming. A giant spear flashed through the air passing through the dark god like he was nothing but a nuisance. Neither Seraph nor Hansa had thrown it. They looked up in the sky to see a cat god hovering above them with the sun behind him.

"Rel?" Hansa wondered how the God of the Rakasta had learned about their plight.

"No, little god, I am not your grandfather's pathetic servant. The God of the Tabaxi has come to claim the lands of Cronn."

"Tu!" Seraph spat on the ground as Hansa said the name.

### ***Violence against Peace***

"Well, this development is most useful." Thera watched as the God of the Tabaxi challenged the two North Gods on Harqual from the Pit of Violence on the 256<sup>th</sup> layer of the Abyss. She had not come when her father had ordered her to. He could burn in Hade's Underrealm for all she cared.

Several dark creatures slithered past her feet as she looked for the prize she sought.

"Ah, there you are little one. You are going to regret leaving the safety of the Outer Planes." Thera hated her more than any of them. She represented everything that Thera was not and she swore that she'd make the Goddess of Peace suffer. Thera drew her sword, Bloodhunter, and transferred her Avatar to the Prime Material Plane, arriving right behind the little goddess.

They were both there of course, her and the bookworm. The little Scholar God did even know what hit him. He was dead, his essence gone to the Twilight, before Thera had time to pull her sword out of him. She wouldn't consume such a weak, pathetic creature.

"Truce!" The Peace Goddess saw him evaporate but didn't know what had killed him. She turned and looked in horror as the Goddess of Violence sheathed her sword.

“Hello Hela, do you want to come out and play?”

Half-dead mortals scrambled to protect their beloved goddess but Thera swatted them away like flies. She grabbed Hela by her hair and lifted her into the air with her.

“If you kill me my brother and Seraph will have your head.” Hela screamed as the two floated over the Sword Gulf.

“Actually, your kin are a little busy right now. ‘Tu should make short work of them.”

“Oh no,” Hela’s fear grew and she began to struggle, trying to break free.

“You see little Hela, you are all alone now and I am going to make you suffer!” Thera tightened her grip and laughed as the Peace Goddess struggled.

The Goddess of Violence summoned the dark power passed down to her by Hiisi and began to draw out Hela's godsoul. The Peace Goddess tried to scream but her voice came out as a whimper. Her skin turned bone white and then her body faded from sight gone from existence. Thera held up the dead goddess’s godsoul, as a ball of pure fire, in her hand in triumph.

“Here me, Mother of Kulan! I have destroyed this goddess to prove that one day I will rule your world and bring darkness to this land. I entomb her godsoul to the waters so that you may share her pain!”

Thera held the godsoul in both hands her eyes glowing with evil darkness. She willed the energy contained in the godfire to transfer from her hand to the waters of the Sword Gulf below. The energy spread out along the surface merging with the water, trapping Hela’s essence there, not really alive, yet not dead either.

The All-Mother watched helplessly as Thera tortured Cronn’s granddaughter. As Hiisi’s influence and evil had spread throughout the land, her power over the dark, alien gods he spawned began to wane. She needed all her energy just to contain the dark pantheon to Harqual. But if Cronn’s pantheon fell, there would be no stopping them. Mirella watched as Thera shifted back to the Outer Planes laughing the whole time.

The waves began to thrash against the shores of Harqual, as Hela tried to escape her watery prison. Thera had done her dark deed well; Mirella could feel the trapped goddesses' pain.

### ***Tu the Cat God***

The two pantheon gods knew that ‘Tu was more than a match for them. They had a choice – leave the Northlands to him or go down fighting.

“What do you think, Seraph?” Hansa readied himself for anything.

“I’m not going anywhere.” Seraph growled in response.

The two gods rose into the air slowly, eyeing the cat god and keeping their distance from him. They moved to flank the Feline God but he backed away, evading them.

“Ah, Cronn’s barbarian children. Now, to find out just how strong you really are.”

‘Tu raised his spear and two pantheon gods readied themselves to get out of the way. ‘Tu did not see them smiling until it was too late.

“Look behind you.” Hansa mocked the cat god's pride.

“Oh please,” ‘Tu started laughing at the two little barbarian gods’ supposed jest. He should have looked, as he brought his arm forward to strike a hand reached out grabbing the spear.

“Hello ‘Tu, remember me.”

Rel pulled on the spear with all his might, flinging it and ‘Tu over the range of the Greystone Mountains. ‘Tu howled as he hit the hills on the other side.

“That is going to leave a mark.” Hansa was glad that Rel had arrived. Now maybe they had a chance. “I think the odds just got a little more even.”

“Rel, where did you come from? Not that I’m not glad to see you.” Hansa felt something odd about the whole situation.

“Larea told me what was going on here. Now, where are those two degenerates?”

“Probably lost on their way to the Twilight.” Seraph laughed.

“Well, you two have been busy. Cronn would be proud.” Rel looked at his nephews with admiration.

“Well, ‘Tu did help I guess.” Hansa looked towards the Sword Gulf. Something was wrong he could sense it. “Where did he go?”

The three gods looked to see if ‘Tu had regained his dignity. He was no where in sight.

“I don’t like this. Where is he?” Hansa felt it then, his sister’s pain. “Hela!”

Then he vicious cat god appeared out of nowhere striking Hansa from behind. The blow sent the young god spiraling out of control to the ground. The force of the impact left a huge crater with no sign of the God of Soldiers.

“Hansa!” Seraph called out to the fallen god hoping to receive an answer. He didn’t get one.

“Damn it, how’d he get over here without being spotted.” Things had gone from not too bad to horrible in mere seconds. “Seraph, do you know where Hela is? I can’t sense her or Hansa.”

“I can’t feel their presence either.” Seraph didn’t know what to do. He couldn’t leave Rel to face Tu alone. Yet, he felt something was wrong. “Rel, Truce has fallen. I can sense his journey to the Twilight beginning.”

“Not so arrogant now are you?” Tu laughed at the duo’s plight.

“Damn you to Baator, Tu!” They weren’t Rel’s words. The rage took Seraph once again and he attacked blindly without any sense or reasoning. He had lost another relative, perhaps three. All sense was gone in him. There was only rage now.

“Seraph, no wait!” Rel’s words could not snap his nephew out of his rage. All he could do was back the Elf Barbarian God up, and he hoped that they could hold out until Seraph’s rage ended.

Rel attacked Tu just as Seraph struck his first blow, his sword in one hand and his favorite weapon in the other, a Rakasta war claw he called Cat’s Paw. The three gods thundered through the sky. Tu used his spear like a staff, blocking blow after blow. Not even Rel’s sword could cut through it. The three gods fought across the mountain sky, striking at each other, looking for an opening. They passed over the Great Forest of Harqual, the Hather Plains, and the desert known as the Great Expanse.

Rel could tell that Seraph was tiring, as the rage left him, and Tu was gaining the advantage. Rel moved in and blocked the other cat god’s obvious attempts to deliver the final deathblow to the Elf Barbarian. His attempt was weak and Tu slammed his fist across Rel’s face sending him to the savannas below. Rel’s Avatar exploded as it hit the ground and it took several moments for him to transfer another one to the mortal plane.

That was all Tu needed. He speared Seraph in the midsection, sending the North God on his own journey to the Twilight, then turned to face Rel’s new Avatar as it formed.

“No!” Rel was shaken by what was happening, he had made an oath to protect Cronn’s kin. It had meant so much to him now that all his own were gone.

“Two down, one to go.” Tu’s laughter could be heard as far away as the Cold Barrens in the Northlands.

### ***Mothers’ Love and Rage***

Larea had known the instant that her daughter’s godsoul had been taken from her. She and Ramara had gone to Hunter’s Rest, to use Larea’s scrying mirror, in order to find out what had happened to the Peace Goddess. But they couldn’t find any trace of her or the Scholar God, for that matter.

Then Bast had appeared in Larea’s realm sobbing. She had felt her peaceful son die but didn’t understand why he had left the Upper Planes in the first place. Larea told her about the harsh words that were spoken and the apologies that followed. Bast had been mad, thinking Hansa had lead her son to death in the Twilight.

Only when they finally learned what had transpired between Hela and Thera did Bast regret her own harsh words. No one deserved to watch her daughter be tortured like that. Bast was sad that her son was gone but at least he had died quickly. Larea immediately began searching for Hansa but she could not find him either. Fearing the worst, she eventually came across Rel, Seraph, and Tu battling above the southern lands of Harqual.

They had not known that Tu had become involved. The three goddesses watched as Tu gained the upper hand, sending Rel’s Avatar crashing to the ground below, obliterated. Ramara cried out not knowing if her husband was gone. Then they watched Tu kill Seraph before Rel’s next Avatar could shift to the Material Plane.

Not being able to watch anymore, fearing her husband might be next, Ramara dropped down on the ground sobbing. Bast wrapped her arms around her adopted sister.

“I can’t take this anymore, this has to end.” Larea was beside herself with grief.

Not only was Hela gone and Hansa as well, but now all her sister’s and adopted sister’s children were gone as well. The pantheon was dying.

“Bast, stay here with Ramara. I must go to Celestia to tell Cronn what has happened and to do my duty.” Balefire burned in her eyes, as emotions that she thought she’d forgotten raged through her once more.

### ***The Battlefield of Lunia***

Jaeger and Larea appeared on Lunia at the same time at almost the same spot. Larea had been following the battle’s progress, as it had unfolded, and everyone kept asking ‘where is Jaeger?’

“Where in Hades Underrealm have you been!” Larea grabbed the God of Honor and shook him.

“I found something that can defeat Hiisi. I can’t say more than that but it could be the break we need.”

“Damn it Jaeger, it better be. While you’ve been traipsing around who knows where, we have been dying out here. Euphoria, Hansa, Hela, Truce, Seraph, and Zealot are all gone.”

“Euphoria...” The God of Honor felt heart brake.

Larea let Cronn’s godson go, storming off into the fray to look for Cronn. Jaeger felt like he had betrayed everything he stood for. The God of Honor, how could he ever call himself that again?

“I make a new vow today, that I will avenge my fallen kin, even if it costs me everything that I am.”

Jaeger’s entire body filled with an unearthly fire that he had never felt inside before. “Everything that I have ever aspired to be, that I’ve forgotten on this day. Honor demands this sacrifice!”

Jaeger drew his sword, Honorbound, and charged into the battle, looking for the Lord of Darkness.

Across the battlefield, the other North Gods were barely holding their own. Cronn and Mayela fought back to back killing fiend after fiend. Sanh and Garl fought side by side while Jalivier and Moradin did the same. Cronn had sent Kuil out of the battle and away from Celestia to find out how Hiisi seemed to know the North Gods every move. He had yet to return.

Hades had arrived just after the third wave of the horde had come. His dark form gliding over the battlefield slaying fiends was a disturbing sight to behold for the celestials. The fiends didn’t like it much either, as Hades decimated entire legions of both evil mortals and fiends.

‘Come to me dark ones and we shall dance the Dance of Death’ had been the only thing he said when he arrived.

Of course, Hades had seemed surprised to find Oberon and Titania fighting alongside the North gods but said nothing. Nothing distracted the Death God from claiming the lives of more fiends.

Corellon had not come. It was to be expected. The God of the North knew that the Elf Lord had to respect the wishes of his fellow gods in the Elven Court. They had never agreed with the two Patriarchs’ friendship.

More than likely it was Seraph that was the key problem. The Elven Court would not accept the Barbarian Elf God with two fathers and the Beastlands as his mother. Thinking of Seraph pulled his consciousness away from the attacking fiends in front of his of a second. He felt something. Then the fiends rushed him and he put his godson out of this mind. He swung North Rage four times and dozens of fiend died.

Cronn shift part of his consciousness towards another part of the battlefield. There, Lokun was wiping out several stands of evil mercenaries. Lokun was proving himself good in the battle and didn’t look like he was in any real trouble.

Lokun’s heroic behavior on the battlefield was something that Cronn hadn’t expected. The Sky Traveler had helped hold the line just as the fourth wave of Sword God follower’s came though from the Outlands.

Yes, Cronn just might make a good barbarian god out of Lokun yet.

“Father,” Mayela’s voice was steady and Cronn knew that nothing endangered her.

“Now is not a good time for a chat my dear.” Cronn decapitated a nalfeshnee that had made the mistake of charging him.

“I don’t want to chat, father. We need to switch places, you have to see something.”

“Can’t you just describe it to me.” The nalfeshnee fell and several dretch took its place. They were less eager to die.

“Uh... no. Seeing is believing.” Mayela’s voice had a feeling of hope in it.

The conversation had been mental. Dozens of fiends came at Mayela but you would never have known it from how calm she was. The two physically shifted places, calmly.

Cronn though he was dreaming at first. But there she was chopping down fiends heading right for the Lord of the North. The Hunting Princess was unleashed from her sorrow.

“Something has happened, Mayela.” Cronn felt it again. The feeling he’d had when he’d thought of Seraph.

And then, in a flash of ancient elven magic, over the rise came Corellon with an army of elven mortals. The elf army swept a path through the fiends taken hundreds down for every dozen elves lost. Soon the fourth wave was pulling back. Larea joined the Elf Lord as they approached Cronn.

“Better late than never my friend.” Cronn greeted Corellon with the Warriors Greeting. “But I have this feeling you’re arrival isn’t all good.”

“After I heard what had happened on Kulan, I could stay my heart no longer.” Corellon looked torn apart. A feeling hard to judge in elves let along their gods.

“Tell me.” Cronn looked at Larea’s face and knew he’d been right about his uneasiness earlier. “Larea, what happened?”

She told him the terrible news that almost all of the young gods were gone. She also told him that Jaeger had joined the battle and about the strange secret that he refused to tell her about.

“I was a little rough on him, I hope it didn’t shake his confidence.”

“He can take care of himself.” Cronn took the death of Seraph hard. Two of his blood children were gone in the same mortal’s day. “Mayela, go and find your mother. Tell her what has happened then try to find Jaeger.”

“But father, you just said Jaeger could take care of himself. I want to fight with you.”

The army of elves had pushed back the fiends to the edge of Oceanus’s shore. The celestials had reformed their lines and backed the elves up; taking out stragglers that tried to slip by. The North Gods in the area had gathered around their Lord to here the grim news.

“That will be kind of difficult since I won’t be here.” He had to go. He could feel Harqual calling to him. “I must go to Harqual and face Tu. I’ve put this off too long already.”

His announcement caused quite a stir amongst the gods. They all started questioning his decision or volunteered to go with him. Then the Soldier of Light stepped in front of Cronn.

“Father, you cannot leave the field!” Jalivier couldn’t believe it. “If you go, morale will suffer!”

“Damn it Jalivier, look around you! How will I help morale? The only one that provides morale around here is you. All the celestials here fight for you. All the mortals of Celestia that died here fought for you. To them, I am just your barbaric father who rages across the field every once in a while. No, this is your fight Jalivier. You, Inanna and Mayela are why we have yet to be overrun. I am needed elsewhere. Rel won’t last long against Tu. He needs my help. I must go. End of discussion!”

Before any of them could argue further, Cronn was gone. The celestials didn’t even notice that the Lord of the North had left. Mayela did as her father asked and went to find her mother. The other gods organized for the continuing wave of darkness that was destined to come next.

### ***Rogue versus Assassin***

Shortly after leaving Lunia, Kuil and his followers had discovered and dispersed a good portion of Hiisi’s information network, which had been keeping the Lord of Darkness one step ahead on the battlefield, as well as details regarding certain ambushes he had set up against the members of the North Gods.

This is why Aegir had not shown up for the battle when he had promised to be there. A strike force of aquatic mercenaries and godlings for hire had pinned down the Sea God’s forces in another region of the great river Oceanus. None of them had been able to reach the shores of Oceanus on Lunia.

Of course, Kuil knew that the Lord of Darkness would never have taken on such responsibilities himself. The most logical choice for such skulldugery was Vespín, the Sword God of Thieves and Assassins. Tracking The Assassin and his followers had not been easy. Vespín was good at what he did, however Kuil was better. After all, he was the North God of Rogues and Illusion.

He had found one of Vespín’s Avatars skulking around the edge of Ramara’s realm, obviously intending to go after the Goddess of Love. Vespín had probably thought that the news of the death of Euphoria would make her vulnerable. He had not expected to find the Hunting Princess there and had stayed his hand, waiting for the Goddess of the Wilderness to leave.

That’s when Kuil had grabbed The Assassin from behind shifting both of them to his realm in Elysium. Once there, he put his dagger, Shadowstealer, through the Vespín’s Avatar. The dark god flashed out of existence, and Kuil was sure that he wouldn’t risk losing his last Avatar by shifting back for vengeance.

Yet, he came back, spitting every blood oath and vile curse known.

“I’m going to eat your godsoul!” Vespín was mad, real mad.

“You always were a fool, Vespín,” the two gods had always opposed each other and competed for the same worshippers, except for assassins. Kuil didn’t accept assassins into his flock, considering them unpleasant mortals that didn’t understand the finesse of being truly roguish. Of course, Vespín had no such morality and relished each kill one of his assassins performed. “You’ll never stand a chance against me in my realm.”

“We shall see!” Vespín lunged at Kuil with bloodlust in his pitted eyes.

Kuil dodged him easily slapping The Assassin with the flat of Shadowstealer. Several of Kuil’s followers gathered around to watch the two deities duel. They remained quiet in respect for their god and many were mentally taking notes.

Kuil was enjoying himself, as Vespín fumed and raged. The Rogue knew that he could take Vespín without trying but toyed with him, like a cat playing with a mouse. Twice more did Vespín feel the flat of Shadowstealer, once against his back the other along his face.

Only when Vespín threatened a group of Kuil's followers that had strayed too close to the fight did Kuil move in and destroy Vespín's final Avatar with a swashbuckling flourish. Vespín screamed as Shadowstealer penetrated his back, sending the dark one on his journey to Twilight.

Kuil sheathed Shadowstealer turning towards his flock of followers that had gathered to witness the destruction of The Assassin.

"And that, my friends, is how you do it."

### ***The Last Battle, Hiisi Arrives!***

Jaeger waded through the battling armies of darkness and light with one goal – find the Lord of Darkness. At times he became embroiled in localized fighting, aiding celestials that were being hard pressed by Hiisi's dark horde.

"Where is he?" This was the question that plagued Jaeger, as he fought his way across the battlefield.

Jaeger was overwhelmed by the carnage being wrought by the dark horde of the Sword Gods. They claimed more and more celestials as the battle progressed. Only when things seemed lost did help arrive. Elves! Thousands of elves poured over the battlefield from every direction.

Jaeger knew that Corellon had come. Seraph, it had to be because of him. He was Corellon's son as much as he was Cronn's.

"Seraph," Jaeger already missed his elven brother. "I will avenge you my brother and I will see you again soon, in the Twilight."

Then the rage took Jaeger and he charged into the fiend army with celestials and elves following in his stead. He decimated the evil hordes, pushing them back farther and farther, driving them against the shore of Oceanus. Dozens of fiends were destroyed by the purity of Oceanus's waters while Jaeger fought one against hundreds of demons. The celestials and elves cheered as he destroyed several key daemon commanders by throwing himself against them, taking them deep into the pure waters.

The young god burst out of the water holding his godly sword, Honorbound, high in the air roaring in defiance at the evil of the Sword Gods. The sight of this untamed barbarian god destroying their commanders sent thousands of fiends into a scattered retreat from the North God.

It was then that a massive wave of fiends appeared from the portal leading from the Outlands. Led by the Lord of Darkness himself.

"Hiisi!" It was all Jaeger could say before the dark hordes pressed anew and he was forced to retreat against the onslaught.

The horde of fiends came in the thousands and all seemed lost, as Hiisi played his final card in the gamble to destroy the Pantheon of the North. All thoughts of challenging Hiisi left Jaeger's mind as he tried to survive.

On the other side of Lunia, the pantheon gods were in shock as the new wave of fiends destroyed all but the most powerful of the celestials and elves. Jalivier knew the day was lost without some sort of miracle. The fiends were too many and his forces were being decimated. His thoughts turned to Cronn and he knew that the Great Father had been right. The celestials would die for Jalivier but if he fell, they would not fight on for Cronn. Maybe for Inanna but not for his father.

"I must not fall," Jalivier spoke the words to himself and no one else. The thought of dying without being with his wife Immotion, the Goddess of Magic, again made him all the more determined. "I will be with you again my love, I swear."

Jalivier divided a small portion of his consciousness so he could sense her in her realm across the planes. There, Immotion fought her own battle, as she sat in her realm, the Soul of Magic in Elysium. She fought to keep her dark brother's magic off the battlefield.

Xuar was the Sword God of Necromancy, as well as Jealousy, and was trying to use his powers to raise the fallen as undead under his command. However, Immotion had foreseen this and she was dedicating herself to keeping her brother's power at bay. It was difficult but not impossible. Xuar and Immotion had about the same power level but Immotion had more access to a variety of magic. It was working; Xuar couldn't gain access to the dead.

"We must keep to hope, my husband." Immotion sensed Jalivier's thoughts viewing her.

"Hope, it is all we ever need." Jalivier focused his entire mind back onto the battlefield, rallied the elves and celestials to him, and pressed forward into the chaos to send the demons of the Sword Gods back to the Abyss.

### ***On Olympus***

Apollo felt like a helpless mortal. His beloved Hela had died a cruel vicious death and there had been nothing he could do to prevent it. The God of Prophecy had wept when he heard the news of her torture and demise. Not even he had seen this coming.

Hela had gone to see if the rumors about Gaoterlog being destroyed were true. That was the last time he had seen or heard from her. She had disappeared to visit her kin dozens of times before, being gone cycles at a time. But she had always returned and Apollo hadn't given the war her pantheon was waging much thought. But now, now he watched as her pantheon crumbled.

"I feel like I am betraying her by not being down there."

"You must not involve yourself in this conflict, Apollo." Zeus understood his godson's pain but remained defiant towards the Light-Bringer. "No matter how much you loved Hela, she was not one of us."

"I don't care," Apollo walked away from his Father's scrying pool, his back to the Thunderer. "Hades fights with them because they have become more like family to him than us. He fights with passion, with a belief in something beyond the Outer Planes. He believes Cronn and his kin can make a difference and so do I."

The Thunderer was enraged by his godson's open defiance of everything that Zeus had provided for him. Yet he was also oddly proud of him as well.

"If you go, you go alone. You may not take any of your followers with you and I will not intervene in this battle on your behalf."

Apollo shifted out of Zeus's temple without a word. He would avenge his beloved. He would destroy the evil witch Thera for her crime, even if it cost him everything on Olympus.

### ***On the Material Plane***

Rel was in trouble. One Avatar left, fighting a Greater God on his home plane, and no one to help him. Yes, he was definitely in trouble.

Tu knew it too.

The God of the Tabaxi was toying with the rival cat god now. Letting Rel find his feet and his strength, just so Tu could knock him down again. Rel didn't stand a chance from the moment the fight had become just the two of them. Yet he refused to yield to the wicked patron of the Tabaxi. He would not surrender; he would die fighting for his people and for Cronn.

"Well Rel, had enough?" Tu was so smug. "Do you yield?"

"Never!" Rel rushed in against Tu once more and was slammed to ground of the Savanna of the Sun, as a reward for his bravery.

The cat god was near his end. He could feel himself drifting towards the Twilight, his power draining away. Tu was laughing at him, as the other cat god hovered in the air above the broken God of the Rakasta.

"Cronn-"

The word was a personal farewell to his liege, not a request for the Lord of the North to come to his aid. Yet, there he was. He appeared some distance behind the two cat gods. Rel knew there was no need to play Tu for a fool a second time. Cronn would announce his presence in a moment.

The Lord of the North roared a barbaric battle cry charging towards the God of the Tabaxi. Tu turned to meet the new challenger not realizing it was Cronn until it was too late to get out of the way. Cronn split Tu's Avatar in half with North Rage. It blinked out of existence.

The vile cat god's next Avatar appeared near the two pantheon members growling at the barbarian god. Cronn beckoned the God of the Tabaxi to continue the fight. Tu howled coming at the Lord of the North with his spear in hand. The two rose into the sky, thundering across horizon.

The next thing Rel knew the God of Rogues and Illusion was at his side.

"You look terrible."

"Thanks a lot Kuil." Rel felt weak and broken.

"Cronn sent an Avatar to find me so that I could get you out of here."

"But we can't just leave him here alone. He needs our help." Rel wouldn't just pick up and leave his Lord to face the God of the Tabaxi alone.

"Don't worry," Kuil smiled at his fellow pantheon member. "Grandfather can take care of himself."

"But-"

Kuil picked up the cat god shifting to Ramara's realm. Kuil was right of course; Cronn could take care of himself. Ramara embraced the fallen cat god and her love made him glad to be alive.

### ***The Tides of War***

The battle was turning into a rout.

Jalivier knew he'd lost the day, as fiend after fiend poured from the Outlands portal controlled by the Sword Gods. The portals had not closed since it last opened and his forces were being overrun. Without help the pantheon would die in its infancy.

Hiisi had turned loose a horde not even the Lord of Darkness could control. The fiends ravaged the first layer of Mount Celestia and those gods with realms on the layer closed their borders, cutting off the fiend's ability to access them, as well as the rest of the Seven Heavens. This also cut Jalivier off from his realm and his followers had rallied behind their Lord to protect him from the fiends. He was losing so many close friends and allies.

Fortunately, none of the other pantheon members had fallen during the initial onslaught of Hiisi's latest horde. Corellon, Damh, Garl, Hades, Inanna, Jaeger, Larea, Lokun, Mayela, Moradin and Sanh were all fighting the good fight. Jaeger's initial absence had been forgotten by all and he seemed possessed on the battlefield. He led charge after charge and Jalivier was worried that Cronn's godson was actually trying to martyr himself.

Lokun was also obsessed for some reason. He fought so hard that Jalivier thought Lokun was channeling Odin. He had refused to discuss the reason for his passion driving him. All he would say was 'I swear I will always fight by your side against the Sword Gods'. Jalivier had been speechless.

But none of that mattered now, Hiisi was winning – slaughtering, really.

Druaga, Mussin, Nether, and Thera had joined their Dark Lord on the battlefield and the five dark gods had the advantage.

Had.

Just when Jalivier was sure that Hiisi would steal his godsoul, two things happened. The first was a huge shock. The Olympian Apollo appeared on the battlefield riding a giant Pegasus steed. He flew over the battlefield and started gutting fiends left and right.

Jalivier heard him call out a challenge to the Goddess of Violence. "Here me Thera! You have violated the one person I loved most, my beloved Hela! I have come to send you to the Twilight where you shall remain for all eternity!"

Thera rose to meet the Old God against the wishes of her Dark Father. Apollo's winged steed sped towards the dark goddess and the two clashed above the battlefield. Again and again the two gods swords met. But the Old God was too strong for the goddess.

"For Hela!" Apollo cried out as he delivered the deathblow.

This event gave hope to the Army of Jalivier's Light, as it was now being called across the Outer Planes. They fought more inspired at the presence of another Old God on the battlefield. But it was the second event that truly gave hope to the pantheon's forces.

From the Great River Oceanus, an aquatic army of Asgardian petitioners and mortals rose from the water and took the fiends from behind. Aegir's forces had broken the blockade sent by Hiisi to prevent his involvement in the Final Battle. The Old Man of the Sea rose from the billowing depths, his voice echoed over the land as he roared in defiance at Hiisi's plan.

"Ha, you thought to keep an Old God down, did you Dark One. You will feel the wrath of the waves and it children! This I swear today before all present!"

Aegir conjured hundreds of water elementals from the depths of Oceanus itself. The water elementals fell upon the fiends, carrying with them the purity of Oceanus. The demons screamed in pain as the pure water burned their skins off.

Soon the hordes of the Sword Gods were in disarray and the Army of Jalivier's Light was sweeping across the battlefield. And one lone, young god renewed his search for the Lord of Darkness.

### ***Cronn versus Tu***

The two Greater Gods raged across the sky, matching the others speed and intensity. They fought from the Savanna of the Sun to the peaks of the Greystone Mountains. Cronn knew that Tu was a formidable foe and used all his strength against the vile cat god.

Cronn was starting to feel the rage flow through his godsoul again but suppressed it concentrating all his energy on keeping Tu's great spear at bay. His great axe, North Rage, wasn't the most effective weapon against the

cat god's spear but he wouldn't fight with anything else. North Rage was part of him, like an extension of his essence. Tu never showed any sort of emotion during the battle, except to hurl insults at the barbarian god.

"Your pantheon is collapsing, Great Cronn." His words mocking Cronn's heritage and kin. "Soon I will send you to the Twilight as I did Seraph!"

That did it.

The rage took Cronn in a way he had never experienced and he roared a thunderous barbarian war cry and charged the cat god. Tu had never seen anything like it and actually wondered if he was afraid. Cronn's Avatar grew to twice its normal size. He towered over the cat god, as North Rage smashed into Tu's great spear, splitting it in half like a mortal weapon.

Yes, Tu was sure that what he was feeling was fear. He fled before the onslaught of the Lord of the North. Heading for the city of his people, Tattenger. There he would be at his strongest; there he could face Cronn on his own terms.

The cat god quickly outdistanced the raging barbarian god reaching Tattenger far enough ahead of Cronn to summon all his divine power. Tu's great spear reformed in the presence of his greatest power, and when Cronn finally arrived, Tu's Avatar was almost the same size as the raging barbarian's.

The two clashed above the streets of Tattenger. Each gaining the upper hand and then losing almost as quickly. Tu's essence began to dwindle while Cronn's rage sapped his strength as well. Soon the two gods fought like mortals in the streets of Tattenger, brawling like two rivals for the same wench.

"Enough, I've had enough of this nonsense! I have no time for this!" Cronn swung North Rage sending Tu's Avatar into a nearby building, destroying it completely.

Tu pulled himself from the wreckage of the building only to be pinned to the ground by the barbarian god. Cronn held Tu's Avatar down with all his strength calling out to the sky.

"Here me Mirella, I have defeated the God of the Tabaxi and petition you to grant me a request."

"What is your request, Great Cronn?" The All-Mother appeared before the two gods and Tu's people bowed down to the Great Mother of Kulan, awed by her presence.

"I request that Tu and his people be banished from Kulan for his crimes against my kin."

"Why do you not just destroy him?"

Cronn shook his head looking at the Tabaxi God. "I did not start this quarrel and will not destroy one who has yet to gain the wisdom to realize why his actions are wrong. If I destroy him, I would be no better than Hiisi."

"Indeed you have become wise through the ages, Great Cronn." Mirella smiled at the barbarian god. "I will grant your request."

"You cannot do this! It is my destiny to rule!" The cat god snarled and spat at the All-Mother but could not break free of Cronn's grip.

"Perhaps," Mirella stood above the howling cat god. "But not yet. I banish you, and your people as well, from the lands of Harqual for a 1,001 years. Hopefully by then you will have matured a little."

Mirella looked to Cronn and he nodded that he was satisfied. Then Mirella reached through time to find a place where Tu and his people could not escape. There she sent the cat god and his people to languish. Thus it was that the city of Tattenger left the mortal plane, forgotten in time.

"Thank you All-Mother." Cronn dropped to one knee and paid homage to the Mother of Kulan as he had done all those ages ago.

"Now is not the time, Great Cronn. One of your kin is risking everything he is to break Hiisi's power over Harqual."

"Who?"

"Jaeger."

"No!"

### ***The Challenge***

Hiisi knew the battle was over, he had lost almost as much as Cronn's pantheon. All the Dark Children were gone, their power with them. Hiisi had had to beg Thera to come to Lunia and add her power to the battle. But then the God of Prophecy had arrived and sent her to the Twilight.

His blockade had fallen as Aegir had surprised everyone by rising out of the Great River with a battle ready army of followers. If Hiisi had received word of the event like he was supposed to then he wouldn't have been caught between Jalivier & Aegir's armies. Vespian was dead, he knew his godson would never have let this slip by.

His pantheon was broken but he refused to surrender. Better to retreat and regain his power than die needlessly in savage battle. Hiisi motioned to Mussin to call the retreat. The vile god laughed at Hiisi's plight, and he, Druaga, and Nether shifted away from the shores of Lunia.

"Damn you to the Abyss, Mussin, you will suffer for this!"

"No!" A voice rang out behind the Lord of Darkness.

Hiisi wondered who would dare contradict him turning to see Cronn's godson Jaeger walking towards him. "Well, this is an unexpected pleasure. I feel like taking my frustration out on someone. It might as well be you, little god child."

"You'll have your chance." The young god smiled as if he had already won. Jaeger raised his voice calling out to the sky in the ancient tongue of the Old Gods. "I invoke the ancient tradition of the Finnish Pantheon. I call for the Ympyrä Ristiriita!"

"What, no, you can't..." Hiisi did not have time to finish his sentence. Eight Avatars of the Finnish gods appeared around Hiisi and Jaeger. Ahto, Ilmatar, Loviatar, Mielikki, Tuonetar, Ukko and Untamo.

"The challenge has been made Hiisi; do you accept or forfeit your station to the challenger?" It was Ahto that spoke the words.

"You can't be serious, he isn't one of us." Hiisi was furious. As long as he was within the circle of Ympyrä Ristiriita, he could not shift away from Lunia.

"It doesn't matter if the challenge comes from outside of the pantheon, you know that. Or do you forget how you came by your station amongst the Finns?" The Mistress of the Forest spoke in rebuttal.

"Don't patronize me Mielikki. And yes, I will accept the challenge." Hiisi looked at Jaeger laughing. "You little fool, you can't defeat me. No one has ever defeated me in Ympyrä Ristiriita."

"I don't have to defeat you, I just have to trap you here long enough for the rest of my pantheon to finish destroying your army." Jaeger looked passed the circle of Finnish gods noting that a growing number of Outsiders had seen the Finnish Gods appear and riders were already on their way to tell the rest of the pantheon. They would come eventually but not soon enough to save him. Not that they could, no god may interfere in this challenge. Not even his father could pass through the circle of Finnish Gods.

Jaeger's words enraged Hiisi and the Lord of Darkness made the first move. Jaeger evaded him easily, as the Dark One was not thinking rationally. Jaeger tried to keep his foe off balance by mentioning that Hiisi's allies seemed to have abandoned him. That really ticked him off and he almost caught Jaeger flatfooted. The God of Honor wouldn't last long against these odds, even with Hiisi on Jaeger's turf. Not that Celestia was his home plane, the Prime Material was. But to Jaeger, the Seven Mounting Heavens were like a second home.

Instead of dodging Hiisi's next attack, he surprised the Lord of Darkness by meeting him head on, striking out with Honorbound against Hiisi's torso. The first hit was his, which enraged the Dark One even more.

Hiisi tore into Jaeger, gaining four straight cuts with his sword. A great cheer rose up from one side of the circle, as a group of fiends had gathered to watch the spectacle. Jaeger blocked the next blow and noticed that a group of celestials cheered him on from the other side of the circle. Law versus Chaos, Good versus Evil. This was what it was all about on the Planes. Jaeger did not care; this was for Harqual – for all the mortals that he had grown up with, fought beside, and watched die. That was what this was all about!

The rage took Jaeger and he fought with no regard for his own essence. He took the fight to the Dark One, beating him back to the edge of the circle. Hiisi was battered by the time Jaeger's rage had subsided. Yet his strength was still greater than the young god's determination. He slammed into Jaeger, sending him sprawling to the ground. Jaeger was hurt badly by the blow barely getting up to his knees. The rage had sapped his strength and he could feel himself slipping away towards the Twilight.

"You are beaten, young one." Hiisi stood over Jaeger and raised his fist in triumph. The fiends roared at the sight while several of Jaeger's pantheon members looked on, helpless to do anything.

Jaeger looked to see his sister Mayela standing outside the circle with his mother Inanna. Cronn was not there yet. It didn't matter, he had lied to Hiisi – he wasn't stalling. It was time for phase two of his plan. Something that the First One in the Halls of Twilight hadn't suspected he knew. Jaeger was not even sure it would work.

"I have fallen Hiisi but I am not beaten." Jaeger's words echoed across the shores of Lunia, as Jaeger grasped Honorbound at both ends. "Here me Old Gods of all the Planes of Existence, I convey my essence to the Outer Planes wishing only one thing in return. That Hiisi be banished to Carceri for as long as my Great Father watches over the lands and people of Harqual. This I do freely with no tricks or illusions."

Hiisi's eyes widened with fear and he reached out towards the young god.

"No!" Cronn appeared just as Jaeger snapped Honorbound with all his strength.

Balefire erupted within the circle consuming Jaeger's essence. The Old Gods of the Planes saw the young gods sacrifice and invoked the ancient Banishing that would trap Hiisi in Carceri for as long a Cronn watched over Harqual.

"Jaeger!" Cronn watched helplessly as his godson gave his life in the Banishing of the Lord of Darkness. A mist swirled around Hiisi and the Dark One screamed as his essence was transferred to Carceri.