

Ænurin – Original Summary
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The Creation of Ænurin and the Heavens

Before existence, there was but the kindling of flame. Only it wasn't fire as we know it but an intelligence, a vast intelligence that was bent on creation, and was known only as Nurin. Out of no other purpose than to create, Nurin set into motion what would soon become a complexity far greater than even he could imagine.

In the vast void of thought he spun a web of words, which soon became material and a molten sphere was formed. Round it flamed, and spun within itself – rivers of flame unquenchable by any physical means. Nurin took the sphere and blew into it, and it bubbled and boiled and grew. It flattened on the top and came to a jagged point at the bottom, yet the inside was cavernous and full of many chambers. Invisible roads and hidden rooms; caverns as large as a realm were there, and thus Nurin had a many sided world of infinite possibilities, to which he gave the name Ænurin.

The world Ænurin cooled and became hard, and it drifted aimlessly in the void of his thought—a stone spike with a cold face. And so Nurin placed anchors and chains around Ænurin, and the world stopped and remained still, held by Nurin himself. But Ænurin was hapless and uninviting. It was hard and rugged and not suitable for his thoughts. An Effervescence he created next and placed the world inside of it. The void disappeared within the enclosure and Ænurin hovered securely inside. Nurin blew and winds were formed, and jagged shards of rock broke free. They smashed and shattered and crushed and stumbled, and the smooth, cold face of the world became sharp and crevassed. Shards of rock flew out of the Effervescence and came together, forming a ring around the world, and this became known as the Ring of Design, which has and always will look down upon the world with a cold knowledge of creation.

Yet now things within the Effervescence were wild and in motion, unhampered by the chains that held Ænurin in place. And so Nurin created a cleansing, and water

drained from the roof of the Effervescence and smote the jagged face of Ænurin. The sharp edges were all chiseled down and made smooth; the stone was broken and soil was formed. Hills, valleys and mountains came to be, all buried under a sea of cleansing, but soon the waters receded, draining into the caverns beneath the face. After the cleansing was done, the oceans and lakes and seas came into existence, and they were each given a name, which are too many to recount here. Beneath the surface, many of the stone chasms were filled, and water ran endlessly under the soil. To this day you can hear the sound of water running, if you put your ear to a smooth face of hard earth-rock and listen closely.

Now some of the chasms within Ænurin were not filled, and to these Nurin gave special attention. He created anchors and bindings specifically for these chambers, so that no things would float aimlessly within them, and so the circumference of each chamber had its own bindings, unlike the chambers around it. The Gravity of the Under-Earth was formed, and the Dwarves and Undercommons who later made their homes there were bound to it.

But Ænurin was a dead place. It existed, yet it did not thrive. And so Nurin drew himself within and contemplated for many world-years. For centuries he meditated, and finally he roused himself. Exerting all his energy, he tore himself in two. The Effervescence wailed and shrieked and Ænurin trembled, and awoke. And so Nurin had a mate, a being akin to himself, and though weakened he had a partner to help with his work. She became Ænurin herself, the living world and mother to life.

After this sore trial, Nurin ascended out of the Effervescence and formed the celestial beings. He dipped his hand into the Effervescence and cast it into the void, and stars were formed—twinkling spheres of flowing light, fixed stationary by the anchors that held Ænurin in place, forever to be guides to the wanderers and seafarers. Then Nurin set into motion a plan for the Lesser-Worlds: Talitar the Red, Kerast the Green, Justarn the Gold, Sarvest the Blue, Jarnok the Gray, and Goondagk the Silver. Each world glowed its respective color and revolved above Ænurin, high, high into the void,

far above the night sky, where as colorful pearls they looked to the eyes of men and were revered. Then Nurin sighed from his great task and stretched, and he drew himself up and burst into a mighty flame. He collapsed there within himself and became a ball of incandescence, forever to light the face of Ænurin. Then he slept.

The Creation of Foliage and Creeping Things

The day Ænurin awoke, she saw the mighty works of her mate and marveled. She saw the stars form, and she was there when the Lesser-Worlds were cast into existence, forever circling her head like a colorful crown. She saw the day Nurin became himself a light and she was amazed. But the heat became too much for her and she began to sway. She turned herself and then began to rotate, so that part of her face was warmed by Nurin while the other part was cooled by the void. Yet a light for the night was needed, and so Ænurin did her first creative task. She took some water from the seas, and some Effervescence from above her. She laced it with silver from the mountains and breathed upon it, and it glowed. She named it Silvermæd the Night-Light and she cast it into the heavens to remain a stationary torch of gray light. There it rested, a cool light for her face during the night and a stone monument in the sky during the day.

But soon she became lonely, for her husband was asleep, and she was without companionship. And so she shivered and shook, and a single tear fell from the Effervescence. This she grasped, molded and crafted, and it began to pulse. She caressed it and cherished it and wore it around her neck, placing it deep within the heart of the tallest mountain, the Mountain of Kindlings. She named it her Pendant of Kindlings. Out of it she drew a single seed and threw it into the hills, and the rains came and soon a single stalk peered out of the soil. It grew and grew; centuries it grew, and then it bloomed into the largest tree, the Vine of Days, and produced seeds of its own. The seeds were varied and unique, and the winds scattered them over the face of the earth.

Reeds and brushes and shrubs grew—grasses, flowers and vines.

Birch and elm and dogwood too—rowan, beech and pine.

*Her face was crowned with a verdant crown and happy were her days,
for the plants of life communed with her and learned all her ways.*

She then bent her mind towards other forms of life, for although Nurin built the anchor that all was bound by, her verdant crown as well, she wanted something free from the earth. She dipped her hand into her Pendant of Kindlings and drew out a single limb. Clawed it was, bony and rough, and she cast it into the sea. A creature crawled out then, the mother of the creeping crawling things—Broodan she was called, and she soon gave birth. All creatures and monsters issued from her womb, and over the course of many lifetimes she populated the world with her offspring.

*Elk and bear and sheep and foal—fish and bird and bat.
Cattle, boars and bison too—spiders, snakes and cat.*

Nothing needed to feed, nothing needed to survive. All things made by Ænurin lived without support and communed with her daily. Satisfied with her works, she rested. She talked with the fishes and the whales and the sea giants, and she communed with the eagles, hill-goats and lions. All things knew her and loved her and she was content.

The Awakening of the Lesser-Worlds

Things would not always be so. Talitar the Red, one of the Lesser-Worlds, also awoke. Now Nurin did not intend this. He split himself in two, not three, and divided himself equally between Nurin and Ænurin. Yet everything he touched was inspired and some things can awaken on their own. Soon after Ænurin finished her great works, Talitar awoke and awareness kindled in his soul. He looked down upon Ænurin and marveled, for he circled her and wondered why she was so revered. He called to Nurin but Nurin did not answer for he was sleeping. He called to Ænurin but she did not answer for she did not hear him. So he revolved slowly above the verdant face of Ænurin. And he went mad.

Desperate for companionship and angry for being alone, he called out to the other Lesser-Worlds. They did not respond. Talitar screamed, shook and trembled, and volcanic pillars emerged upon his face and roared. His being cracked and fissured. Steam and smoke billowed out into the void and rivers of flame covered him. After a long while, another Lesser-World finally heard Talitar's call and awoke. Jarnok the Gray, closest to Talitar the Red, stirred and became aware, and looked at all around him. He wondered at Ænurin and was in awe of Nurin. Talitar concealed his madness and befriended Jarnok, and they discussed many things.

After many years they conversed one day and wondered if the other Lesser-Worlds could be awakened. And so Jarnok the Gray, with his infinite patience, called out to the Lesser-Worlds. They did not respond but he sat patiently and whispered a summons, over and over again, for centuries. Finally he drew them out, one by one, and all eight of the Lesser-Worlds became fully awake. Brothers and sister they became and they were content with each other's company. They looked down upon Ænurin with wonder, respect and love, and existed solely to grace her crown.

But Talitar was not satisfied. Jealousy and arrogance filled his mind. He was the one that was responsible for awakening his brothers and sister. Why should he not be revered? Why should he not be arrayed in fiery splendor? And so he began to contemplate and plan. He told nothing of this to Jarnok or any of the others, but he strived to create his own moons and his own life and his own lands. Yet in the end he was merely an accident, not even a thought on Nurin's mind, and he simply did not have the ability to create. Angered by this he howled in rage and bewailed his sorrow. His brothers and sister listened to him, and some were swayed to do likewise and create things of their own, but also were frustrated with their attempts. Talitar took things one step further, however, and sought revenge. He chose Ænurin to take his vengeance out upon, for he hated her and was jealous of her. She was what he wanted to be but could never become, and so he chose to make her miserable. Gently he whispered and sent his call down to Ænurin. His words drifted amongst the hills, valleys and dales. His mutterings sank to the bottom of the oceans, and filled the cavernous voids of Ænurin. His whispers reached the

ears and mind of every creature, plant and being, and they were stirred. The harmony that Ænurin had given them was interrupted, and a new, chaotic desire was replaced, and before Ænurin could do anything, the animals and beasts began to feed on each other and fight over mates and territory. The plants and foliage were consumed or died and rotted. The seas were tossed and the things within became violent and restless. All of Ænurin became a torrent of chaos, and Talitar laughed.

The Creation of the Stewards

Ænurin cried out in sorrow and cursed Talitar, for now she was aware of him, painfully aware. She did her best to calm the world that fed off her and she stilled the seas and won back the minds of many beasts, but still her work was forever marred. The verdant life that was her offspring would no longer be the tranquil creation she issued, and no longer would the beast-life commune solely with her, for now other things were on their minds; power, food and blood. And so Ænurin reached within her Pendant of Kindlings yet again.

She pulled out a limb, a clawless limb, an articulate limb. The limb was smooth and hairless, and she cast it into the sea. Out of the sea a giant woman emerged, fair as the cloudless sky and as striking as the sliver sea; strong as the snow-peaked mountains and as soft as the flowered vales. Iberiena was her name, and she was the mother of all. In a nearby dale she lay and gave birth, and the races of mankind were born.

First the Dwarves were born, and Ænurin delved for them a cave. “You will master earth and stone; rock and jewel,” she told them, and they did. They delved into the hills and mountains, and some even delved into the deeper recesses of Ænurin and dwelled in the realms that were governed by the Anchors of the Under-Earth.

Second, the Elves were born. Ænurin gave to them the sea, and they dwelled in and upon it. “Govern the waves and the squall; the torrents and the current,” she said. “Learn the name of every sea beast and rule them; give them order and tranquility.” And so the Elves created sea-cities that rode the crests of waves. They created underwater abodes

and lived in deep sea chasms. Some swam even deeper and plunged into the aquatic caverns deep under the seafloor, and there made such wondrous homes amongst the giant sea-reeds that few tales can capture their glory. The filtering of water all Elves were given and they could breathe just as easily in it as out of it.

Third, the Orcs were born, but they were wild and unruly, and they disregarded the words of Ænurin. So she gave them no realm to master and they wandered the wild, eating what they saw, building what they wanted, killing when they wanted and were ruled by nothing.

Fourth, the Halflings were born, and to them Ænurin gave the dells. “Masters of the field you will be; harvesters of crops. Nature will be your sustenance.” And so the Halflings built small homes in the fields and villages in the glens. They delved into the hills and created holes for themselves, or climbed the trees and built platforms. They cherished and respected nature and wore her on their bodies in wreaths and necklaces—rings of vine and laces of flowers. They ruled and governed the small plants and shrubs, herbs, flowers and gardens.

Fifth, the Gnomes were born, and to them Ænurin gave the hills and mountains. “In the rocky high places you will live, and you will create things of wonder; things of greatness. You will master the stone and the sky, and always look to the heavens.” And so the Gnomes built halls on the highest of peaks, and homes in the sides of cliffs. They made platforms to view the stars and shops to build machines of wonder. Tinkerers they are and always will be, for creation was their gift.

Lastly, Humans were born, and Ænurin gave them the whole of earth. “Masters of the soil, the trees and the seas; masters of animals, beasts and man-made things; craftsmen and stablemen, farmers and vineyard owners, sailors and adventurers; rangers you will be. Wardens of the land and the other peoples you are, for all are in your care.” And so the Humans spread out over the face of the earth and made their homes where they wished. Some followed the instructions of Ænurin and cared for all things, growing or static, and others looked after and communed with the other races among them. But some ignored the words of Ænurin and went off on their own, mating with Orcs and

living in hovels. After her great birthing, Iberiena receded into a quiet glen, the Plains of Iberiena, and there she dwells to this day, finished with her great work, handmaiden to Ænurin.

Ænurin gave all races free will, and all races were given the ability to choose. Some have chosen to be good wardens and masters of the earth around them, and others have chosen to be rebellious and hateful. She created the races of mankind to guard the earth and tend it—to be good stewards—but anything is possible when you have the ability to choose.

When Talitar and the other Lesser-Worlds saw what Ænurin had done, they marveled. This by far was her greatest deed: the creation of beings similar to herself. Many of the Lesser-Worlds respected and praised Ænurin for her work, and each took a race as their favorite. Talitar, however, despised her attempt at thwarting him, and likewise favored the Orcs for their rebellion.

Thus came into existence the whole of Ænurin, the seas, Nurin the sun and the heavens, the beasts, birds and plants of the world. Thus came into existence the Lesser-Worlds, which are worshiped by man-folk and thus came into existence the races of mankind, the Stewards. Next will be told in detail the history of the Steward's interaction with the Lesser-Worlds and how man-folk harnessed the power to use magic, and following will be told the histories of the peoples and their wars that formed the land of Ænurin as it is known today, and the political and mythological systems that rule it.

History of the Stewards

The Lesser-Worlds rested in the void above Ænurin for centuries, admiring her work. When the Stewards were made, the Lesser-Worlds became excited and each took a race of man as their favorites. Talitar the Red took the Orcs as his favorite, Kerast the Green took the Halflings, Justarn the Gold took the Humans, Sarvest the Blue took the Elves, Jarnok the Gray took the Gnomes, and Goondagk the Silver took the Dwarves.

They communed with the Stewards but it was difficult, and so they each took on a Shell, similar in appearance to the Stewards they cherished, and sent this shape down to Ænurin so that they could communicate through it to their Cherished. Each race of the Stewards created palaces and halls for the Shells of the Lesser-Worlds, and the Shells resided there, listening to their Cherished, communing with them and giving them wisdom. It was then that the first histories of the creation of Ænurin were recorded, and each race had a record that was read in a different light, for each record was relayed through the perspective of that race's Lesser-World.

Of all the records, Talitar's was the most perverted. He told the Orcs many lies or things that he believed to be true yet weren't. He told them that Ænurin was a weakling and should not be revered as the mother of life. He told them that Iberiena never intended to give birth to the Orcs, and that they were bastard children, mistakes, and that she hated them. Then he set himself up as a god, and told them that it was he who called them out of Iberiena's womb, and he who placed rebellion in their hearts, and that it would be he who cared for them and he who would make them powerful and lords of all existence. He told them grand schemes of conquest and glory, victory over the other races of men-folk and dominance over it all.

Because of Talitar the Orcs became resentful of all other races of men, resentful of nature, resentful of everything, and they were forever filled with hate. They became violent and destroyed things without remorse, and vowed vengeance on Ænurin, Iberiena and the other Lesser-Worlds. And they sought to take out this vengeance on their fellow Stewards.

Jarnok the Grey, Caretaker of the Gnomes, set his Cherished to work the moment he filled his Shell. He could not be creative directly, but through his Gnomes, perhaps he could be creative indirectly. Under his tutelage and direction, the Gnomes made grand mountain cities, pillars that reached to the heavens, and machines that made life easier. They communicated and traded with all the other Stewards and became a very wealthy people. The Orcs saw this wealth and became jealous, and one day, only a few centuries after the birthing of the Stewards, the Orcs forged the first war.

The Shell of Talitar clad himself in crimson and wore many rings. He draped himself in crimson cloth and he made for his Orcs crimson banners. A drop of blood was his symbol and the Orcs adopted it, and it flew from their flags. He forged swords and axes, hammers and scythes, and gave these crude weapons to his Orcs. He led his army out of wandering and marched across the Plains of Iberiena, and she heard their trampling and wept. To the base of the Frosty Spine they marched, and they climbed up to the Gnome cities. There the first war was waged upon a race that knew nothing of war. The Gnomes had no weapons and no fortifications, and so they fell. Jarnok the Grey was wroth with anger, and that day when the Orc armies clashed against the mountain sides of his Gnome's homeland, he roared a deafening war. Talitar heard it and became afraid for the first time.

Jarnok emerged from his sea-gray hall and stood atop the highest peak of the Frosty Spine–Snowcap the Old—and smote the mountainside. The mountain rumbled and the rocks were loosened, and an avalanche fell from its crown. The Orcs fled in dismay, for although Talitar told them tales of glory, murder and power, he told them nothing of fear. They knew fear now and they fled, but many were engulfed in the icy death of Snowcap the Old.

Talitar looked around him and saw his Orcs dead, fleeing or dying, and he felt his power stripped from him. He did not consider the results of his actions and had no idea that his brother Jarnok would act this way. The war, he had told himself, was justified; fun, exciting, and it would be appreciated. The lies he told his Orcs were just tools to get them to fight so that Talitar and the other Lesser-Worlds could have good entertainment, but he did not expect Jarnok to actually love his Gnomes. He saw Jarnok now, his face alight with anger, yet he had wept for his Gnomes and his eyes were tearstained. Talitar looked upon his brother and felt sorry for his deeds, yet this thought passed through his mind too late. With a roar, Jarnok dug his stubby hands into the side of Snowcap the Old and pulled forth a giant boulder. He hurled it at Talitar and Talitar fled, but could not flee very far. The stone smashed into him and broke his Shell, and they tumbled together down the slope of Snowcap the Old, down to the base of the Frosty Spine, and fell smoldering, deep into the Sea of Stones.

The Orcs wailed in dismay to see their lord fall, and they scattered over the face of the realm. The scar that Jarnok left into the side of Snowcap the Old can still be seen to this day, and it is called Jarnok's Bite. Jarnok assembled his remaining Gnomes and took them deep into the confines of the Frosty Spine where he tended to them and nurtured them and helped them rebuild. After many hundred years the Gnome populace flourished once again, but they were not as naïve as they once were and built castles, keeps, fortifications, walls and traps, weapons and shields. The Gnomes used their technology to once again build things of wonder, but also to forge weapons of splendor.

Word spread of the attack of Talitar and his Orcs against Jarnok and his Gnomes, and the other peoples of the world grew afraid. They too created weapons and fortifications in anticipation of another war, but Talitar could not be found. He still glowed in the evening sky but it was a faint crimson glow and paled in comparison to his shimmering brothers and sister. And so peace flourished in the world of Ænurin and war was a forgotten word.

During this time the civilizations of the Dwarves, Elves, Halflings and Humans became very much advanced, and rivaled that of the Gnomes, although they could never produce the technological wonders that Jarnok envisioned. Goondagk the Silver, Caretaker of the Dwarves, saw the shimmering peaks of the Gnomes and shook his head. Instead he spoke with his Dwarves and their eyes gleamed, and they began their great work. Halls were delved into the Teeth of Goondagk, the rocky chain on the southernmost region of Ænurin. The Dwarves mined for all sorts of precious metals and created jewels and chiseled gems of wonder. The halls and fortresses they created were strong and made from the oldest of stones.

Deeper Goondagk took his Dwarves, and they entered the chambers in the very heart of Ænurin. Goondagk marveled at these chambers, which were hollow and round, for there was no up or down and every surface one walked upon was the floor. These were the Anchors of the Under-Earth that Nurin had formed, the secrets of the interior. It was here that Goondagk built his royal hall, and from here he sent out instructions and

directions to his busy Dwarves. Goondagk ordered a decree, and it was stated that no beings but Dwarves would be allowed in the chambers beneath the earth, for they were, he said, created solely for the Dwarves, and no other races were clever enough to dwell there. And so Goondagk posted sentries at all the entrances to his under-earth regions. The deep places aboveground, however, were open to all friends of the Dwarves, and there were many feasts and parties held in those wondrous halls. The Dwarves especially liked the hospitality of the Halflings, who would bring great foods with them that they had grown, and they would tell grand tales and sing songs. And the Dwarves wondered at the Gnomes who would bring extraordinary trinkets and gadgets with them, and they traded these with the Dwarves who gave them precious metals and swords and axes of gold and platinum, and other valuable things.

Kerast the Green was quite carefree, and when he met the Halflings he knew at once that they were his Cherished. He descended in his Shell and spoke with them, and relayed a song about the forming of Ænurin, and the Halflings laughed and clapped. From then on they were beholden to him, and Kerast led them far away from the mountains and the seas, to the rolling hills of Halfburrow, and there he planted his people. The Halflings made grass huts aboveground, or dug into the hills and made holes for themselves. They made grand gardens and grew the largest fruits and vegetables, and there were contests every year where all the great products were assembled and given awards based on their size and taste. Parties were held every day, and the evenings in the land of Halfburrow were filled with laughter and much drinking.

Soon, emissaries of the Dwarves arrived and were treated so hospitably that they invited the Halflings to dine in their granite halls under the Teeth of Goondagk. The Halflings hesitated, for they did not like the look of the swarthy Dwarves, but after being offered the finest ale in existence, they conceded. The Dwarves lived up to their boastings, for they did have the best ales, and the Halflings traded merrily with the Dwarves, just to get their ale. They became good friends, the Dwarves and the Halflings, for they had one thing in common that could never be broken: feasting.

The Halfling realm extended over all the smooth lands of Ænurin. Whenever there was a hill to burrow into, a hole would be there. The Halflings met many peoples in their

days of expansion, most of whom they did not trust, and so formed the ability to make themselves disappear very easily. The Halfling realm was divided into seven portions, each with its own capital villages and each with a network of twisting roads that led all over their realm, (but never outside of it); Halfburrow, the original region, where Kerast resided in his hall, and then there was Billowbellow, Tobbyleaf, Kerast's Peak (the highest hill, which really wasn't very high), Waterlog, Cloverhæm, and Cattail Dale.

When Justarn came to Ænurin, he found the Humans building small huts in lightly forested areas. They wove branches and carved fine things out of wood, and this inspired Justarn. He called to them but they would not listen to him, for the Humans were independent and each wanted to go his own way. The Humans had no lord but rather divided themselves into separate communities, and lived quietly, eating, making and caring for the things around them. In order to get the Human's attention Justarn decided to make something wondrous. In sight of them all, he walked into the midst of the forested vale and uprooted the largest tree he saw. The Humans cried out, for they loved the tree, but he silenced them with a wink. Justarn took out a knife and went to work, whittling away all the bark and trimming the branches. He walked over to the Sea of Goldenleaf and dipped the tree in it and when he poked it out, the leaves on the tree were golden in color and shimmered brightly in the daylight, but glowed softly in the moonlight. Then he thrust the trunk into the earth and roots sprang from the tree, and weaved about under the earth. Wooden husks began to grow out of the sheer trunk, and knobby roots emerged from the earth. Jarnok laughed and took out his knife, and carved rooms within the tree and stairs that led to the top; platforms to look from and great carvings all over the trunk. When he was finished the Humans looked up and marveled, for before them was a living house of great craftsmanship. At this they applauded Jarnok and he bowed, and he told them the tales of Ænurin and how she formed the trees and the vegetation around them. They recorded these things on scrolls of tree bark from the living tree which Jarnok had crafted, and they called this tree Goldenhæm, and it became Jarnok's dwelling.

The Humans united themselves under Jarnok but still held true to their self-government, which Jarnok allowed for he was not power hungry. He taught them many

things of pruning and forestry and woodsmanship. The Humans became great woodcarvers and builders of large wooden halls, but they tended the trees near them and for every tree they felled, a new one they planted. The Humans were the Stewards of the Vales, the lightly forested places, and due to their felling and reseeded, over time the Humans had created a large empire of ordered trees, interwoven with wooden halls, all circling Goldenhæm, the living house.

They first visited the Halflings, who were afraid of them, but they gave the Halflings well cut beams for their homes and supports for their holes, tools to better dig with and seeds to scatter over their hilly lands. The Halflings warmed to these gifts, and though ever distrustful of the larger folk, allied themselves with the Humans.

The Dwarves scoffed at the wooden things that the Humans made but took them in and eagerly showed them the stone workings they had done, and displayed their finely chiseled jewels. The Humans smiled, praised the works of the Dwarves but then took out their tools and made for the Dwarves great rings of wood and handles for their weapons, wrapped in leather and finely carved. They took the Dwarves metallic boots and gave them wooden soles and leather wrappings, and then made them different shoes, of cloth, wood and fur, and the Dwarves marveled at the comfort and the skill that was employed. For Goondagk the Humans crafted a wooden crown, and Goondagk was impressed but clearly disappointed with the lack of metal and jewels in it. So the Humans winked, took some precious stones from the Dwarves and presented Goondagk with the finest crown he had ever seen. It gleamed with rubies, emeralds and sapphires, and the Humans had inserted precious things that Goondagk had never seen before; pearls surrounding the perimeter of the crown, and he was in awe. In exchange Goondagk whispered something to his Dwarves, and the Dwarves forged for Jarnok a mighty scepter of silver and gold, laced with myhril and imbedded with diamonds, and Jarnok accepted this gift warmly.

When Sarvest descended from the void she hovered over the seas. The Elves had constructed floating towns of wood and stone, anchored to the sea floor, far from the sight of the mainland. She lingered over the waters and called out to them in her fair voice, and they hearkened to her words as if spellbound. She arrived and looked about and nodded in satisfaction, but whispered to them a secret of her own. Then she dove into

the sea and beckoned for them and they followed, and they breathed the clear blue waters of the ocean and saw far around them. There she showed them the kingdoms of the whales, squids and Sea Giants, and they were amazed at the colors.

There was a stone on the seafloor as large as a mountain and Sarvest pondered. In sight of her Elves she bent and lifted the stone, and tossed it along the seafloor. An entrance she uncovered, an entrance to the Chambers of the Underearth, only these were submerged. She entered with her Elves and they gaped at the beauty of the things around them. Crystals grew from the walls and intricate dwellings of coral were there. Here Sarvest set up her throne, a throne of coral deep under the seafloor, and the Elves built their homes around her. They clad themselves in the plants that grew there and in shells and stones and coral and light. They fed off of the sea life, yet tended to it as well. Their far hearing ears could hear well despite being underwater, and their eyes could pierce the darkness. Sarvest took in her hand one of the crystals that she saw in the wall beside her, a golden crystal, and she squeezed it. It began to glow and the light filled the chambers under the sea, and she shattered the crystal and gave its shards to the Elves. They made lamps of silver and coral and set them about in their submerged kingdom.

But the Sea Giants did not like this. They had lived in the sea before the Elves had and they knew about the sea chambers before the Elves ever did. It was one thing for the Elves to ride the crests of waves but to invade their waters? That was unforgivable. And so the leader of the Sea Giants, Goblual the Sea-strider, called his Giants together. They conspired with each other and made for themselves spears of ash, coral and glass, and then assembled at the entrance to the underground caverns. At Goblual's command, the Sea Giants struck and invaded the homes of the Elves and of Sarvest. But the Elves were not idle and they had learned from the attack of the Orcs against the Gnomes. They met the charge of the Sea Giants and drove onward, welding hooks and spears of bone. One by one the Giants dropped, but Goblual swung his spear like a squall, and killed several Elves with each stroke. Sarvest stood from her throne and called out in an angry voice, and the waters were silent and the currents all stopped and the sea-life gave her heed. The sound gave the Sea Giants pause, but Goblual roared back and charged her. She pulled from her throne her Lance of Blue Coral and leapt at Goblual ferociously. There they met

and clashed and fought, and the fury of their combat tossed the seas. The Elves hid in their homes and the Giants wailed and retreated and scattered themselves all over the ocean floor. Goblual smote Sarvest across the face and scarred her deeply, but Sarvest retaliated and pierced his thigh. Goblual cried out and turned to flee, kicking Sarvest in the face as he swam away. He left the Caverns, swam far away and salvaged what forces he had left. Forever he considered the Elves an enemy and sometimes raided Elf towns on the outskirts of the Chambers of the Underearth, but never again would he assault the center of the elfish kingdom directly.

With Goblual's final blow, Sarvest floated to the ground and lay there. The Elves wailed in sadness and took her Shell and placed it in a chamber in the middle of the world. They prepared a bed for her and laced it with sea plants and laid her on top, with her lance by her side. Her wounds healed but she had a scar forever on her face and would not waken. The Elves told themselves that one day she would awaken and seek vengeance upon the Sea Giants to rid the Elves of their presence forever. But until then the Elves could do nothing but look at the night sky, where she flickered.

As the Elves swam deeper into the earth, they discovered something. Some of the chambers went very deep but then opened up into dry chambers. Here the Elves met the Dwarves and they startled each other. The Dwarves declared that the Elves had trespassed on their sacred ground and would have fought them, but the Elves declared that the Dwarves had delved into their passages and invaded their seas. Goondagk was summoned and he came to the Elves and looked at them sternly. "If not for my sister," he said, "I would have you all slain for trespassing on our sacred ground. But she is dear to me and you are dear to her, so I will make no such decree. But hear me now, you all must leave!" And so Goondagk gave them free domain of all the submerged chambers but strictly told them to not step foot in any dry places under the ground. The Elves shrugged and said they didn't want to anyways, and ever after there was tension between the Elves and Dwarves, yet they remained reluctant allies.

It was later, after all the realms of the Stewards were formed, that the Orcs reemerged from hiding. They had taken up a new leader, the largest Orc that had ever lived, Oggrank the Fierce, and continued in their quest of domination. It was the Humans that they raided first, for they despised all things made of wood. They began to attack the outskirts of human villages, pillaging and plundering where they could, raiding for food and women. The Humans sent out their best rangers and attacked the Orcs in small skirmishes, but this did not daunt them. The Orcs were strong and swift and could evade the retaliation of the Humans, and then go on to the next village. For hundreds of years the Humans fought off the Orcs, and war became a common thing. The Orcs multiplied and spread like a wildfire, and soon all the peoples of Ænurin were troubled by the Orcs. The Halflings had their holes dug up and their belongings taken, their farms pillaged and then burnt to the ground. The Dwarves had their halls invaded and the Orcs took up residence deep within their recesses, and it became nigh impossible for the Dwarves to exterminate them. The Gnomes found Orcs hacking at the sides of their mountains, casting themselves over their walls with great evil machines and killing all they saw.

After many centuries the peoples of Ænurin appealed to the Lesser-Worlds, and they heard the cries. They gathered together, Kerast, Justarn, Jarnok and Goondagk, but not Sarvest for they could not find her. They sent a message to the wave-riding Elves requesting for the help of their sister, and the Elves dove into the sea to find her and try to rouse her, but she never came. So the four conspired with each other and wove a great plan to rid Ænurin of the Orc threat. A pitched battle they wanted, a battle to end all battles, one swift strike to destroy the Orcs for good. They gathered their Cherished together and scoured all of Ænurin; Gnomes, Halflings, Dwarves and Humans. Everywhere they saw Orcs they rooted them out, and finally they cornered the last army of Orcs at the coast of the Sea of Stones.

Kerast strode forward wielding a green Trident, and every place he stepped a stalk of corn sprang forth. He wore leather finely cut and imbued with the darkest of runes. He had grain and fruit etched into his armor and a wreath of wheat circled his brow. His eyes flashed and his jolly cheeks were hard. The Halfling armies, wielding their tridents and scythes, stood behind him in grim silence.

Justarn stepped forth, draped in golden cloth. Young and flexible trunks of golden trees were wrapped around his legs and arms, and a golden breastplate he wore with a carving of Goldenhæm in the center. Vines trailed from his body. From his belt hung the scepter the Dwarves had made him, and in his hands he bore a mighty bow of living wood, green buds still sprouting from it. Behind him stood the Human armies, bows, swords and flails in hand, their eyes verdant and sharp and their faces stern.

Goondagk marched forward next and growled a guttural growl. His silver beard was braided and trailed behind him on the ground. He wore the crown that the Humans had made on his brow, and his long silver hair draped behind him. His armor was of mythril, fine chains intricately woven, with symbols of the chisel, axe and pick woven across his breast. His heavy strides made the earth rumble, and he left a trail of crumpled gray stone in his wake. His legs and arms were bound with silver and in his hands he wielded a great axe, larger than a tree, mightier than a mountain. The dwarf armies stood behind him and roared in strange tongues, slashing at the air with their axes and swiping the ground with their picks.

Lastly, Jarnok strode forward and set himself before his brothers. His face was stern and cold, and wind flowed through him wherever he went. His gray trappings flailed and fluttered and he creaked as he walked. He wore gray boots and a gray tunic, graced with the images of the Frosty Spine and Snowcap the Old. From his belt hung a spyglass and in his hands he held aloft a great hammer, made from the stone at the broken peak of Snowcap the Old. He stopped there and glared at the Orc armies as they whimpered before him, trapped between the sea and the armies of the Stewards. Jarnok raised his hammer and pointed it at the Orcs, and the wind around him howled.

“You Orcs! Ye who have taken up alliances with our evil brother! Ye who have cared so little for the lives of your own fellow Stewards! Ye who forsook the calling of Ænurin and rebelled against her, who hated your mother Iberiena! We have come here today for you, ye Orcs, and we will not leave without a resolution.” The armies behind him howled and the Orcs before him wailed.

“However I would not wipe out completely a race that Iberiena birthed, for you were intended for a great purpose, though you cherish it not. I would have you repent of your evil doings and take on a new task, forgetting about war and power and harnessing the power that you were meant to have. So I give you this one chance to repent and follow us, by joining your fellow Stewards as brothers again. What say ye to this offer?” The armies behind Jarnok were quiet, and the sea stood still.

“I would have none of their kind here if I could,” said Goondagk with a growl. “They invaded my mountain homes and have infested our halls. I owe them no love! Let me kill them all!”

“And I,” said Justarn, fitting an arrow in his bow, “have seen enough fair trees and plants uprooted without remorse by their kind. They have burned enough human villages and taken enough of our women for their evil purposes. They deserve no second chance! Death is their only reward.”

“And I,” said Kerast, staking his trident in the ground, “have seen enough of our crops plundered and burned by their murderous horde. Our holes have been dug up and our homes smashed to bits. They travel our roads without remorse and invade our homes at night. My Halflings do not enjoy such disrespectful company, and a debt is due!”

“I feel likewise,” said Jarnok, lowering his head and speaking quietly, “yet I feel that no deed is so bad that it cannot be forgiven. These Orcs have the same right to live on Ænurin as any of the other Stewards and though they have misused this privilege, they should be allowed to repent. So what is your answer, Orcs!” he said, looking up with eyes flashing. “What is your reply?” The Orcs were nervous and confused. They swayed this way and that and muttered amongst themselves, yet they still hung onto their cruel weapons. Finally the leader of the Orcs, still alive after all these years, Oggrank the Fierce, stepped forward.

“We... we Orcs...” he said gutturally and he spat. “We... we wish to—”

There was a surge of water, and Talitar suddenly glowed bright in the night sky. The seas roared and a jet of water soared into the air, and splashed down upon the Orcs. Standing where the water had surged stood Talitar, recovered from his fight with Jarnok, so many centuries before. His hair was black and long, and reached to the sandy shore. His armor was dented and chipped, worn out plate dyed crimson red, and on his breast was the emblem of a single drop of blood. His trappings were tattered and dragged behind him, soaked crimson red, and his eyes flashed like fire. In his hands he had a flaming red sword and he looked upon his brothers. The Orcs below him looked up at him with sudden recognition, and they cheered and moaned in glee. “Talitar has returned, like our prophecy said, Talitar has returned!” they sang, dancing wildly on the shore. “He will answer the stern-faced Lesser-Worlds for us.”

Talitar looked at Jarnok. He took his sword and he set it on the beach.

“I will answer for them.” His face seemed drained and his eyes were distant, but he slowly approached his brother Jarnok. Jarnok grasped his hammer with both hands.

“I told your Orcs that all should have a chance to be forgiven, and you none the less. Despite the... horrible thing you did to me and my Gnomes... I will give you a chance to redeem yourself.” The Gnomes murmured. “Stop where you are Talitar, what say ye to my offer.”

Talitar stopped in the sand. He lifted up his hands and looked at them, and a quick grin flittered across his face before fading into a frown.

“I love you both Jarnok, and I never meant to hurt you... but...”

Talitar strode quickly forward and embraced Jarnok. He squeezed Jarnok hard and his armor squeaked. Talitar leaned his head back and spoke into Jarnok’s ear in a low whisper.

“...but I still must have my fun.”

With that he roared in laughter and the sea began to boil. The Sea Giants emerged from the waters with Globual at their lead and they cried out in anger. The Orcs at the shore laughed evilly and lifted their weapons in a charge. Jarnok lifted his arms and cast his brother aside, who was still laughing madly.

“You were given a chance and have rejected it, Talitar! Now feel the wrath of your angry brothers!” Goondagk roared and lifted his axe, and the Dwarves charged first. The other races followed suit and the four allied Lesser-Worlds rushed Talitar. The Sea Giants stepped over the ravaging Orcs and smote down the ranks of Dwarves, Humans, Halflings and Gnomes. The Stewards cut down the Orcs and Giants alike. The Lesser-Worlds raged on the shore, fighting in the midst of their Cherished. The battle issued for hours but no ground was made. The death toll was surmounting and it became difficult to fight amongst the bodies. Talitar laughed madly and lashed out at his brothers. He swung frantically, afraid of nothing, for madness was in his eyes.

“Don’t you see? Don’t you see?” he cried, and he slashed at his floundering brothers. “The pure entertainment, the deaths, the battle! The smell, the waves, the blood the carnage! Don’t you see? This is all that was meant to be; these are our pawns to play with, ha! and fight we shall, for good or ill, for that is all there is!” The wind around Jarnok intensified and lifted Talitar off the ground. Jarnok threw him into the water and lunged after him. Goondagk, Kerast and Justarn dashed into the sea and grasped for Talitar’s body, but Talitar leapt from the waves with a slash of his sword and smote them all to the ground. He laughed over them while they stumbled to their feet.

Suddenly the sky darkened and the sea became wild. Lighting struck the water and a squall hit the shore.

“Ah!” cried Oggrank, “is this another demon from the sea, come to aid us?”

A Blue Coral Lance came out of the swell and slashed Talitar through. Talitar fell back into the sea, laughing. Sarvest emerged from the ocean and the sky above her lit up with lightning. Her smooth body was draped with the colors of the ocean. Her blue hair was long and tied back in a loose braid, but it whipped about in the torrent around her.

Silver shells covered her breasts with a lance and a star carved into each one, and her body was laced with shimmering sea plants. She wore blue coral bracers and greaves, and in her hand was her long, Blue Coral Lance. From her waist hung a horn of shell and a starry cloak fluttered in the wind.

Global shrieked at the sight and lunged at her but she slashed off his head with one fell swoop. She turned to Jarnok.

“Forgive my tardiness brother, but I live a long ways from the waves. Yet I see that there is still something my Elves can do.” The clouds cleared and the waters grew calm, and abruptly they saw cities on the sea. The floating cities of the Elves were coming towards the shore at full speed, and with this sight the Gnomes, Dwarves, Halflings and Humans cheered.

“The Elves have come!” they cried, and the Elves cried back, “We have indeed come! And with the flaming lust for blood in our eyes!” The Elves leapt from their floating cities and charged the shore. The Orcs and Sea Giants were now caught between two armies, and they panicked. It did not take long to finish them off. Many Giants fled into the ocean and many Orcs fled into the wilderness, but the majority of both populations died that day. The remaining Stewards cheered in victory, but then looked at the dead around them. The Lesser-Worlds looked around too, and wept. Jarnok bent down and examined Talitar. He was laughing weakly and muttering, “*Don’t you see? Don’t you see?*”

The races of man-folk pulled their fallen comrades out of the carnage and piled them a short ways from the shore. Six mounds were erected that day, and under each mound were buried the Stewards, but the Giant corpses were cast back into the waves.

“My brothers and sister,” said Jarnok sadly, “I fear we have caused more harm by our coming to Ænurin than had we stayed in the void.” They nodded solemnly.

“Our Cherished have learned all they need to know,” said Sarvest, “but now we must ascend back to our places in the night sky.” Goondagk lifted up Talitar and threw him over his shoulder.

“The shore will forever be stained red because of what we did today. It is time that the Dwarves ruled themselves.”

“We can influence our Cherished indirectly, my brothers and sister,” said Jarnok, “and from afar in the void, for I have a plan. Our presence should no longer remain on Ænurin.” The Lesser-Worlds nodded in agreement. They left for their realms and put things in order and set up governors and rulers. Then they met at the top of Snowcap the Old, and Goondagk brought Talitar. With final words of blessing for Ænurin and their Cherished, they faded from the world of mortals and existed once again, solely being the crown of Ænurin, revolving high above her and glowing their respective colors.