

**Fifteen years have passed in the world of Falnorian.
It is now year one hundred and thirty eight of the third age, second era.
(138.3.2)
(2016 Timejump)**



The Center Crumbles, and the Ties that Bind

Falnin has long held an eminent position as the center of Falnorian's affairs: be it through its elite diplomatic core, its extensive trade networks, its prominent academies and flourishing arts, or its place as seat of the High Council, Falnin has been the hub upon which Falnorian turns. These last years have been hard for Falnin, however, and the province has become isolate and restrictive.



While it is still a major center for skilled work and study, Falnin has undergone much overhaul,

starting with the discharge of Ardin Lenn from the Falnorian High Council. Ardin Lenn, previously head of magical affairs, was brought to trial by Kida Shieldbreaker on

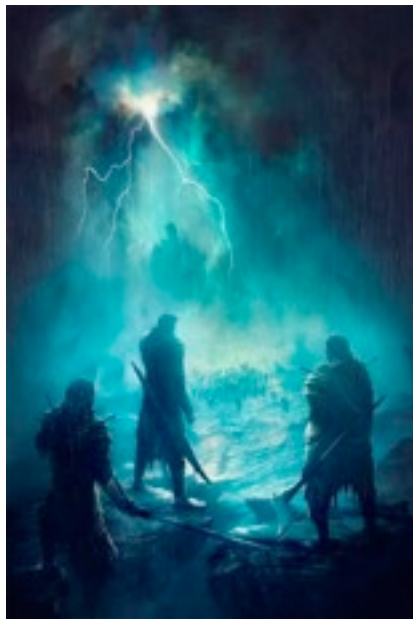
grounds that she was a major follower in the Tree of Life religion and, due to her strong religious affiliations, unfit for duty as a high councilor. The trial lasted a year, and Ardin Lenn was expelled in the autumn of 124.3.2. She has since been replaced by Elena Kai, a figure previously unknown to the public sphere but who soon proved powerful sorcerer and diplomat. Shieldbreaker and Kai have since embarked together on further development of the coordination of the mage school and military, encouraging them to grow together and strengthen their presence as a major force in Falnorian. Much of the industry of Falnin has shifted to support the enormous needs of this organization, and a draft instated to fill out its ranks.



Other nations, distrustful of the militancy that Falnin has begun to manifest, have pulled back from what was once their ruling center. Though they still acknowledge its authority with taxes and passing notice, most have severed as many diplomatic connections to the capital province as possible. Many ties, however, still bind through blood; and the family unions between the nobility of Falnin and the royalty other provinces prevents these nations from fully divorcing themselves from Falnin's influence. Each abide by their own authority and way of life, as much as they are able - and though their allegiance to Falnin continues to exist in name, for most it has ceased to exist in spirit.

The Fall of the Northern Alliance

During the course of 123.3.2, the northern nations - Oldmin, Syenon, and Ardel - banded together in an alliance. This began as Oldmin swept eastwards across the map with much of its army, to be joined by Syenon's forces and then proceed to Ardel's western border. There they began to invade Ardel, whose own troops were bolstered



with mercenaries from the south as well as Falnin forces already in the region to curb Ardel's attempts at secession. This act was deemed treasonous by the High Council, which had previously forbid Oldmin and Syenon from bringing military force to bear in the region. Not long after the fighting began, Ardel unexpectedly joined Oldmin and Syenon, ending the conflict and continuing east with the other armies to embark into a great storm that raged over the ocean northeast of the coast. There, the three nations fought and captured a formidable being - a large, blue ram which has come to be known as Stormhorn. After its capture they imprisoned it under the city of Trolldin, which housed the being before in times long past.

With the weight of half of Falnorian behind them, this Northern Alliance seemed to be gearing up to challenge the authority of Falnin and the High Council. Despite their status as traitors, Falnin was unable to

prosecute the leaders of each of these nations lest they commit to what likely would have been a losing battle. Indeed, a full-blown civil war against Falnin seemed imminent - until Oldmin, the foundation for this alliance, abruptly returned home. This left Syenon and Ardel to struggle on alone, and the two nations quickly turned against one another in a border dispute. The cooperation of Ardel was given on the agreement that Syenon would cede territory back to Ardel; Syenon, without the influence of Oldmin, was loathe to follow through on this promise. Only recently did Syenon grudgingly release the promised territory to Ardel - including the city of Trolldin, which lays nearly on the border between the two

Each of these nations now quietly move forward on their own, wary of causing trouble and attracting attention from the capital. Ardel, still caught between two countries, struggles now to control the growing influence of Illionor while it remains caught in its ties to Falnin. Syenon too has turned inwards, having lost much of its land and influence to outside forces. Oldmin most of all has become uninvolved in the rest of the world, tending instead to matters at home. It is rarely heard from these days, and often absent from the political scene where once it was among the greatest presences.



Dueling Mage Schools

Of the three mage schools in Falnorian, Eldspel by far is the most ancient. It is the oldest site for true study of magic, stretching to as far back as the early first era. There is no place in Falnorian with a deeper understanding of magic's workings and mysteries - however, depth does not always equate to power. Though not as old, Falnin's mage school is larger than Eldspel's and has always had the benefit of all the capital has to offer. This is especially so in the last few decades, when Falnin has prioritized the development of its mage school alongside its equally-formidable military.

During the martial law of 123.3.2 and 124.3.2, Eldspel was subjected to strict watch and occupation by Falnin. Many feared that they would be the next to defect to the Northern Alliance, and many measures were taken to safeguard Falnin's hold on Eldpsel. Eldspel, to all appearances, went about its business as ever, and Falnin slowly relaxed its grip on the region. In the summer of 128.3.2, Eldspel and its mage school conducted a swift takeover and disabled the remaining Falnin forces in the region. The

response this provoked from Falnin was severe and the two regions quickly found themselves - and particularly their mage schools - embroiled in conflict.

Both schools began to push their advancement hard, and embarked upon a magical arms race in an attempt to outdo and outmaneuver one another. This led to a magical renaissance in Eldspel, which - given the nature of the conflict - turned from its traditional interest in enchanting to methods of making war. The two schools have kept a close pace, and with the extensive support of their respective provinces, have had the ability to pursue research to a degree not often seen before. For Eldspel, however, this has come at a significant cost: many of its warriors, having been overlooked and neglected, defected to other regions or refused to work for their nation.

With the dissolution of the Northern Alliance, Eldspel fights on its own; but for now it holds steady, and looks not to be slowing down any time soon. This conflict continues to grow, and due to the possibilities offered by new materials being exported from Gildmar, will undoubtedly continue to advance in the coming year.



Conquest of War to Conquest of Wealth



Harken Gilead's conquest of the Wildlands came to a close in 124.3.2 when the royal treasuries, long-dwindling, finally dried up. The army disbanded, and its soldiers scattered all across the area. Those who had families went home; those with the means set out to seek their fortune elsewhere, in Falnin or Ardel; and many of those left struck out to explore and search for new challenges in the remote areas in and around the Wildlands.

Those who left to explore met mixed fates. While some uncovered old troves of treasure left behind from the Halimin culture, many others were lost to the Wildlands and never returned. Those explorers who survived discovered a wealth not only of archeological sites but also mineral resources: iron, gold, crystalline, precious gems,



and - among the most valuable of these - several new substances not seen before in Falnorian. These new materials have proved remarkably useful in both spellcasting and metalsmithing, and Gildmar has since repaired its treasuries through exports of these to other nations across Falnorian and beyond.

Mining for these mineral resources has attracted a large number of workers and craftsmen - many of them former soldiers - to the Wildlands to participate and take their own share of this

newfound wealth. Small settlements and colonies have begun to spring up around mines and quarries, and in these places it seems the Wildlands are on the path to being tamed not by war but by work. On the fringes of these small settlements, however, the Wildlands still remain wild - and perhaps wilder than ever as civilization presses in on them once more. They pose a great danger to the miners and settlers in this region, and the going is difficult - but as many would say, without risk there can be no reward; and the rewards offered by the Wildland's untapped resources may be enough to overflow the treasuries of kings.