

### **A Children's Tale**

"In times long ago, when the protectorate was in it's bloom. In the time of legends That is where this story starts. " The aged Librahm raised a hand and knuckled the feathers that came from his brow. The children of the Collegium's newest class sat around the brazier which was sunk in the floor and leaned in. " Then the world was full of magic. Great cities hung in the skies with crystalline ships flying between and the massive crystals which stored power vibrating with the songs of the Chorus. The races were at peace. None challenged us. We were the masters of our realm. This my dear pupils is where we erred. We were so convinced we had no dangers within that we did not look..without.." The Librahm paused for dramatic effect and his fingers rolled the hematite ball between thumb and forefinger. " You see our might with magic had risen to such a point that somewhere. In the darkness between the stars an ancient hunger awoke. Unmakers, destroyers... beasts of destruction... The Vreech."

He eased back as the children gasped and nodded at the monsters of the surface and legend so much part of their lore now. He brought a small cup to his lips and sampled the wine with just a hint of cocoa. Resources were ever scarce but he found that just a nip helped him tell a better tale and better educate. " The Wardens in the stalwart armor heard the tales first but we were arrogant and did not raise arms.. The dark elves..only called such because the sun was ever at their back and most saw this corsairs of the skies while looking up..they thought themselves too skilled to be concerned. Even the Selunar elves in their great crystal Manufacturies did not believe the first tales. We were fools for it. I heard the first Harbinger Elf came a week before the horrors began. A woman warning us of creatures from another world. Beings that devoured magic and unmade life. The "Vreech" she called them. She claimed her own people chose to serve them in a bargain where they would not invade other worlds. She came to us to warn us because these Vreech had broke that bargain. We did not believe her. We did not listen when The Dryads began coming to the cities warning of the dragon clutches they guarded being attacked. We shrugged off the stories of the forest elves warnings that the realms of the primal Fae were attacked. We all stood idle when the dwarves with their great gift for seeing warned us again and again and began diverting resources to their great cities built in the iron lined mountains. " His eyes old and knowing, he waited a minute. He watched for the realization to spark in each eye as the children knew what was going to come next.

"Then came the time ..the first attack. On the windswept streets of the capital. The flying city above the clouds we heard the screams. These creatures the size of a mount with writhing tentacles lashing its foes swarmed over the docs.. and then they went for the power plants. The Manufacturies. The storehouses for the crystals that made our everyday life so easy. The items that powered our magic laden technology. They fed. It was not until that great shining symbol crashed into the city erected below it. Until the loss of life was so great we could not even count it, we took the threat for what it was. The protectorate banded together and with them, came the dragons. Creatures of awe and legend and a plan was formed. A great ritual. A proscribe so powerful that it would push out any creature not of this plane. " The Librahm swayed when he spoke, his hands moving as he told the story. Words crisp on his tongue, eyes widening at the right moments to convey the gravity of the follies and choices. He then stopped and sipped his

wine before his tone became melancholy and he looked up through lidded eyes, memories channeled through the stone in his fingers.

"The ritual had a cost. It was not one of purely reagents. The catalysts were what made us unique. The things that made us who we are. Our Ante in this gamble was our essence. So the races gathered. A great magic dome was erected to keep out the Vreech during the ritual. Already these creatures had been devouring ancient artifacts, earth and celestial circles, even small weapons and items of power their call would cause to resonate. We stood there. En masse against them. The dryads side by side with the dragons who's clutches they had protected. The Orcs close behind ready to lend aid and apply healing. The Selunari attended the crystals each of their families had created in hopes to aid its power. The Hoblings in clusters around each selunari based on the house of their employ. All the old races before the change were there... None of the new. There were no humans. They we have found are due to crossbreeding between races and rare though no one admits normally to birthing one. No circle born or ogres as people have called them. This is even a time before the Wyldborn or kin. No before the fall the world was different. Those standing there had no idea what was to come."

The Librahm wet his lips with his tongue. The memories flooding out of the stone put him there. What happened next he had to do his best to tell as a lesson. Not a horror story. His gaze met yours as he almost whispered . The room is silent enough to make it sound like a basso rumble. "All were represented. Those that could not fight were ushered into the cairns. The undercities the dwarves had readied. We saw them come. The horde. Not just the smaller creature but massive building-size fleshy bugs. Huge being to rival the size of the dragons. They came and we fought. The ritual began and during it the protectorate worked together aiding and assisting. Refreshing ranks, healing the wounded. Moving out of the dome to shore up defenses. We almost had it.. then.. somehow The dome cracked. The dragons. So mighty fell. The swarm of these Vreech tearing chunks of flesh and gobbling down their magic essence. When the last dragon fell is when the dryads collapsed. Without purpose, it is said they went to sleep. Their friends, the orcs, whose lives seemed without end, took them in and covered them as the defenses crumbled.. and then the backlash happened. The ritual you see...was flawed. All that we put up for ante was lost. Each race was warped and changed and undone into something new. " He swallowed his eyes reddened as the last memory of the person holding the stone at the time of recording was swallowed in darkness and pain.

His gaze swept the children of the Cairn now assembled. Various races and ages. " We know what happened next. We fled., Our ancestors brought us here. Even the Sylvanborn with all the lives they have lived and people they have been do not remember the time we had to seal ourselves away. When the time comes. When survival or exploration is needed. We will open the seals and try to reclaim our world. We think they are still out there. We don't know what to expect. " His eyes moved to yours holding them and his voice seemed almost certain " In some time it will be to you to go out. to help us be closer to who we were. You will be one who leads to our Ascension."

- Childhood memory of Librahm Alhen Joaquis Librahm of the Fall

