

## **Thirty years have passed in the world of Falnorian. It is now year 169.3.2. (2017 Timejump)**

### **An End to an Endless War**

The war waged between Eldspel and Falnin - both of them nations with a reputation for wit and immensely powerful mage schools to back them - has been hard-fought, and not easily won. What began as a Falnin occupation of Eldspel in 123.3.2 and led to an Eldspellian rebellion in 128.3.2 became a decades-long campaign for control over Eldspel's territory and cooperation. Both nations committed their resources, their treasuries, and the resolve of their people to a struggle that seemed to go on without end. Falnin's powerful troops and training found itself matched with Eldspel's craftiness at every turn, and for a long time, neither could seem to gain the upper hand.

In 139.3.2, the war seemed to turn. With many of Eldspel's warriors having deserted it, though its remaining troops fought on resolutely, the tide began to turn against them. A series of earthquakes and natural disasters only aggravated this, as they left much of Eldspel's infrastructure in ruins. This misfortune was not what it seemed: adventurers discovered soon after that these disasters were the work of a creature known as the Mountain, a being of vast power and one of the four Harbingers. Furthermore, they found soon after that Falnin did not fear this being, and that it seemed indifferent to them: Falnin took advantage of this situation, as it was discovered later that it had been sending spies into Eldspel as aid workers to work in the wake of this destruction and gain intelligence on Eldspel's plans. With the spies weeded out, Eldspel found new footing; but by this time, Falnin had pushed hard, and was setting up for a siege on the city itself.



In this hour, Eldspel found itself joined by two allies: Oldmin and its knights, who had until now remained isolated from external affairs; and the wood elves of Xucu'an, with which Eldspel has had on-and-off relations. Both allies took heavy

casualties in the years to come; and by 145.3.2, both had to withdraw from Eldspel and Falnin's siege of the capital city took hold. By this time, however, Eldspel had managed to recover; and through encouraging Falnin to advance into what was ultimately a series of traps, Eldspel finally won the war in 149.3.2. Falnin troops withdrew back to their nation, leaving Eldspel fully under its own power at last.

This war did not come without a price, however: twenty years of war has left Eldspel scarred with the fields of battle and with piles of the dead from both sides. It has also become militant where once it was often dispassionate; and though its leaders steer it carefully towards peace, many of its people - especially its youth, who have grown up in the midst of this great war - have learned a deep hatred of Falnin and a way of life that is both more aggressive and less withdrawn than Eldspel has traditionally been.

Over the next two decades, Eldspel has slowly put itself back together, and begun new tasks. In the aftermath of the war, there has been a deepening of the relations between Eldspel and Xucu'an; and through careful negotiation, Eldspel has gained access to Xucu'an in what is the first time the wood elven nation is known to have allowed a foreign nation access across its borders. Eldspel has begun a zealous exploration of Falnorian's southern neighbor, and hopes to learn many things from them in the years to come.



### **The Harbingers' Toll**

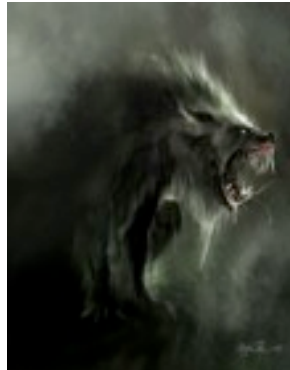
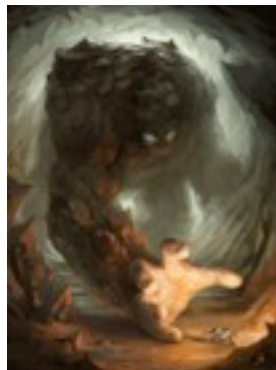
In 138.3.2, an ill omen befell Falnorian: beings from the depths of Ancient history, known now as the Harbingers, began one by one to appear across Falnorian. The Hunter, a being with a semblance like a great predator, appeared first from the southeast; it was followed by the being known as the Mountain, which was discovered in Eldspel having come from the west, and then the Mirror, which was first found in the town of Hutmoor with no other origin apparent. These three beings lingered for some months, causing devastating destruction within their regions; then, come the summer solstice, began to make their ways north. They gathered at the city of Trolldin, where the fourth Harbinger - a being known as the Ram - had been imprisoned through the might of three nations and a number of adventurers some years before - and stormed the town, breaking their fourth members from its prison and then headed south again, this time all together towards the Wildlands desert and the ruined city of Halimin.



Why they gathered there is not known: only that once there, they circled the city of Halimin for some months, and then abruptly vanished. They are rarely seen in their physical forms these days, but their presence is felt all across Falnorian. The years since have brought tidings of disaster everywhere: waves of famine and disease have swept across all the country, killing many and crippling the populace of each nation. In some places, the population of many cities has been as much as halved from previous decades, and is still shrinking each day as more people succumb to this tide of ill fortune.

Desperation and despair are now commonplace as many struggle to keep their tenuous hold on life and health; and where the Harbingers choose to appear to take their toll in souls shorn with black teeth and claws, little can turn them back. While many attempt to resist the effects of these beings, others have chosen a different way deal with dark times: a new religion has arisen which worships these Harbingers. Many shrines have been built to them, tended by priests and worshippers who believe it is their role to aid these beings, not to oppose them.

The Harbingers Cult has been opposed fiercely by the Tree of Life religion, which has worked hard against the effects of the Harbingers. Where there is famine, they are seen bringing food; where there is plague, they are seen bringing medicine; and where there is disaster, they are seen bringing relief in any way they can. The Tree of Life religion has grown in recent years; but it is also stretched thin, and is often hit the hardest by the devastation its members seek to intervene in. The various Death Cults have grown in power as well, as many seek the perspectives the religion has to offer as family, loved ones, neighbors, and entire communities are added to the count of those dead. The Harbingers have enacted a heavy toll indeed these last many years - and their work appears not to be done any time soon.





## **Ties that Pull and Chains that Bind**

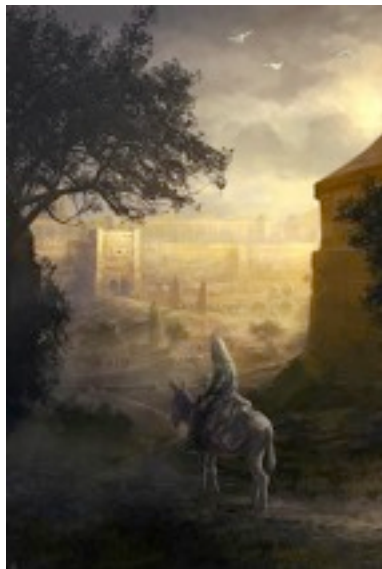
Falnin's increasing military power and restrictive attitudes have worried many over the years, and caused many nations to draw back from the ruling nation and distance themselves from its reach. After Ardel's failure to gain independence, none have dared talk openly of secession; nevertheless, unease has grown slowly but surely, and left many wondering how best to protect themselves from Falnin should it choose to exert its power over them. Already, many have minimized their diplomatic presence in Falnin and Falnin's in theirs, and many have withdrawn from Falnin's cultural influence in favor of upholding the cultures of their own nations.

Starting around the time that Oldmin joined the Eldspel-Falnin war as an ally to Eldspel, there began elaborate and extensive discussions between nations about more substantial forms of protection from Falnin as well as preparations for the coming of the Harbingers. Negotiations went on for nine years, as these agreements involved not merely discussion but putting in place the groundwork for more complicated projects to come. At the end of these nine years, at last the agreement came to fruition: and the first act of this alliance was to pressure Falnin to cease its endless war against Eldspel. It was this pressure, as well as cleverness on Eldspel's part, that finally forced Falnin to pull back its troops in the summer of 149.3.2; and for a time, the protection offered by these mutual agreements allowed nations a breath of relief for the first time in many decades.

In retaliation against these agreements, Falnin closed all of its foreign embassies. Falnin has long been the center of diplomatic work in Falnorian, and with the embassies closed, each of Falnorian's neighboring countries have been forced to send a separate set

of diplomatic staff to each of Falnorian's nations - or to send none at all. This has resulted in a significant slowing in international relationships, as well as some degree of friction as communication between each group has become much more complicated. Additionally, Falnin closed all roads and trade routes through it, which has slowed trade between nations to a crawl. Now, any caravan or trader wishing to do trade across Falnorian must use the Great Ring Road rather than move goods direction through Falnin, which doubles and at times even triples the time it takes to complete a trade route. All goods that come into Falnin and intended for another destination are seized by the province and confiscated, and the roads are heavily patrolled by members of the Falnin military to ensure that they do not see use by those use is no longer meant for.

In the following days, all nations - Falnin, Oldmin,

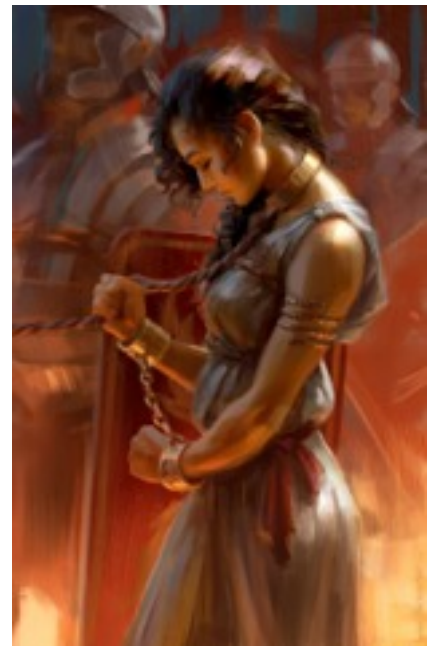


Eldspel, Gildmar, Syenon, and Ardel alike - suffered greatly at the hands of the Harbingers. Though the allied nations struggled mightily to maintain their agreements, many found that with the death and devastation each were experiencing, none were able; and the agreement fell apart not through divisiveness but rather a lack of resources even to tend to their own. Falnin, for its part, offered major subsidies to farms and large quantities of medicines that have since become scarce in other parts of the world; and though each other nation refused these at first, one by one each has reluctantly accepted the forms of aid that Falnin offers in order to preserve their people - and thus Falnin has once again regained control of Falnorian, and more often than not keeps each one on a close leash. The nations are now each for themselves, able to do little more than struggle to keep afloat in the midst of disaster.

### **The Passing of Crowns**

The alliances and cooperation between nations has always been led by its senior members: those leaders with the greatest experience and age, who take it upon themselves to guide those leaders younger than themselves as they embark together upon complicated tasks. During the last thirty years, two of the most eminent leaders - Queen Rachel Kingsvey of Oldmin and King Harken Gilead of Gildmar - finally passed after long reigns in their own nations. Queen Rachel Kingsvey passed in 150.3.2, leaving her granddaughter - the now-Queen Guinevere Kingsong - as her successor. Oldmin mourned the passing of their queen deeply, as they did her grandfather at the time of his death. King Harken Gilead passed in late 151.3.2 after battling an illness for many years, leaving the throne to his eldest granddaughter and her husband - an uncomfortable situation for many in Gildmar. With these two great leaders dead, the only remaining leader of similar experience was Queen Chelsea Amirite of Syenon. She has guided the younger rulers of Ardel and Eldspel, as well as the new leaders from Oldmin and Gildmar, in matters pertaining to the new alliance since.

Queen Chelsea Amirite is well-known for her talents as a spymaster and collector of all sorts of information, and for the infiltration capacities of her forces. In addition to serving as the last remaining member of the old guard amongst the allied nations, she has also served as its primary information-gathering resource. This served both her and the other nations well until Ninthmoon of 169.3.2, when it was discovered that she was plotting against the Falnorian High Council. Falnin troops appeared in the city of Syenon overnight, swiftly arrested Chelsea Amerite, and established martial law while they continue to investigate and question the remaining members of her household. Chelsea was publicly morganti executed for high treason on the 7th of Ninthmoon, 169.3.2; her heir has vanished, and his whereabouts are still not known. In the meantime, Falnin still occupies Syenon as it searches for accessories and conspirators to Chelsea's plans; the city, in shock at these events, has been in chaos ever since.



How long it will take to complete this investigation, and what will become of it, is unknown; it will likely take some time for Falnin to ferret out the full extent of Chelsea's treachery, and if her heir is found similarly guilty, it will become an almost-unprecedented situation in Falnorian history. In the meantime, Syenon will have to find something to steady itself on in the aftermath of such violent changes; and the remaining leaders of the other nations, with the last of their forebearers gone, will have to learn to take the places that have fallen to them - for better or for worse.



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