



INTRODUCTION TO GLORANTHA

Glorantha conforms to the mysterious laws of myth rather than the reliable, repeatable laws of science. It was born of magic, and throughout Mythology and History this force has shaped peoples, empires, and the land itself.

The Mortal World of Glorantha is not a planet moving through space. It is a huge cube of earth floating on an infinite sea, with one surface partially exposed. The sky is a dome that the sun, planets, and stars move within, upon, and beneath. Past the dome is the Sky World, where immortals live. Below the world is the Underworld, a place of ghosts, monsters, and demons. Around the edges of the world the immense sky dome contacts the infinite sea and the Underworld. The edges, too, are home to immortals.

In the center of the world, a gigantic whirlpool sucks all waters into it. Around this central ocean are the continents and islands that mortals call home. The northern continent, Genertela, is the crucible of the Hero Wars. Dragon Pass is the crossroads of the continent, and it is there, among its gods and peoples and ancient races, that the fire will be ignited to spread across the whole world.

Mythology and History

All peoples of Glorantha practice magic. All the various contradictory explanations for the origins of magic seem to work. No one doubts that magic exists; everyone can see its effects. What differs between the methods are the ways worshippers perform magic, the Otherworld from which they draw their power, and the entities they contact.

The Mythic Age

Before Time, the world existed in a mythic state where mundane and supernatural were not distinguished. Although no one knew it, three separate worlds existed (or had the potential to exist), each blissful and perfect on its own. Then the Gods War erupted, a cosmic conflict that created the modern world of Glorantha.

The Gloranthan races and peoples interpret this Time Before Time in their own ways. They share these fundamental stages.

Creation

Every intelligent race on Glorantha has myths about its origins. Yet vast eons of creation occurred before mortal beings were made. Thus no mortal remembers creation, though some have endured it through religious or magical experiences. The

elder races remember events before humans, but even they do not remember the start.

Every religion explains its experience of creation differently. Most have this in common: they were formed in isolation, then came into contact with other forces, other worlds, or other beings. The Three Worlds separated, mixed together, enhanced each other's existence, or grew apart from each other.

Most myths do not say it that way, but such it was, or might as well have been. The meetings of strangers caused the universe to change into the world that is here and now. Mortal people, deities, spirits, and other entities and beings became aware of themselves. Creation was over.

Golden Age

The Golden Age is a time of great peace and plenty. A huge variety of peoples and races exist together in harmony. Heroes make laws, organize nations and ceremonies, and arrange customs and societies. The Emperor, Yelm, is the brightest light in the universe and sits in the center of the Three Worlds. He arranges the gods and goddesses of the world into an orderly hierarchy, and those that are unable to bear his glare flee and hide far underneath it. Some people, the Emperor's Chosen, build great cities along great rivers where artists gather, philosophers join in debate and counterpoints, and strange foodstuffs from across the universe are peddled. The few early troubles are quickly solved by brilliant heroes.

Gods War

The universe could not continue forever unchanged. The Three Worlds crash together, break apart, and negate or amplify each other in unexpected, impossible ways. The combining and canceling of deities, spirits, and essences is sometimes easy, occasionally wonderful, but mostly difficult and painful. Creation becomes destruction. The cosmic impulse that had started the world collapses.

The Gods War is a time of trouble, grief, shortages, and conflict for everyone. It is a war for the cosmos, a battle of deities, spirits, essences, and demons. It starts and worsens slowly, until Death comes. Then people die, animals die, trees die, and soon even the rocks die. Gods and goddesses die, spirits are sent to the Otherworld, and essences become inert. The Sun falls, the Earth sleeps, the Winds stop, the Ocean freezes, and Underworld things come out everywhere.

Great Darkness

The Great Darkness is the end of the world. All sources of light die as the Lesser Suns are extinguished, stars fall, and

planets fail to rise. Fires become harder to light, fail to ignite most wood, and attract hunters and hungry monsters. Soon no lights exist save for the tiniest and most secret sparks. Nothing is good, all water is ice as hard as rock, air is toxic gas, and the earth itself is a putrid poison. Populations vanish, and even mighty gods, great spirits, and first beings disappear. Chaos demons and monsters invade Glorantha from outside of the known universe, and the world itself mutates and crumbles out of existence. Terror, horror, and suffering are the only ways of life. The Spike (the Cosmic Mountain, the center of all being) vaporizes in a huge explosion that cracks reality into its original pieces.

The Darkness should have ended the whole world, and maybe it did. But somehow the cosmos was saved. Every religion has its own explanation, always due to the intervention of its key figures. Common to nearly all is the story of desperate but heroic people fighting for existence against terrible odds. A few survived to see the first Dawn. The Darkness ended, and Time and recorded history began.

History

Most Gloranthans believe that history—and Time itself—began 1,620 years ago. Most divide this history into three ages: the Dawn Age, the Imperial Age, and the Modern Age. The Heortlings of central Genertela use the most accessible dating system; they begin counting the years at the Dawn.

The Dawn Age

The Dawn Age began with the first sunrise. At first only a few organized homelands existed, with other survivors thinly scattered across the continent. The Dawn Peoples of all the mortal races worked together at first to rebuild the world after the catastrophes of the Great Darkness. This cooperation lasted for 150 or so years. As experiences of the Great Darkness became distant stories people competed again. For two centuries warfare grew more common.

In the year 375 the Sun temporarily stopped in the sky. Each race or culture interpreted this event in its own way, but almost everyone agreed it was a disaster, or a portent of disaster. A great empire disagreed, for the Sunstop heralded the birth of their new god: Nysalor, the Divine Light. Everyone else knows him as Gbaji, the Deceiver. Peoples and races fought against him, but Nysalor conquered, unstoppable.

Then came Arkat. He hated Gbaji and destroyed the evil god. Arkat began as a Brithini, but betrayed them and became a Seshnelan. He betrayed them and worshipped Orlanth, then

The Theyalan Calendar

The Theyalan calendar used in much of central Genertela is perhaps the most widespread. It divides the year into five seasons (Sea, Fire, Earth, Darkness, and Storm) and a two week Sacred Time. Each season has eight weeks: Disorder, Harmony, Death, Fertility, Stasis, Movement, Illusion, and Truth. Each week has seven days: Freezeday, Waterday, Clayday, Windsday, Fireday, Wildday, and Godsdays. Each day is twenty-four hours long. Some peoples name the hours.

Dates in *HeroQuest* follow the Theyalan calendar.

Humakt, but betrayed them too, and became a troll. The Dawn Age is said to have ended around the year 500, upon Arkat's apotheosis.

The Imperial Age

After the Gbaji Wars powerful kingdoms became empires and shared the world. Central Genertela was ruled by dragons, all coasts were ruled by the God Learners, and Errinoru the Elf Emperor ruled most of eastern Pamaltela. Each had a new magic of its own. Each engulfed a great region and encouraged communication, trade, and movement within itself. The God Learners clashed with both other empires, and with East Islanders as well.

Each empire overreached itself. After decades of turmoil, dragons turned on humans and devoured millions in Dragon Pass. The God Learners provoked a backlash from the cosmic forces they sought to control. A little fungus wiped out all the Errinoru magic. Finally, to cap the disaster of the Imperial Age, all seas were closed to shipping by a great spell cast by Zzabur, the wizard who was like a god.

The Imperial Age is considered to have ended with the Dragonkill War in 1120.

The Modern Age

For a century people could only retrench and recover. They enjoyed their new isolation and thought there would be no more empires. They were wrong.

In 1247 another great celestial portent shattered the world's comfort. A great red planet rose from the surface high into the sky where it stopped and has hovered ever since. Under it a new empire has risen led by the Red Emperor, son of Sedenya, the Red Moon. One by one the kingdoms and tribes of the central lands have been taken into her strange and mystical embrace. Only the barbarian Heortlings hold out, and they are in desperate straits.

The Hero Wars are between... Magic and Nature

Several times in history, the actions of mortals have had profound effects on the world. In the First Age, the great acts of high magic of several peoples caused the Sun to stop in the sky. In the Second Age, simultaneous curses cleared all oceans of traffic and destroyed several lands. In the Third Age, the long-range plans of a dead goddess caused the rebirth of Sedenya and the rise of the Red Moon. Many peoples are in the middle of centuries-long rituals, and the results they seek, whether Flood or Forest, Reconstructing or Eating, Raising Up or Pulling Down, will determine the course of the Hero Wars and once again reshape Glorantha.

The savage Praxian tribes, though, have not agreed. They must go to their sacred grounds to visit the giant spirits that live there. They must pilgrimage to the graves of their ancestors. They must visit the Paps, where babies come from. They must destroy their foes, the Sable People, who accept Chaos as a friend. Leaders have risen among them. Some like White Bull are great men becoming demigods, others like Orfiyan are demigods born to be men. A few, such as Engrenga Marala the man-eating cow, defy description. They share one thing: the desire to return to Prax. They are coming.

Malkioni

The Malkioni peoples of the West worship an Invisible God and many also pay homage to the saints who attend Him. Foremost among the prophets is Malkion the Prophet, whose revelations helped the people to survive the terrible Ice Age. Second (in some churches) is Hrestol the Prophet, who taught a new, more hopeful way of worshipping God after the Ice Age ended. Two great nations of Malkioni are known, the Hrestoli of Loskalm and the Rokari of Seshnela, but there are dozens of smaller sects as well. Theologies compete for recognition as the one true faith; all practice wizardry.

Most Malkioni societies are feudal. Wizards attend kings, princes, and dukes—nobles who command armored knights, patronize a tiny middle class of artisans and professionals, and tax the serfs who work their lands. People are born into castes and, depending on the church, remain in the caste of their birth until death, progress through the castes, or rise above them.

Kralori

The people of Kralorela toil under the benevolent eye of their Dragon Emperor, a great mystic who has sacrificed spiritual oneness in order to provide guidance to his subjects. Society is crowded and hence polite. Each person knows his place in the intricately ordered society. Each struggles for personal perfection, seeking to bring honor to his household and his ancestors. The highest Kralori value is stability—of thought, of government, and of behavior. Now this stability is threatened by omens and signs that augur a time of great and disturbing change.

Pentans

Fearsome horse nomads roam the harsh grasslands of Pent. They have at times overrun both the Lunar and Kralori Empires. Many small tribes hold territory within the wide lands; each year any may conquer its neighbors and form a powerful force that never outlives its founder. They herd horses, cattle, goats, and sheep; trade raw animal products for the goods of the Citadel Lords; and watch for chances to plunder east, south, or west.

The Islands and Oceans

Between the two continents stretches the Homeward Ocean. At its center swirls Magasta's Whirlpool, a maelstrom whose doom currents suck anything they capture down to Hell. Around the edges of the great ocean lie many islands and archipelagos. To the west is Justela, once a small continent and the residence of the long-dead God Learners, now a broken group of islands home to elder races. To the east is Teleos, once a great pirate kingdom but now as deceptively peaceful as it was at the Dawn; beyond it lie the Ten Thousand Isles of Wonder, commonly called the East Isles.

East Islanders

The East Isles cover a vast expanse in the Eastern Ocean. Mysticism is common there, but most people worship deities, from the High Gods who created the universe to the Low Gods, one on each island. Humans are the most populous race but non-humans are also found here, in particular the duck-like race of Keets. The East Isles have generally remained unaffected by the rest of the world, but the islanders have acted when they needed to, and are ready to act again during the Hero Wars.

The Wolf Pirates

Harrek the Berserk is a great god-killing hero. He leads the Wolf Pirates, infamous sailors who prey on local shipping and coastal lands for food and slaves. Their raids have reached as far as Teshnos and Seshnela, and reavers from across the world have joined them. They defeated the defending fleets years ago, and are the dominant naval power on the southern coast of Genertela.

Now the coast lies waste, and Harrek looks inland towards greater prizes. He smells plunder on the wind, sees fire in the future, and laughs at the thought of the blood of kings, heroes, and gods. He will not stay at sea.

Pamaltela

Pamaltela is a distant continent of jungle, savanna, and desert. Kingdoms, empires, and magical realms have lived and died here, as in the north. Most consider it too far away to be of much immediate importance. But that will change.

Doraddi

The Doraddi live in tribal or extended family units sometimes confederated into nations. The most important thing to a Doraddi is her lineage, which is traced through maternal lines to an original ancestor with a mythic link to a particular type of plant. Status, choice of mate, and the spirits a Doraddi follows are all determined by her lineage.

Fonritans

The overlords of Fonrit oversee a society in which almost everyone is a slave. The most cruelly mistreated slaves are a race of blue-skinned humans descended from the prehistoric Artmali Empire. The warlike overlords are at odds with one another, except when fighting against Aldryami incursions from the Errinoru Jungle to the east.

The Outer Limits

Beyond the edges of the world lies the Other Side. Demigod races dwell in the places where the Mortal World becomes the Otherworld, and mortals do not go there. The deities, great spirits, and saints themselves can sometimes be found in these regions, even if only temporarily.

Four outer lands are known to humans. Beyond Valind's Glacier is Altinela, bordered to the north by Sramake's River and surrounded on the other sides by the Mountains of the Sky. Beyond the East isles lies immortal Vithela, and beyond that is Theyela, the Land of Dawn, where the Sun rises each morning from Dawngate. South of the Nargan Desert in Pamaltela lies Sakum, the most southern and burning desert, home of the immortal agitorani and the bomonoi, men of living fire. In the far west, beyond the vast Western Ocean, lies Luathela, where the Sun passes through the Gates of Death each night, home of the violet-skinned demigods who destroyed Old Seshnela.



Dragon Pass

Dragon Pass is the crossroads of the continent of Genertela. Its mountains, forests, and rugged foothills are cut by few routes of easier travel. Its warm summers are broken by frequent violent storms, and bitterly cold winters make travel impossible.

Throughout history, the civilizations of Genertela have met here and the ruins of their collisions are still scattered throughout Dragon Pass. As the Third Age draws to its close, competing civilizations will clash here again—igniting the Hero Wars.

Recent History

Five hundred years ago, everyone in the lands north of Dragon Pass who could pick up a spear, sword, or sling gathered as the True Golden Horde. Farmers and princes from Peloria marched to annihilate the dragonewts and their nests. They found only death. All of dragondom returned to defend the nests. Dream dragons swarmed, breathing fire and poison, while true dragons hurtled down like the sky falling. No humans survived. None. People call this the Dragonkill for what the dragons did. A generation of men were gone, and the descendants of those left behind still fear the dragons. No one forgets. For centuries Dragon Pass was off-limits to humans. Only elder races lived there.

Three hundred years ago desperate people risked entering Dragon Pass, fleeing from wars or following ancient prophecies. First were the Grazers from the east, then Heortlings from the south, and last were the Tarshites from the north. They lived in secret at first, discovered and fought each other, and then the outside world learned of them. Dragon Pass again entered history. The Lunar Empire came, conquered Tarsh, and defeated the Grazers.

For generations, the Heortling kingdom of Sartar resisted the Lunar expansion. Then in 1602 the Empire stormed their capital city, Boldhome, and put the royal family to the sword. In 1613, the Governor-General of Dragon Pass, Fazzur Wideread, quashed a Sartarite rebellion. The last rebels fled to wastes and wilds, and now Sartarite slaves labor in farms across the Empire.

By 1620, the only resistance left to the Lunar advance was the besieged hilltop city of Whitewall, where Broyan, the Last High King, held out.

Land of Thunder

Dragon Pass is an extraordinary land of unique magical places. The hills, waters, groves, hollows, and crevices are the bodies of gods and goddesses. The land lives. In a thousand places the gods and heroes of old trod and did their deeds. The geography marks their presence now with a thousand holy temples, spirit places, and power spots into the Other Side. The entire Pass is itself a holy place, a land of great, living mythology.

At its center, the impossibly tall and steep Kero Fin Mountain juts upward almost eight miles into the air. The great mountain goddess weighs down the land with her power, giving it of old her name as its own: Kerofinela. Above her snow-capped crown the omnipresent cloud of Orlanth surges and swirls, sending winds in all directions. From her icy heights the goddess of snow descends each winter to cloak the land.

Dragon Pass is a highland, but is the lowest point in the con-

tinental divide that runs from southwest to northeast through the precipitous Rockwood Mountains. The series of stony outcrops and undulating hills is the broken back of a great dragon that was a hundred miles long before Orlanth slew it. Its skull, a mile long, sits over a gap in the hills. Caravans that pass over these hills must travel through the fanged skull. Light enters only through the eye sockets and the great crack in the crest.

The northwest of the Pass is drained by the headwaters of the mighty Oslir River. The river formed when an ancient water deity challenged the Emperor to a duel and roared northward, flooding the Lord of the World and instituting a vast flood that nearly drowned everything. Even now, the river is a great force in Dara Happa that defies land, fire, and storm.

The southeast of the watershed is drained by the Creek-Stream River. It combines a god, The River, which flows southward from the eternal rainstorm over Skyfall Lake; a great spirit, The Stream, which flows from the Indigo Mountains that border the troll land of Dagori Inkarth; and a mighty essence, The Creek, which flows out of the Quivin Mountains. The waters combine at the Upland Marsh and then flow south through Heortland.

The Upland Marsh formed in the Pass when an empire fell to civil war, before the True Golden Horde invaded. A resident now called Delecti the Necromancer cursed the land and made it neither land nor water, high nor low, wet nor dry, living nor dead. The result was the marsh that is now filled with undead monstrosities that menace everything around.

North of the Upland Marsh is Snakepipe Hollow, a huge depression surrounded on three sides by vertical cliffs made in the Great Darkness when the earth collapsed to contain the monsters collected there. When they swarmed out of its western mouth they met armies of humans and elder races which, united against Chaos, crushed the foul foe.

Three great mountains mark three of the four corners of the Pass. In the southwest is snow-peaked Arrowmound, the tallest of the three. Atop it live gods and heroes, and upon its steep slopes are nest caverns where winged people called wind children live. Southeast rise Quivin Mountain and his kin, including a great cow and a white raven that have become stone like Quivin himself. Northeast rises Blackorm Mountain, where Cragspider lives with the dragon that gives its name to the peak. Around it storms the tumultuous hole in the sky called the Skyfall, a magical rainstorm that never stops dumping its waters into the lake below.

Three great cities dominate Kerofinela. In the northwest sits Furthest, capital of Tarsh and the greatest of all Lunar Provincial cities. Its tall walls shield apartments and parks, laid down upon gridded streets with markets and wells at the intersections. In the southeast perches Boldhome, rival of the Empire and former capital of the Kingdom of Sartar. It nestles among steep valleys high in the Quivin Mountains, a seemingly impossible place to live, and seemingly impregnable. Yet thousands dwell there, and once it fell to a Lunar assault. North of Boldhome and east of Furthest stands Alda-chur. It has neither gigantic walls nor impossible mountains to protect it, relying instead upon the ancient magic that exudes from the spot and the arms of the brave souls who live there. Only the southwest has no great city, for there the Grazers' ancient powers have forbidden all forms of civilization, and set such a great challenge that no one has yet defied their rough but powerful magic.

Land of Unrest

Dragon Pass is broken into many political entities that struggle for dominance or freedom. Their conflicts will shatter the region, the continent, and the world.

Tarsh

Tarsh is a wealthy kingdom, the richest of the Lunar Provinces. It is ruled by ambitious King Moirades, a friend of the Red Emperor. His subjects include both lowland associations and highland clans. His authority radiates from fortified cities with great stone walls that protect tall apartment blocks, ordered streets, lavish temples, and wealthy markets. His power is enforced by royal officials wielding Lunar magic. Much of his wealth comes from slave-stocked plantations.

The Kingdom of Tarsh is the dominant power in Dragon Pass. Orlanthi kings ruled the country from 1368 until 1490, when HonEel the Artesse seduced and then murdered the old king, beginning a Lunar dynasty with their only child. Tarsh once ruled much of Dragon Pass, and Moirades plans to conquer all of it, aided by his council called the Phargentites who scheme to replace the incumbent military governor with one of their own. Opposition will be crushed.

The Earthshakers

The Earthshakers are a ruthless people exiled from Tarsh who occupy the central highlands of Dragon Pass. They have rejected plow and herd for looting and raiding. They center on the Earthshaker temple, home of Maran Gor, goddess of earthquakes. Her high priestess makes the earth shake with the stamp of her foot, and travels in a huge oak cart pulled by six blind cave oxen, accompanied by forty-seven male and female cannibal virgins. The Earthshakers are a magnet for the disinherited of the Pass.

Sartar

Sartar is ruled by a puppet, the aged, dithering scholar named Temertain. He cannot command the tribal kings, but true power lies with Fazzur Wideread, general of the Provincial Army and a subject of the King of Tarsh. The tribes of Sartar quarrel with one another. Fazzur grants wealth, peace, and favor to loyal tribes and punishes those who resist. He forces clans and tribes to rebel then crushes them, seizes land, and distributes it to his supporters. Imperial soldiers garrison the cities and towns, ambitious tribal kings court his favor, and missionaries of the Seven Mothers win converts to the Lunar Way every day. Soon, Fazzur knows, he will find and crush King Broyan, the last rebel king.

The Lunar Provinces



Between the Empire and the sea are the Provinces, tributary kingdoms partway to being among the “us” of the Empire. The Provincial Overseer, Ap-pius Luxius, asserts the Empire’s authority over these lands, which have yet to be fully absorbed by the Empire. Instead of worshipping the Goddess directly, most worship the Seven Mothers in the Provincial Church (see page 112), whose missionaries spread the new faith by drawing on parallels between the Seven Mothers and the Lightbringer deities of the Heartlings. The Provinces have responded to such a degree to the missionaries’ work that followers of the Lunar Way are now as common in Provincial cities as in Dara Happa. Despite this (or perhaps because of it), many citizens from the Empire’s Heartland look down on Provincials as ignorant bumpkins, but there is at least peace and understanding between them.

A generation has been lost in the conflict. Who can imagine that a beaten people will resist? Who dares to think that the last rebels, like Starbrow and King Broyan, can last even another year?

The Far Point

In Far Point rules the warlord Harvar Ironfist. He seized power several years ago putting down a rebellion, and has purged the northern tribes of everyone who refuses to kneel before him and the Moon. His foes hide in Shakeland or the wilderness, impotent. He promises fealty to the king of Tarsh, pays tribute to the Imperial Overseer, but searches for his own crown. He has betrayed his own people, supported vile gods, allied with trolls, and conspired with thieves and heretics. His bright eyes peer toward hidden goals, and his iron fist grasps hidden power.

The Grazelands

The Grazers are overlords, an elite ruling class. The Luminous Stallion King rules the people and the Feathered Horse Queen rules the magic. But though they are one people dissent tears at them. Jarsandron Tenherds, the current Luminous Stallion King, has a great friendship with the King of Tarsh, and the Empire often hires Grazer mercenaries. Jarsandron remembers that the Grazers once roamed over all of Dragon Pass. He is aggrieved that struggles with Tarsh and Sartar have confined them to the river valleys west of Wintertop, and wishes to rule over the old lands once more. His rival Jandetin Regalmane

The Hero Wars are between... White Bear and Red Moon

The White Bear is the superhero Harrek the Berserk. He has been a mercenary, gladiator, assassin, and general. In 1609, he slew the polar bear god, bound its spirit, and now wears the living hide as his cloak. He leads the Wolf Pirates that ravage the southern coasts of Genertela. He hates the Lunar Empire.

The Red Moon is present in the Emperor and his daughter, JarEel the Razoress. Each incarnates the Red Goddess in human flesh. Famed for her beauty, voice, and sword, JarEel has come to Dragon Pass twice before to conquer. The third time shall be the last, and she will come to take her place in the clash of heroes.

Coinage

Most people receive their income in goods, not coins. The most common currency is food. Still, some people do use coins, often in trade or to pay community taxes. These coins are relatively pure alloys, not pure metal.

Currency in Dragon Pass is based on a silver standard, for it is by far the most common monetary metal. However, most Gloranthans never have cause to use anything more valuable than the clack, a copper coin. The silver coin goes by many different names, depending on where you are: silver, crown, lunar, guilder, penny, sovereign, and so on. It is used for large transactions and is worth 10 clacks. The rare gold coins called wheels are worth 20 silvers each. Trolls use a lead coin called a bolg, but these are rarely accepted by human merchants. Certainly no Solar worshipper would handle one, fearing spiritual pollution just from the touch of the Darkness metal.

disagrees, and seeks only peace and plenty for his folk. The hero Karndaro the Leaper protests against both paths, and says that only in the Otherworld will the Grazers find both wide lands and true peace. And the Queen? She tells no one what she knows, although she sees far past the smoke and into the fire of the future.

Black Horse County

Sir Ethilrist commands the mercenary Black Horse Troop. They ride demon horses and sell their services to whomever pays in gold. Sir Ethilrist (now hundreds of years old) plays the mercenary and collects great treasure, but awaits his chance for revenge. He hates the Emperor who cheated him, despises the barbarians who fear him, and holds mere mortals in contempt. This man, who harrowed hell, lays plans for his hidden agenda.

Sun Dome County

The Sun Dome County is a spartan religious community that fiercely defends its independence, until the right price comes along. They serve only the Sun, seek to preserve their freedom, and revere the Son of the Sun above all other entities. They have laid down a magical operation that will take another thirty years of bright sunlight to complete. That is when the world will go dark, their prophecies say. Then the son of a god and a demon shall shine forth from the Sun Dome Temple to complete their plans, for peace or for conquest no one knows.

Heortland

Foreign lords rule in Heortland. The king, Bandal Tigerbane, rules by the power of his knights and foreign mercenaries. He is a hard man, sunk in greed, subject to the Empire.

For decades, mercenaries have ruled and plundered here.

Patriots still ferment rebellion in Sartar and Heortland. Freedom fighters gather in the hills, strike the enemy, then disappear. Despite cruel reprisals sympathizers smuggle the guerillas food, offer shelter, and risk their lives for the cause. A generation born since the occupation still whistles patriotic songs and dreams of a chance to strike a blow against the Empire. Hushed conversations around the hearth recall heroic tales of resistance. The forces of the storm pause only to catch their breath. When they exhale, a hurricane of freedom will scour the land.



Now, the sorcerous knights of the south have become lords over the free men of the north. Now, clan towns are manors of alien sheriffs. Now, castles house outland earls who devastate the countryside to punish any protest. A schism of language and culture stands between the people of Heortland and their rulers. Wealth and power reign from the castles, while famine sits at the hearths of peasants. But the last high king still lives, and Orlanth is not dead.

Whitewall

In Whitewall, independence was capped for years, like wind in a bottle, and King Broyan vowed to die rather than submit. He and his followers resisted magic, threw down armies, and defied the Red Goddess.

Land of Elder Secrets

Beast-men

Ancient magic protects Beast Valley so no human may settle there. Strange races cluster there, part man, part animal: centaurs, minotaurs, satyrs, and fox-women. They gather once a year to dance at the standing stones of the Wild Temple. They remembered Ironhoof, the god who was their chief, and they brought him to life again. They remember other things, more ancient and powerful, and they prepare for the greatest dance they have enacted since the Dawntime.

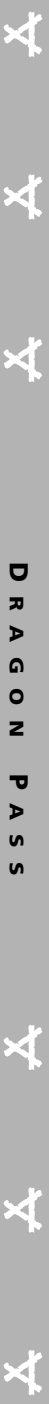
The durulz are beast-men, called ducks by men. They controlled river trade up and down the Creek-Stream River and were part of Sartar. Fazzur made them scapegoats for rebellion and a cruel bounty drove them into hiding. Many now live as outlaws and men laugh at their trouble. Who could not? What possible power could they waddle out to harm strong men?

Dragonewts

Before history or myth the dragonewts lived in Dragon Pass. They are alien creatures, ever reincarnating through their eggs in their home nests, and changing form as they progress through their different life stages on their journey toward full dragonhood. Humans avoid the areas where dragonewts live, especially the hunting lands around the Dragon's Eye, their central nest. There sinuates the Inhuman King, who has interrupted his transition to true dragon to protect his people. They have secret magic roads that crisscross Dragon Pass, control dragons, dinosaurs, and wyrms, and work magic that defies understanding. Humans are fortunate that they remain aloof. For now.

Esrolia

A Queendom lies across the sea from the Lunar path, but rises to meet the challenge. Ten women of destiny hear the call and muster armies of the living and the dead to meet the foes. They quarrel among themselves, plot against and cheat each other, and steal from their sisters to find who among them is the best. They will find that one—or three, perhaps, if the Basket Prophecy is true. And then they will march, with the Blood Flag at their fore, to quell the trouble, cast down the evil, and bring all of the land to their banner. Who is there to rule, who to fall?



Tusk Riders

Drinkers of blood and eaters of man-flesh live in the Stinking Forest. They are brutal raiders who ride gigantic porcine steeds called tuskers. The last time they ventured out in force, all the peoples of Dragon Pass joined to crush them in the Pig Hunt. But blood runs in small streams from their great temple called the Ivory Plinth, and old daimones have been brought up from the tombs again. A stinking army waits, a grunting cavalry gouges the ground, and red eyes glower so brightly that they blind even friends. They wait. Their chance is coming.

Dwarves

The dwarves methodically ratchet forward their plans to fix the World Machine. They stay in their deep homes, following secret plans to gear up their conquest. In Dragon Pass lives a uniquely friendly one, known to men as The Dwarf, who sometimes rents out dwarf secrets like gigantic stone men, the Cannon Cult, a glass flying machine, or the Alchemical Transformer. But he does nothing for the good of humankind, and plots for his own people. Yet in the short run, who can refuse his aid?

Trolls

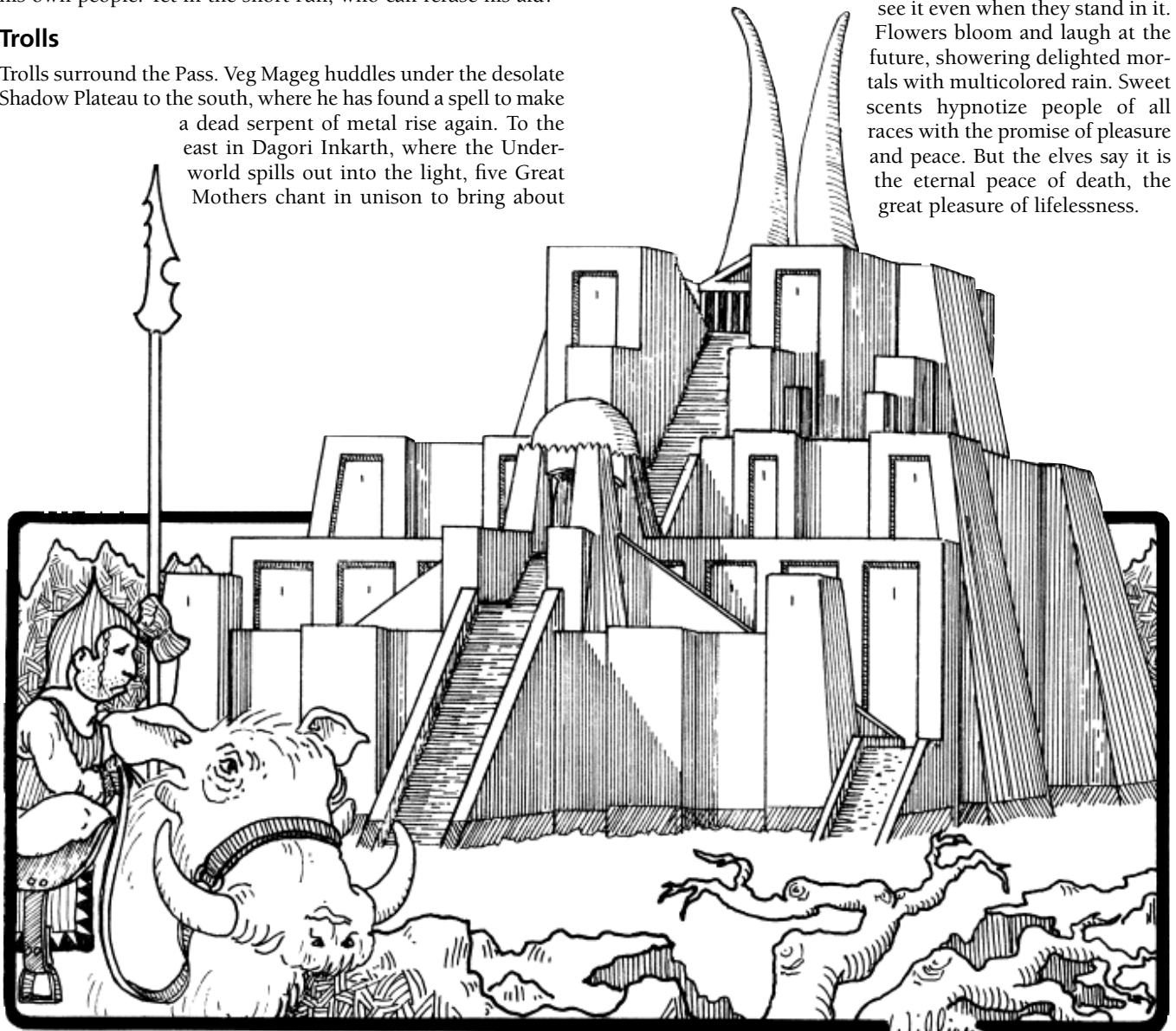
Trolls surround the Pass. Veg Mageg huddles under the desolate Shadow Plateau to the south, where he has found a spell to make a dead serpent of metal rise again. To the east in Dagori Inkarth, where the Underworld spills out into the light, five Great Mothers chant in unison to bring about

the birth of something never seen before. They are sure it will come once they have devoured the Five Foods. North in the Black Dragon Mountains, near Skyfall Lake, the great demigoddess Cragspider whispers to her dragon and brews stone drinks for her troll army. And to the west, in Halikiv, Urukong Mogagar impregnates herself with himself and births litters of trolls that see in the light, hurl rocks that destroy walls, and deafen mortal men with their angry roars.

Each waits, planning and plotting. They send secret messages to coerce and threaten each other, trade presents of might, power, and fear, and await the word of their Greatest Mother. Then they will rise once more and seize first Dragon Pass, then the world.

Elves

A new seed is being planted in the earth. A new earth is being formed among the tribe. A new tribe is growing in secret somewhere in Dragon Pass, born from a tree that has been lost since the Sun first fell. The elves have started their plan in a place so secret that men cannot see it even when they stand in it. Flowers bloom and laugh at the future, showering delighted mortals with multicolored rain. Sweet scents hypnotize people of all races with the promise of pleasure and peace. But the elves say it is the eternal peace of death, the great pleasure of lifelessness.



"I am the War-Teeth of Gouger," reads the main inscription on this blood-stained altar. "Sacrifices offered to appease me, hot blood and quick deaths." The brutal Tusk Riders who follow the Cult of the Bloody Tusk are happy to oblige.