

## The Story So Far

(As of the start of the campaign in 2022)

### **THE THREAT**

Our story began when the world ended. Creatures from another plane, monsters we call the Vreech, came into our world. At first, we ignored the threat, for we thought ourselves above these risks. We had our floating cities and magic that allowed us so many advances, so why should we worry?

We were fools.

By the time the threat was realized, it was too late. We had ignored the warnings of the Harbingers, and for that we would suffer. Our defenders managed to temporarily ward off the threat, but our mystics didn't take the claims of the Primal Fae. No one listened to the Dwarves' visions. Our pride and our confidence in the world we made became our downfall. It ripened us for conquest.

It was then that we took measures to stop the Vreech, but it was already too late in many ways. The Dragons arose and made themselves known to us. Their ancient lore was unearthed, and pacts were made. It was decided that we would complete a ritual, one that, once completed, would banish the Vreech from our plane forever. The lore said a great risk must be taken, but with the assistance of dragons and our magical technology it could be done.

### **THE RITUAL**

A plan was made to push back the Vreech, to send them from our plane with a massive Proscribe ritual. We altered the magic to allow for influence from various groups, and each race had to invest part of who they were - a piece of what made them them. We risked the ante in a desperate gamble, but we lost the bet. Each race gave up a part of themselves: The Dwarves their height, and their reliable foresight they used to find in their dreams.

The Dark Elves surrendered the sky itself, and the sun now hurt them. The Wardens had made their oaths and since have become the defenders of the prime material plane. The stone of the land itself is now part of them. The Union's hive-like mind has been shattered. The Celestial Chorus has been thrown into disharmony and their harmony broken. The Orcs' long lives taken and cut so very short. The Dryads all fell into a deep slumber when the last dragon died. The jade pacts ancient alliances fell.

All these changes and more.

Each race took a devastating blow in the backlash of the ritual, and in the aftermath there were whispered rumors that claimed someone had intentionally sabotaged the ritual. Many tried to defend the ritual, including the great Dragons themselves. Even they fell under the many variations of the Vreech monstrosities, their essence and magic fed upon ravenously.

The Dwarves, as they now call themselves, had a plan. Their High King had long ago seen what would happen, and they had built great Cairns within the Iron Mountains to hide traces of magic. The Selunari had their elaborate carriages, which they usually used for vacations, now loaded with supplies and goods, as well as the sick and injured. Many things were abandoned, and the magical technology that previously had been their boon became their bane.

The creatures even ate the magic straight out of Earth and Celestial circles, and if it were not for the Order of the Silver Sword then few would have made it to Cairns. These warriors were the finest the Protectorate (the governing body of the civilized world) had to offer, each soldier an army unto themselves. It was this cadre who had been held in reserve during the battle, and they now split into companies to defend the travelers as they made their way into the Cairns.

Some remained outside while the evacuees sealed themselves inside, hiding the cairn from spies and covering the tracks. It is believed none entered Cairns; they chose the fate of being the protectors of the Protectorate itself, even at their own expense.

The Collegium is an organization constructed primarily by the Biata. In the beginning the Collegium was a massive source for common education throughout the Protectorate, and since The Fall the Collegium has ensured that each generation is educated and trained for an eventual return to the surface. While not a political faction the Collegium does have goals of its own, and not a member within the Cairn is untouched by them.

### **LEY LINES**

These are lines of power that intersect and go through the mists of Fortannis. These conduits of power were said to be one of the major feeding sources for the Vreech, and reagents can normally be found near them. The “leystone ore” has been rumored to have been craftable, and the Cairns themselves have been rumored to have been built where these lines intersect deep below the earth. The most ancient of magics and machines are powered by them, and they may yet be useful.

Originally thought to have grown near areas where the Ley Lines came to the surface, crystals that can store magic within the lands of Ascension have been closely tied to the story of the people themselves. Cultivated and shaped over eons, the crystals' functions varied based on color, size and shape. Some were used as power sources for magic, while others were directly imbued with powers. Unfortunately, the knowledge to cultivate and grow these magics has been lost since The Fall.

Now the few that remain are safeguarded, and are only used in the most dire of need. They are avidly guarded, and are protected for the potential of what they can do.

### **NECROMANCY**

The very thought of necromancy is abhorrent to the people in the Cairn and the lands of the Protectorate. It is referred to in whispers and talked about with disdain. Necromancy and any chaos infused magics are anathema. It is rumored that rather than risk the disgrace of resorting

to it people have instead been resurrected and in whispers those that have talked about it know of someone who was put down by their own people for using it and not resurrected.

The Sombre Lance themselves seem to target those rumored of necromancy just in case. It is known where it is used, it destroys the life in the area and damages the land that your people so badly want to reclaim. It is taught by no one anywhere. No one has ever seen it used (officially), and it is a death penalty upon use.

### **THE CAIRN**

The "Cairn" is a city-state built underground by the Dwarves. It is one of a few such constructs that were made centuries before The Fall by wary Dwarves, the seers who saw the end of all things coming and wanted to give the Protectorate a chance to outlast the threat and survive. It is built in multiple levels, much like wagon wheels, with districts within each wheel. The Cairn is truly a marvel of craftsmanship and planning, as it has stood strong for a millenia since The Fall.

The lower levels were known to house affluent families, as well as Dwarven royalty. The Cairns themselves were built inside areas of heavy iron content in the hope that the wards and defenses, as well as old magics, would be hidden from the Vreech.

Within the last few years the Collegium has become more protective of the resources at the upper levels in which you reside, and all communication and trade with the lower levels of the Cairn have stopped. Resources, such as ore and minerals from the ancient mines, have dwindled. More and more scout teams are being sent to the forbidden and abandoned tunnels to look for resources, and rumors of some kind of invasive species being seen in tunnels persist.

Sometimes the rumors float back, and all they talk about is the horrific screams that echo through the seemingly-endless tunnels.

Rumors always circle, and the most recent ones have even claimed that plans have been recovered for the ancient wards, and that emergence back into the outside world is planned. The feeling lately is one of desperation and anxiousness, and everyone seems struggling in varying ways. The Night Markets have become even more important for keeping supplies in stock, and there is a heavy sense of unity even with all that has been happening. It is widely said by the Collegium that "Only together can we rise."