

Falnorian Timejump 2019

Thirty-four years have passed in what was Falnorian.

More than 30 million people have perished; many more have been marked in their own ways by the passing of the Fall.

All we knew has crumbled; and the world that once was, is no longer.

The Fall

Near-thirty years ago, a series of bells rang out across Falnorian and heralded a series of catastrophic disasters. Entire regions erupted into war and conflict, and the very land itself was reshaped and reformed. Some say it went for five years; others say, ten; but all know that, when the dust finally settled, all we were was broken into pieces and scattered as if to the four winds.

We have lost much. One third of Falnorian's population perished, beset by war and plague and natural disasters. Its oldest and greatest cities have crumbled or been swallowed by the shifting earth, and the societies that once dwelt there have unravelled and been driven apart. Much of our history has already begun to fade, lost either in our fallen cities or in the memories of those who have perished.

What follows is the tale of how, nation by nation, we fell; and what has begun to emerge as the people of these places have begun to pick up the pieces that remain.

Oldmin

Early in the morning a month after the final bells, the city of Oldmin was awakened by a massive earthquake in the pre-dawn darkness. Whole stretches of the city sank into the ground; many of these sinkholes filled with floodwaters or were buried in the rubble of the surrounding buildings. Many lives were lost amidst the wreckage, but many were saved as well: and the city was filled with helping hands at every turn, even as most of their Knights were fending off an invasion from Falnir in the south. As evening crept closer and the final survivors emerged from the ruins, the sky turned to an early night as it filled with smoke from a chain of volcanos in the Halhar Mountains - set off by the earthquake and erupting with a fury not seen in two thousand years.



Survivors fled the ruins of Oldmin as the volcanoes rumbled through the night. Soon after, the city was buried in a wave of ash and rock and mud rushing down from the mountains; massive floodwaters followed in its wake, erasing in mere minutes what had once been the oldest city in Falnorian. The old city's remnants now sit at the edge of a lake called the White Lake for the milky color lent to the water by the corrosive volcanic slurry that still at times washes down from the mountains.

The sky remained dark for six weeks, broken only by the distant glow of the eruptions and the tracks of lightning that crackled across the sky. Ash rained down not only on Oldmin but on the rest of Falnorian as well; an early winter followed, made bitter not just by the ash and cold but by the hundreds of thousands of deaths this first winter alone. When at last the ash fall ceased, it left the ground covered with a thick layer of ash; crops in Oldmin failed and could not be planted for several years thereafter, and in those years many perished of starvation and illness. The people of Oldmin withdrew south and east to where the damage was not as harsh, but many still died of hunger, plague, and cold in the years that followed.

Syenor

Oldmin was not the only region shaken by the Great Earthquake in the Halhars. Much of Syenor was disturbed by the quake as well; not only was there extensive damage done to the buildings in its cities, but the pass between Falnorian and Illionor collapsed. Many see this as a blessing rather than a curse, and fear that Illionor may have then tried to take advantage of the chaos as they did in Ardel; but the collapse also cut off a source of potential aid and resources in the difficult days to come.

Fires, started by the collapse of buildings, ravaged Syenon for weeks. Mendillion, destabilized by the quake, began a slow sinking into the marshes of the Tleth; and parts of Silsendel were washed away by flooding from the mountains. Many Syeni people escaped these disasters in their cities and fled into the woods; most of them went missing and did not return. Those who did find their ways back emerged changed - mad, half-beast, or twisted into shadows of themselves - by what dwelt there waiting. Even those who chose to stand their ground and stay in what remained of their cities were not free of the horrors of the woods, as the forest's many dangers - beast and fey alike - roamed freely to fill the emptiness left by loss of life.

Syenon has grown wild and its forests spread wide without the pressure of civilization to press it back. Its people, too, have grown wild in their own way: whether in the collapse of leadership and the falling of power to rule by the cruellest; or in retreating into wild spaces to escape their violent peers. It is said to take care should you travel what is left of Syenon: for those you meet are rarely what they seem, and those who are only show themselves because they have no shame left for what they have become.



Ardel

Ardel was rattled by its own quaking- these occurring deep beneath the ocean far away from Ardel's shores. Though the initial quakes felt neither as powerful nor were as destructive as those radiating from the Halhar Mountains, the tsunami that followed them was devastating. Large portions of the capital city were leveled by the wave; other parts flooded, brewing destruction and diseases; and some parts of the city - as well as large lengths of coastline - simply crumbled into the sea. Sections of cliff would continue to be swallowed by the ocean for weeks to come as water and weather ate away at the weakened earth and rock, and the coastline edged back foot by steady foot.

Southern Ardel met its end in fire rather than water. A great wildfire, set to hold back a Falnir invasion and then stoked by the winds of the Ram, ate its way across the vast prairie and dry scrub of Ardel's southern half. The Emerald Wood and Celeni Forest were spared, having already been burned by a fire early in the last year; but all the rest, from ranches to villages to large cities, turned to ash in the raging inferno. The smoke here, fueled not just by the flames but also the volcanic ash spewing from the Halhar Mountains, did not lift for another two weeks. A long night

gripped the region, and those few who did not burn to death found a slower death in shortened breath and smoke-blackened lungs in the weeks and years to come.

And at last - sealing the fate of a nation long divided in two - northern and southern Ardel found themselves finally divided in earth as well as heart. The great rift that had begun to open between the two halves filled with water as its eastern edge was eroded away and then broached with the steadily-dwindling coast. The breach has now opened wide into a gaping sea that runs the length of the land up to the Falor Plateau - leaving few options to cross, and cutting off from one another those survivors left on each side of the Rift.



Falnin

Falnin found its troops scattered far and wide as the Fall began - engaged in conflicts on all sides, surrounded by turmoil, and with no allies to turn to. The most dangerous turmoil, however, came from within: exhausted troops, tired of taking orders from and fighting alongside undead rebels. At first, the battle seemed optimistic; Falnin's living troops caught their undead counterparts by surprise and cut through their numbers in the thousands. But the reserves of the plateau's depths went deeper than any had anticipated, and the horrors that emerged from its depths were far worse than any could have imagined.



Falnin's forces fought long and hard to return home, faced with undead to their front and harried by the troops of angered nations at their backs. Many gave

their lives in the process - or became subsumed in their deaths into the armies they had once opposed. When at last, after long months of fighting, those few surviving troops staggered into the Falnin capital - ragged, tired, battered, heartsore -

None were spared. Young or old, soldier or civilian, rich or poor - none were given mercy by the horrors of the plateau. Those lucky were drained to death to sate the hunger of undead armies - their spirits able to flee their bodies and find refuge far, far away. But many were not so lucky; and the tattered remains of the living armies that had forced their way to Falnin found themselves

fighting faces that had once belonged to family or to friends - or else, never saw their loved ones again.

Those who could, fled. Whether they were Falnin's people who managed to escape when the full strength of the plateau stormed the capital and its many cliffside villages; or whether they were Falnin's troops who arrived to find they had no home to return to - those who were able fled far and wide. Many turned south to Eldspel to search for missing loved ones and to throw themselves at the mercy of a people they had invaded and occupied for many years before. Mercy they found from its people - but not from the elements which battered a land already beaten by armies and broken spirit.



Eldspel

Eldspel has long been a place known for its vast waters and for the magic coursing through the fabric of the earth; but it was these that turned against it as the shadow of the Fall fell across it. Torrential floodwaters, washed down from the Halhar Mountains in the Great Earthquake, surged down the length of the river and into the lake; here too, the water leveled cities and left behind vast swamps and pools of stagnant water. With the rivers and lake itself running white with poisonous volcanic wash, these pools of stagnant water became the only source of water to drink: and many, fleeing thirst, left behind the once-populous shores of Meloia Lake to seek out scarce watering holes in the expanse of savanna.



Thirst was not the only gift the floodwaters brought: disease, brewing in these stagnant pools the floods left behind, ravaged the countryside. It is said that the stench of sickness and rot in what was left of Eldspel stretched for many miles; it was not spread only by the foul water but by the bodies of those who had died from drinking it or from the illnesses that brewed in the stinking waters. Those who survived did so by traveling: and for many years, the people here lived as nomads and migrated from watering hole to watering hole in ephemeral, fleeting communities that were broken and parted not long after they were formed.

Unfamiliarity breeds distrust - and where once a sense of connectedness and sisterhood was the strength that sustained Eldspel even through years of war and occupation, the distance between person and person grew too wide for many to overcome. Loss - in calamity, in thirst, in sickness, in skirmishes over resources and the choices made in struggle for survival, left many in a grief too deep to reach past; and across a gulf too wide to be bridged by the unrelenting rhythm of friend after familiar face after stranger made once and never to be seen, nor spoken to, nor heard from again.

Gildmar

Dryness and thirst was not Eldspel's doom alone. Gildmar has long lingered on the edge of a vast desert, all but set apart from the rest of Falnorian - the single road connecting it to the rest guarded with vigilance lest it be claimed by the desert and the wild creatures that dwelt there. As the last bells rang high and clear across Gildmar, the Wildlands stirred, shrieked, and awakened - then unleashed a fury upon the land matched only by the desert that grew steadily in its wake.

Fields and orchards withered. Riverbeds lay bare, and wells dried to nothing. Sand choked out oases and buried buildings whole; and livestock and people alike roamed the parched earth in search of sustenance until they died where they stood, succumbing at last to hunger and thirst and exhaustion. Those whose bodies not torn to pieces by wild creatures were stripped of their meager flesh by the unrelenting wind; their bones - and all memory of who they once were - swallowed by the shifting sand. The vast deserts of Gildmar have themselves has become a vast and unending graveyard marked with unceremonious graves of circumstance.

Where the desert went, sickness followed. Bodies and minds alike became twisted with illnesses that could not be cured by healers - no mere plagues, but other, deeper ailments. Troubles often seen only in newborn children began to appear in those long grown into their adulthood; and many who had seemed of sound mind began to lose their grasp on the world around them. More still, it was not only the land left barren by the desert: children became rarer and rarer as the years went on, and the lands that once belonged to Gildmar became emptier and emptier as the old died and the young numbered few. Some called it a curse; others cursed it, and cursed the shifting winds that brought it to a place that no one now calls home.



The year is now 29.1.3. The Fall has come and gone at last, and brought with it a turning of the era.

The seasons turn now from Fall to Winter; and the new world is left to us in the ashes of the old.

What legacies will we pull from the rubble as we rebuild that which was broken -

- and what hauntings from worlds past will we lay, at last, to rest?

A Footnote: Stars and Earth

Much has changed the last thirty-four years. It is not only the nations that we knew or the people who dwelt within them; the very landscape itself has changed in the vast upheaval of the Fall, and other aspects of the world with them. Though many of these changes remain to be discovered by Falnorian at large, there are a few that have transcended the destruction of the Fall and the splintering of the world we knew. The stories of these more widely-known events follow here.

Shrines and Temples

Since an event that has become known to us as the Toll, walking shrines have been widespread across Falnorian. The structures known as shrines for hundreds and perhaps thousands of years went quiet; and in their stead, shrine hood awakened in the priests and followers of the deities themselves. Many of these old structures, long-abandoned, were washed away in the destruction of the Fall; but the walking shrines have remained, for reasons and purposes unknown.

These shrines continue to serve their deities in all the ways a shrine always has: giving blessings, receiving prayers and sacrifices, and interpreting the visions and oracles given to them by the deities that have chosen them. They protect and guide followers and domains of their deities, oppose that which their deity is also opposed to, and take the will they have interpreted and work to bring that will to bear upon the world.

As the years have gone on, these walking shrines have also begun to discover purposes that constructed shrines did not serve. It is known that two shrines can oppose one another directly, and that the contest that ensues can have great ramifications for the deities on the winning and losing sides; for this reason, shrines tend to give one another a wide berth so as not to accidentally initiate such a contest. Furthermore, it has become known that when several shrines to the same deity gather together, their capabilities are far greater than each of the shrines alone. These gatherings have become known as temples, and as rare as they are, it is unknown what the full power or purpose of a temple might be.

So too, it still remains unknown what purpose the walking shrines serve - and why deities have turned to such vessels in the aftermath of the Toll. The answer is elusive, even to the shrines themselves; some say that it is to protect places of worship during the destruction of the Fall, while others say that the answer must be greater than merely that; and, as they continue their work, these walking shrines continue to seek the answers to their purpose.

The Third Making

Morganti is seen in few forms in Falnorian. It is known to exist in the form of weapons; it is also known to be intrinsic to the four Harbingers; and has otherwise been found in only a handful of other elusive circumstances. Of the three, morganti weapons are seen by far most often - but even so, still rarely, owing to the rarity of the weapons themselves. It is not known how morganti is made - if it is made at all - and only a few times throughout Falnorian history have new morganti weapons appeared.

The first making was in 5.1, when a coven of witches created a number of powerful morganti weapons. Though it is thought by historians that morganti may have been present in the world before this making, it is thought to have rarely if ever been wielded by people before this point; it is only after this crafting, during the divine wars that marked this age, that it is depicted as used by people in general. The second making was in the second age of the second era (2.2) just before the Bellmorn Civil War - its creators, and their reasons, still unknown to this day. Much of the morganti used in Falnorian since has come from this making, though much of it was locked away as it was acquired or captured in order to prevent its use.

The Fall saw a third making of morganti weapons: this time in the hands of the followers of the Harbingers. Where - and how - they have obtained them, we do not know: only that, one by one, bands of followers and their shrines began to carry them - and use them. Many fear the followers of the Harbingers; and though they have endured all the same hardships in the Fall as everyone else, their numbers have not seen decline. The Harbingers worshippers are apt at gaining new followers under threat of these new weapons, and few disturb them as they go about their business.

How the followers of the Harbingers have obtained morganti, none but the followers themselves know - but there is still speculation. Some believe they were gifted to them by the Harbingers when the Fall came; others suppose that the Harbingers followers have learned how to craft them. Others say perhaps it is old weaponry from long ago, hidden in some ruin and revealed by the tossing and turning of the earth... but the answer, for now, remains unknown.

Felast i Halhari

All people - from the highest rulers to the lowest villain, regardless of their form and function - have lurking in their hearts all the great Evils. Greed, Hate, Ignorance, Arrogance, Apathy, and Despair; and in the final days of the Old World, these Evils were by many brought to bear. Though much of the destruction of the Fall was wreaked by plague and starvation and by shifting earth - how much more was wrought by us? How much more was wrought by Falnin's desperate conquest in the final days; by Ardellian neighbors who turned on one other while their rulers grabbed for power, or by Oldmin knights who turned from their oaths in a time of need; how much more destruction was wrought and wrought again by those who saw the world fall to pieces around them and did nothing?

Evil's influence has grown all the greater in the passing of the Fall - both in big measures and small. There are those who roam the broken land now with great and terrible blessings bartered from pacts with this great Court - and who use their power to perpetuate the very evils from which they have built their power and their selves. So too, there are many who roam the face of this world with smaller evils in mind: raiders, killers, and even simple thieves and liars whose thought is for themselves above all else. The world is full now of dangers, and though it ever was, those dangers show themselves more freely and with less concern than once they might have done.

But the Fall has revealed to us something more: that all people - from the oldest soldier to the youngest vagabond, regardless of their past or present - have lurking in their hearts all the possibility for Good. Despite fear, and anger, and hurt; and despite all odds as so many struggle to survive in the new world that has been left to them; the Fall has found that, given the chance, many will reach out rather than pull away. It is found in small gestures, mostly: in those who share their meal, lend their cloak, or offer a hand to one fallen on the road. It is these gestures which have built the small groups and villages that have slowly begun to spring from the destruction of the Fall; and these gestures upon which these places continue to grow, even as evil works its nature. Though the Court of Darkness may rule the world, it is Good that walks its face; and we only need seek it out and strive to know its name, that we might bring it, too, to bear.

