

Ænurin  
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The Foundations

Before Time there was but the inkling of flame. Only it wasn't flame as we now know it, but rather a vast Intelligence that simply was. His name was Nurin, and nothing existed beyond him. His sentience boiled and burned, churning with energy and thought. His was a mind bent on creation, and every idea he had was in furtherance of this pursuit.

He first created things that are hard for the mind of man to fathom—chains and weights that set the bounds of the universe. He named the universe *Hru* and it resided within Nurin's being, but it nowhere compared to Nurin's infinity. Nurin then cast new energies into being and molded them into laws and ideas. It was during this moment that Time was born, and everything that was made after it resided within the plane of Time. Time itself stretched from one corner of *Hru* to the other, filling it completely, but not extending beyond.

Within this sphere of Time and *Hru*, Nurin focused his work. He gave *Hru* dimension and it became the block with which Nurin crafted all else. He then gave character to *Hru* by filling it with portals which glimpsed at that which was outside the sphere of *Hru* and Time. These portals became known as stars, and they varied in size, color and brilliance.

Nurin then decided to craft something different. He withdrew into thought for a time, and when he emerged he cast a burning ember into *Hru* which spun and spun, ever growing until it had become enormous. Nurin then

dashed the ember to pieces and flung the blazing matter to every corner of Hru. Some of the pieces went on forever and to this day continue to seek out the furthest reaches of Hru, but others were hand placed by Nurin, to forever glimmer and gleam before the stars in radiant colors.

Nurin took one ember and gave it particular attention. He heated it and it expanded into a molten ball, which he divided in two. One half he left molten and charged it with so much energy that it shown dazzling white, a blazing sphere that crackled and spat flames. This sphere he named *Yalis*, the sun. Nurin struck the other half and a small glob came loose. He blew on this glob until it became cold and frozen, and he polished it so that it shown brightly. He named the frozen glob *Halis*, the moon, and placed it near to Yalis, but not so near that it thawed.

Nurin took the remaining material and blew into it, and it bubbled and boiled and grew. It rounded on the top and came to a jagged point at the bottom like an icicle, yet the inside was cavernous and full of many chambers. Invisible roads and hidden rooms with 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* which means “Of Nurin”.

The world *Ænurin* cooled and hardened, and it drifted aimlessly through the void—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. He placed it near to Yalis and Halis and flicked it ever so slightly. *Ænurin* slowly began to spin and teeter back and forth, so that at one

moment half of it faced Yalis and was heated while the other half faced Halis and was cooled, and it moved so that no part of Ænurin faced Yalis longer than it faced Halis. Its teetering gave Ænurin seasons and made some places on Ænurin's face, particularly in the middle, perpetually colder than others.

But Ænurin was hapless and uninviting. It was hard and rugged and not suitable for his thoughts, and so he created an effervescent *Welke* 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 *Welke* and came together, forming a ring around the world, and this became known as the Ring of Design, which has and always will encircle the world as a declaration of creation.

Yet now things within the *Welke* 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 *Welke* and smote the jagged face of Ænurin. Sharp edges were worn away and made smooth. Stone was broken and soil 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 soil. After the cleansing was done, the oceans and lakes and seas all settled and were placed according to Nurin's desire. Many of the stone chasms beneath the surface 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 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 nothing would float aimlessly within them. The Weight of the Under-Earth was formed, making little worlds within the greater world.

But Ænurin was a dead place. It existed, yet it did not flourish. 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 focused upon Ænurin and breathed a new breath upon it. The *Welke* wailed and shrieked, the stars flickered and a tongue of flame sprung from Yalis, licking the surface of Ænurin. Ænurin trembled and awoke, and Nurin spoke to her;

*“Ænurin fair, you are my bride;  
I made you to be my delight.  
All things I know and to you I confide  
My desires and my far-seeing sight.*

*Like me you yearn to make and create;  
This desire to you I bequeath.  
With creatures you will populate  
The surface and everywhere beneath.*

*You are mine and so I decree  
Of this you should be aware:  
Do not seek for love beyond me,  
For rebellion ends in despair.”*

So Nurin had a mate, a being akin to himself, and he now had a partner to help with his work. She was the living world and mother of life. He gave her instructions and taught her the ways of creating, and then he took to other tasks.

Nurin set into motion a plan for the Lesser-Worlds. He dipped his hand into the *Welke* and cast it into the void, and the Lesser-Worlds came into being, which he named the *Kalani*. There were six *Kalani* in all and Nurin gave them each names; Talitar the Red, Kerast the Green, Justarn the Gold, Sarvest the Blue, Jarnok the Ashen, and Goondagk the Silver. Each world glowed its respective color and revolved above Ænurin, far above the night sky, where as colorful pearls they looked to the eyes of men and were revered. Nurin opened his mouth and let loose a mighty cry, and the *Kalani* awoke. They sparkled and shimmered in the night sky, and every wave of their dazzling light spoke of the love between Nurin and Ænurin. The *Kalani* rejoiced in all things made and took delight in bathing Ænurin with their light. Nurin was satisfied with all of his great works. It was now Ænurin's turn to fulfill her creative destiny.

### The Living Things

Ænurin beheld the works of her mate and she marveled. She gazed at the stars and was in awe of Nurin's power and bottomless creativity. She saw the brilliance of the *Kalani* and her mind leap with joy, desiring nothing more than to spin life into being.

She understood the will of Nurin and then began her task. She groaned and yawned, and the world shook. Her moan reverberated throughout the *Welke* and it shimmered violently. A single tear fell from the sky and smote the highest peak of Ænurin, the Mountain of Kindlings, which rested in the very center of the world. She grasped the tear and molded it until it began to pulse, and she hid it away in a chamber far beneath the mountain. It became her Pendant of Kindlings, a prized jewel to grace her neck.

She reached into her pendant and pulled forth a single seed. She threw it into the hills and the rains came and soon a stalk peeked out of the dark 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 world.

*“Reeds and brush 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 was clothed in the loveliest of clothes; living clothes of all shapes and kinds, from the sturdiest of smooth-skinned trees to the liveliest of creeping vines. She was pleased with her verdant crown, but she yearned to create something more. Nurin had placed bindings over the whole world which kept

the vegetation in place, but Ænurin wanted to craft something that could escape these bindings, if only partially, and move about on the surface.

Ænurin reached into her Pendant of Kindlings and drew out a single limb. It was clawed, bony and rough, and she cast it into the sea. The sea gurgled and churned and out of it crawled a gigantic creature of many shapes. Ænurin named her Broodan, the mother of the creeping, crawling things, and Broodan laid herself in a large valley to give birth. She birthed every creature to ever inhabit the world, from the largest of monsters that leap over hills, to the tiniest insects that drink from the bells of flowers. Broodan also gave birth to the sea life and the birds that skim the clouds, and over the course of many lifetimes she populated the sea, land and sky.

*“Elk and bear, sheep and ewe  
Fish and bird and bat.  
Cattle, boar and bison too  
Spider, snake and cat.  
The beasts of Broodan honor her  
And all call her mum.  
In reverence they bow to her,  
For from her they all come.”*

Broodan’s offspring thrived in the world and lived off of the plants that graced Ænurin. They did not need to feed off each other and they had no desire for territory or land. None of the beasts longed for dominance, and instead they lived with each other happily, delighting in their senses, enjoying each other and communing with Ænurin. The world was at peace in those days and there was nothing other than happiness, but it would not always be so.

### Talitar's Meddling

The Kalani's glimmering presence wafted throughout Hru and filled all of creation with joy. The Lesser-Worlds had no other desire but to shine for eternity. It was what Nurin made them to do. One of the Kalani, Talitar the Red, began one day to have unusual thoughts. He rested in the void and looked down upon Ænurin. She was beautiful and green and with every passing moment, life moved and wriggled upon her surface. At first this brought Talitar great joy, and he delighted in her beauty and in her bond with Nurin. But after a while he began to be dissatisfied. Why should Ænurin belong to Nurin alone? Why should the Kalani be doomed to forever admire their love, but have no love for themselves? Talitar glanced at his brothers and sister in the void and wondered if they too were having such thoughts. If the other Kalani did, they made no sign of it.

As Time went on, Talitar became increasingly frustrated. He was no longer content with his life as it was. His very existence used to be one of pleasure, but as of late he had begun to desire Ænurin for himself. He could not admire the union between Nurin and Ænurin without throwing himself into a fit of jealous rage. Nurin was wrong to keep Ænurin from him, thought Talitar. Nurin should share his love, for then Ænurin would be able to see how great Talitar was and she would love him. Talitar formed a plan to approach Ænurin and take her for his own. He would impress her with his might and

power, and then he, not Nurin, would own Ænurin. After uncounted years of dazzling brilliance, Talitar the Red grew dim.

This change was like a resounding gong that rang throughout Hru. The other Kalani turned their gaze toward their brother in confusion. His light had never been dimmed before and they did not know what to make of it. Worried that his siblings might make designs of their own for Ænurin, Talitar quickly focused their attention on something else.

“Have any of you ever wondered why we sit here glowing?” he asked. Jarnok the Ashen, the eldest and wisest of the Kalani, frowned.

“Because it is what we were made to do,” he said. “It is what makes us happy. I can’t imagine myself not gleaming, sending my rays into the very depths of the void. That would be painful.”

“True, but have you ever thought of what else we could be doing if we weren’t placed here to shine?” asked Talitar. “Ænurin has been busy these many years and has new clothes. Imagine what we could look like if we too clothed ourselves.”

“I do not think we are able to,” said Sarvest the Blue, their only sister. “We are Kalani, gifted in beauty and brilliance, but not in creation. Our greatest joy is in lighting and admiring things made, not in the making.”

“You think so simply,” said Talitar in disgust. “We Kalani are the fairest of everything in the Outer World. We shimmer in beautiful hues and next to Yalis and Halis we are the brightest things in all of Hru. Surely we are equal to Ænurin herself, and therefore we should be clothed too.”

At this the Kalani all became confused. What if Talitar was right? What if glowing was not the greatest joy they could ever have? What if they could form something and bring it to life, just like Ænurin could? Would not that be a greater joy? After hearing Talitar's words, the Kalani ceased their glimmering, grew dim and tried to create life. While they were thus occupied, Talitar whispered to Ænurin.

"O Ænurin, who has the loveliest form and the fairest crown. Who do you love most of all?"

"I love Nurin the most," said Ænurin. "He is my maker and my husband. Next to him I love the creatures that dwell upon me. They are a gift of joy to me."

"Yes, Nurin is indeed a powerful being. He has made everything that is, and marks of his craftsmanship are reflected in your own works. But have you ever considered the possibility that you might be happier loving another?"

"No, I haven't. Nurin told me not to love another, and I am happy now."

"Aha! You see, Nurin betrays himself. He forbids you to love another because he knows you will find greater joy in doing so! Listen to me, Ænurin. I desire you above all things, and wish that you would desire me. Forget about Nurin! If he really loved you he would let you choose. Choose me and be my bride, and together we can create the most curious things!"

Talitar's prospect bewildered Ænurin. She had never had any thought other than being Nurin's bride, but now she had another option. Talitar had always been a color to her, one of the many brilliant Kalani that sparkled on

the horizon. But now he was approaching her as if he were Nurin himself, and this confused Ænurin immensely. She gazed upon Talitar and saw that he was beautiful. He glowed the purest red, and she realized that, like all of Nurin's creations, he was lovely. Ænurin felt a love for him, and seeing this, Talitar grinned.

All at once Ænurin became disgusted with Talitar. The beauty she had seen vanished and he became ugly and vile to her. She had not known horror until that moment, because it had not existed until then, and she averted her gaze from the fiery Lesser-World in dismay.

"I thought I might have loved you," said Ænurin in pain, "but I realize now that what I loved was the reflection of Nurin in you. I love you in that you are simply an extension of my husband, but I now see something else within you, something hideous. You are trying to be apart from Nurin, this I see plainly, and there is nothing beautiful apart from Nurin. Depart, and never speak to me again!"

Ænurin hid her face from Talitar. Talitar the Red shook in a jealous rage. His surface bubbled and boiled and volcanoes erupted on his being. Channels of liquid flame cut across his face, and he was disfigured. He howled in anger and cursed Nurin. He gazed down upon Ænurin, desiring to possess her even more, but she was veiled from his sight and her verdant beauty was shadowed to his eyes only.

All at once, wailing filled Hru. The Kalani cried out in dismay. The sound was thrilling to Talitar, and he asked his brethren what it was about.

“We have failed in creating life,” said Goondagk the Silver, “and now we have forgotten how to shine!”

“We have strayed from our purpose and can no longer reach the very depths of Hr with our light,” said Justarn the Gold in dismay.

“If only we had never listened to you Talitar, we would still be dazzling, and we would be happy,” said Kerast the Green. “But now we have lost all joy in pursuit of a greater joy, and can do nothing but wail!”

The Kalani continued to cry out in sadness, but Talitar the Red laughed.

“Yes, wail for me, my brothers and sister, wail! Sing new songs that glorify me, for I am Talitar, and I have created sorrow!”

Ænurin heard the wailing of the Lesser-Worlds and she shuddered in dismay. Their brilliance had at one time brought her energy and rest, but now they were dim shades of what they had once been. Her only solace was Nurin himself, who she communed with and loved.

But Talitar’s words never left her mind. Now that she had the idea of loving someone besides Nurin, it would not leave her. She loved Nurin and was completely fulfilled by him, but she couldn’t help wondering what it would be like to love someone else.

She knew she could never love any of the Kalani. Talitar was revolting and the other Kalani wailed incessantly. Next to Nurin she loved the creatures that dwelled within her, and she turned her attention to them. They had all been perfect in her mind until now, but as she considered them one by one, they all seemed wretched compared to Nurin. Perhaps she could make

something else, something completely new to be her mate. After all, Nurin made her to be his bride, so surely she could make something to be hers.

She kept all these thoughts from Nurin as she schemed within herself, but Nurin became increasingly quiet, as if he were waiting for a storm to strike. The thought that he might know her secret desires terrified her, but Nurin made no sign that he had any inkling of what she considered doing. Still, the thought of her own treachery riddled her with fear, and though she was the most comfortable when in Nurin's company, she was also restless.

At last she could not keep her curiosity hidden any longer, and she attempted to make a spouse; one that was better than Nurin. She stretched her consciousness over the whole of her being and strained her mind. She groaned and creaked and twisted her very soul. Soon she felt herself moving, bloating outward, and the feeling terrified her. She clung to the surface of the world, and realized that she was separating from it. The soul that was Ænurin was ripped from the world that was Ænurin, and as she was torn free she shrieked in pain. Nurin watched his bride in sadness, but he did not lift his hand. He knew what she was doing and he knew the ultimate outcome of her decision, but still he did not intervene.

Ænurin twisted and grasped the dark soil of the world, clinging to it desperately. Her soul spun and mixed with the soil and the sea. The blood of creatures that crept upon the surface was caught up and the mess congealed into a new body. With a terrible scream, Ænurin was ripped into twelve pieces,

and the mixture of blood, soil, water and spirit was flung to all parts of the world.

When at last the dust and water settled, Ænurin the being was no more. In an attempt to create that which she could not, she divided herself into twelve bodies that became known as mankind. Six races of men were born, male and female of each, and they were spread over the face of the world so that they did not know each other. The new beings stared at their hands in awe, and cried out in pain, knowing that something was horribly wrong.

Nurin then came to the world and gazed at what was once Ænurin sorrowfully. He saw the six races of man and named them each; Rostic, Hress, Peepkin, Favish, Glaski and Trellic, and then spoke to them all:

“You are still my bride, though you are no longer Ænurin. You are now the races of mankind, and though you betrayed me, I love you. One day, we will be united again, but for now, we must be separated. You must learn that there is nothing other than myself that can bring you happiness. There is nothing you can create, nothing you can love, and nothing you can believe in that will bring you more joy than me. Once you realize this, we will again be united. Until that time you will find death, disease, war, poverty, famine and sorrow in your search for happiness, and the only things that will bring you true joy in this world are those that reflect a part of me. Live now in the bodies you have created for yourselves and remember me. Forgetting will only prolong your journey.”

With that, Nurin never spoke to his bride again, until the day arrived when she had learned that Nurin was the only joy there was. Nurin then turned his gaze to the Kalani and his eyes smoldered.

“You forsook your role in search of something greater. Did you not realize that I had made you to be as happy as you could be?”

“We now know,” said the Kalani as they wailed. “We now know that the greatest joy we can ever attain is to fulfill the role you molded for us. Forgive us and let us remember how to shine!”

“The days of shining are over,” said Nurin. “You listened to your brother’s bad council and must now suffer that decision. But do not lose heart, for I will give you new tasks to accomplish. You will guide the men of the world with my wisdom and my council. Do not stray from my will, lest you lead mankind away from the truth and prolong their years of suffering. Go, now, to Ænurin, and lead the races of men well.”

Nurin crafted for each of the Kalani a shell that took on the shape of one of the races of men. Each Kalani was given a choice of which race he would guide, and then their shells were sent to the world. But turning to Talitar, Nurin scowled. Thunder came from his voice and his eyes blazed like fire. Talitar trembled in fear.

“It is you who are responsible for this sundering that has taken place,” said Nurin, and his voice rattled throughout Hru. “You strove to have what it was not yours to have, and you tried to be me. But you are not me. You are my

creation; everything that is good about you I made. You have no right to be proud.”

“That may be,” said Talitar with a shaky voice. “But I managed to make something new, something that did not exist before! I made sadness, I made death. I made sorrow, I made disease. I have created! I am more than Kalani!”

“You are nothing,” said Nurin. “You did not create. You merely twisted that which already was. There is nothing original in your entire being, only fraudulent facsimiles of the good I have made. You have only the ability to distort that which is already created. Sorrow is merely a distortion of joy, ugliness a distortion of beauty.”

“I will go to the world,” said Talitar, “and I will twist it all, to spite you!”

“I will send you to the world,” said Nurin, “and I will use you to mold mankind. You are nothing but a tool. With you, I will teach my bride what pain is, so that she might choose comfort. With you, I will teach my bride what sorrow is, so that she might choose joy. With you, I will teach my bride what death is, so that she might choose life. But you will have no such choice. No matter what you do, you will always be wretched. You will always be filled with hate, envy and spite. No matter what you do, even if you think it will bring you joy, it won’t. Your remaining existence will be one of misery.”

“Then do away with me!” cried Talitar in fear. “Do not let me be tortured!”

“That which is made cannot be unmade,” said Nurin. He formed a shell for Talitar and flung the Kalani towards the world, and as he fell he screamed in terror. Thus began the history of mankind.

### The Races of Men

After the sundering, the races of men quickly forgot what it was to be Ænurin. They had no memory of ever being Nurin's bride, but each and every one of them had a feeling, deep down within themselves, of loss, of being incomplete, and of a golden age long gone. The races of men created myths and epic stories to retell the past and reconstruct this "golden age" that they so longed to reclaim. All their myths took on the color and character of their respective races, and yet were similar, in that the races of men were recalling the same collective past, but retelling it in different ways. One race's mythology was the most accurate and the most complete, thanks in part to Jarnok the Ashen. It belonged to the Rostic.

#### *The Rostic and Jarnok the Ashen*

The Rostic lines were founded by Roseth and Rosma, two of the original twelve that were once Ænurin. Upon the sundering, Roseth and his wife found themselves near the center of the world. The land was densely forested with thick fir trees, covered with snow, and it was rocky and rough. They found a river that gave them cool drinking water, and the two followed it. They climbed up and up until the tree-line ended, and the couple saw before them the great shape of a massive, snow-capped mountain. Perhaps it was the vague memory

of a beautiful pendant encased within the bosom of such a mountain that made the pair feel at home. They had indeed come across the Mountain of Kindlings, though they didn't know it. Instead they called the great mountain Snowcap the Old, and made it their home.

Over the course of many generations, Roseth and Rosma gave birth to a people that were quite at home in the cold and snow. Their children were rather short and chubby. Their hair was white like the snow, except for the women, whose hair could be white, gold and light blue. They were strong in the arms and swift, able to move amongst the trees like the deer. They were a dexterous race and in their earlier years were fond of making trinkets out of bone and stone. They made their homes in the snow, forging strong and sturdy homes and palaces out of nothing but ice. It wasn't until the Rostic met the Favish that they learned the highly skilled craft of hewing stone, but once they acquired the art, they climbed to the very pinnacle of Snowcap the Old and carved grand palaces into the rock, though they retained their snow-molding roots. It was then that the Rostic began to look towards the skies. They saw the stars and the Kalani and marveled in awe at their beauty, desiring to reach out and touch them.

When Jarnok the Ashen was sent to the world, he arrived in the snowy places near the mountain. He walked amongst the trees and came upon the Rostic, who were building snow-houses and hunting game. He greeted the Rostic warmly and the men gazed at him in wonder. He looked like one of them but was much larger. He had a full head of gray hair and wore a short gray

beard. About his neck was a gray cloak that spilled over his shoulders and down his back. He wore a gray suit that seemed to be carved from stone, and at his side he wore a spyglass. He asked where he might find the leaders of the Rostic, and the men pointed up the slope of Snowcap the Old.

Jarnok followed the river up the mountain, passing many men and small ice-villages as he went. The men and women were busying themselves with daily life, and lived off of game. The Rostic looked happy and seemed to take great joy in whatever they did, from hewing large blocks of ice to construct a home, to tanning and cleaning skins to turn into clothing. Upon seeing Jarnok, they rushed up to him and touched him, examining his clothes and staring in awe at his great size, thoroughly curious and not at all afraid.

At length Jarnok left the forest and stood face to face before a magnificent palace, carved in the very side of the mountain. He entered through the massive gate. There were no guards since the Rostic had no enemies, nor even the concept of “enemy”. Jarnok passed many rooms filled with people who were playing games, weaving beautiful blankets and tapestries, cooking food, making sculptures out of ice and rock and otherwise entertaining themselves with matters of play, not work. At the end of the hall was a large round chamber, and inside were many people who were putting on a play. The roof of the hall opened up with a long slit in the stone, revealing the night sky, at which all of the Rostic were fond of gazing. Two of them sat in seats of honor and watched the play with great enthusiasm, laughing and

clapping. They held each other's hands and looked on at the actors with great fondness. These were the two parents of the Rostic—Roseth and Rosma.

“Greetings Roseth and Rosma, mother and father to the Rostic people. My name is Jarnok the Ashen and I have come from afar to help your kind!”

“Come from afar!” said Roseth happily. “You most certainly did, because I have never seen a fellow like you before. I’ve been here for countless generations and know the names of all of my sons, and you certainly aren’t one of them!”

“And I have been around for just as long,” said Rosma, “and know the names of all my daughters. You are far from one of them!”

Jarnok laughed heartily.

“Of course not! I’m not really what you would call human. But I have been sent to be your guide, and I have wonderful things to teach you.” With that, Jarnok looked to the sky and pointed at the stars. With his finger he drew a line between them and the stars he touched twinkled brilliantly in the night sky. Slowly shapes emerged from the stars and the Rostic gazed at the new constellations wide-eyed.

“Images in the stars!” said Roseth in amazement. “I would never have guessed such a thing!”

“And I have much more I can teach you my fiends. I can show you how to map the sky so that you never lose your way. I can show you how to build contraptions that can help you from day to day. I have devised a script for you

so that you can write down your histories. To forget the past is a horrible crime. Follow me, and I will help you become a great people!”

The Rostic were impressed with the knowledge Jarnok demonstrated and readily accepted his leadership. Under Jarnok, the Rostic developed warped glasses that could peer at the stars. With Jarnok’s help, the Rostic cataloged hundreds of constellations and made detailed maps of the sky which have yet to be rivaled. The Rostic became lovers of gadgets and made intricate boxes for hiding things, turning even the most mundane of objects into amazing toys and works of ingenuity. Jarnok told them the tales of all that had transpired in the past, from the creation by Nurin to the sundering of Ænurin, and though Jarnok’s recollection was imperfect, it is believed that the Rostic have the best account of the ancient days, far exceeding that of the other races of men. And so the Rostic and Josak lived within and around Snowcap the Old, exploring the heavens and building things new.

### *The Favish and Goondagk the Silver*

The Favish lines were founded by Farvo and Sivish, two of the original twelve that were once Ænurin. When Farvo and Sivish became aware, they found themselves in a barren, rocky place, devoid of trees and any large life. They made their way across the landscape looking for something that could comfort them. The ground was hard and cold and they desired some sort of security. At length they stumbled across a deep cave that crept into the side of a rock and

then reached deep within Ænurin. They huddled there for a long time and lived off of small crawling creatures that resided within the cave. They found nourishment there—a spring of cool metallic water that refreshed them. It was here that Farvo and Sivish remained, and they gave birth to many children.

The Favish were a tough race whose strength was unmatched by any of the other races of men. They could punch through solid stone, though it was painful and took a while. Their skeletons were exceptionally strong and could withstand impacts that would kill any other race of man. They were of an average height and had skin the color of stone, from the darkest of gray rocks to the lightness of sandstone. Their hair was also quite varied, usually dark browns and blacks, but also silver, gold and bright red. The women liked to grow their hair long and braid it, either into wound buns or long tresses. The men, however, liked to cut their hair short, often shaving their heads completely, which is no wonder due to the work they did in the depths, constantly digging, cutting, hewing and hacking. All the men wore long mustaches, sometimes braided or tied with ropes, and each man wore his mustache differently.

Farvo and Sivish explored the furthest reaches of their cave until they reached the end. Their children multiplied until they could no longer reside in the cave alone, and since the Favish had forgotten how to live on land, they decided to burrow further into Ænurin. They used their remarkable strength and sturdy frames to knock out rock, but it was a slow and painful process.

And so the Favish invented stone tools, and though they dulled quickly, they were greatly prized until the time when the metal *urutik* was discovered.

One day, as they were busy expanding their realm, one of the Favish knocked through some stone to reveal a deep hole that went on farther than sight. He called for his parents, and Farvo and Sivish came to see what it could be. Farvo stuck his head in the hole and looked around, and though his eyes were attuned to darkness, it was too dark inside for even him to see.

“Hand me that there torch by ye,” he said to one of his sons, and as he reached behind himself to grasp the torch, he lost his footing and stumbled into the hole. He yelped and fell swiftly, but all of a sudden his body lurched around and was drawn back. He plopped down onto the smooth surface of rock on the other side and shook his dazed head.

“Farvo!” called Sivish from the hole, and Farvo could see shadows moving excitedly from the other side. But to him the hole was not above him, but sitting on the floor before him, and he stood to his feet. He gazed above and saw a never-ending darkness, which also stretched behind and in front of him as far as he could see. He stood for a moment, bewildered and amazed, as his wife called his name. At length what had happened dawned on him and he raced to the hole excitedly.

“I think I’ve fallen out the bottom!” he said, but in truth he had not fallen out the bottom. He had stumbled upon one of the peculiar chambers that Nurin had crafted long ago. Farvo told his wife and offspring that it was safe, and they came into the hole with him. Over the next many years, the Favish

explored and filled this chamber, discovering that it was an oval shape, like a bubble, only they could walk along the inside of the bubble, and everywhere they walked was “bottom”. They named this chamber Gadwyth, which means “first hole” and it was not long until it had been completely explored. Their eyes, however, never fully adjusted to the new darkness, and so they took steps to bring some sunlight to their world. They invented the mirror using polished urutik metal, and dug a long tunnel back towards the surface. It came out near Snowcap the Old, and they lined the tunnel with urutik mirrors. The light from Yalis was therefore channeled to Gadwyth during the day, and during the night, the Favish could see the light from Halis. Though urutik was a great conductor of light, the sunlight did not illuminate Gadwyth fully, and there were still many darkened corners and recesses within their peculiar realm. Once it was illuminated, the Favish discovered that the inside was not as smooth as they had first thought. There were craggy mountain ranges, and rivers and lakes. There was running water everywhere, and streams crisscrossed the interior surface of Gadwyth. The Favish delighted in drawing maps and strove to chart every corner of their realm, and once this was done they were in no way satisfied. They dug deeper into Ænurin and found other chambers like Gadwyth, but they were so numerous and of such a variety of sizes that keeping precise records grew nearly impossible. Small groups of Favish colonized other realms, but Farvo and Sivish were pleased to stay within Gadwyth, which they made their permanent home.

The Favish were the first race of men to encounter another race. They stumbled upon the Rostic as they were digging their great skylight, surfacing in the snows around Snowcap the Old. The Favish didn't know what to think about the plump, white-haired snow-molders, but the Rostic were kind to the Favish and treated them hospitably. The Favish soon warmed to the Rostic, and to this day, the bond between these two races is the greatest between any of the other races of man. The Rostic showed the Favish the stars and the constellations that Jarnok had invented. The Favish, however, weren't interested at all, and instead showed the Rostic the great wonders they had found within the world. They presented the Rostic with rings made from roughly hewn jewels and bands made of gold, silver and other precious metals. The Rostic were delighted, mainly with the prospect of something new to play with. It was the Rostic who fully developed the art of gem-cutting and metal work, and though the Favish were exceptional miners and forgers of tools, they often gave their more precious stones to the Rostic to shape and smooth.

Though the Favish lived underground, they were still lovers of light and life. They tried to obtain an understanding of the animals and plants that lived in dank places, and they developed gardens underground, lit by the great skylight of Gadwyth, which produced fantastic vegetables. They discovered the special properties of some of the softer rocks and developed powders made from these ground stones that, when applied to the roots of certain plants, increased their size two-fold. Though their gardens never received the same fame as those of the Peepkin, the Favish alone could grow peculiar foods that

could not grow on the surface. Their produce outmatched all others in size until the time when they began to sell their special powders to the other races. It was the Favish who discovered the amazing properties of certain rocks, a group of stones called the *Dako Jewels*. The jewels were treasured for their beauty, but their amazing properties were not fully understood until much later.

The Favish agreed to leave Snowcap the Old under the administration of the Rostic, and helped the snow-dwellers to build their first hall of stone. Once they learned the art, the Rostic perfected it and became exceptional stonemasons, using the wonderful urutik tools to craft their living places. Numerous tunnels were hewn that went between the Rostic mansions in Snowcap the Old to the Favish caves of Gadwyth, and the two races often traveled between the realms to share stories, technology, crops, meats, furs, clothing and friendship.

When Goondagk the Silver arrived on the surface of the world, he found himself in a rocky, flat landscape. He was naturally drawn to the hollows beneath the earth and subsequently stumbled upon a hole in the ground, the perimeter of which was ornately carved in relief of men hewing, cutting, carving and digging. When Goondagk entered, he found a long tunnel that led deep within Ænurin, and which ended at a huge stone gate, chiseled into beautiful, twisting designs. He had stumbled upon Gadwyth, just after the time when the Favish first settled it, and there he found Farvo and Sivish whom he greeted warmly. He resembled them closely, with a bald head shorn of any hair, and

yet his mustache was braided and long, reaching to his knees. He was clothed in silver links of mail and his somewhat blocky shape made him appear to have been hewn from stone. He had a silver belt braided with silver strands, and he wore a long cloak that shimmered as he walked. He wore a silver chisel at his side and was much larger than any of the Favish.

The Favish looked up at him and cast aside all their fears. When Farvo and Sivish saw Goondagk, they leapt to their feet and surrounded the Kalani. They were quite pleased with his appearance, thinking him a fitting example of how the Favish should hold themselves. Goondagk greeted them and told them who he was and why he had come. He sat them down by the fire and recounted the events of ancient times, but the Favish were bored, having a vague interest in the tale only because it somewhat concerned them. Goondagk's version of the events was less complete and therefore less reliable, not because he set out to skew the truth, but because he and the Favish had little interest in history unless it concerned themselves. From the moment of Gadwyth's founding, however, the Favish took meticulous records of everything that transpired, weaving great histories, but before that time, they could care less.

As he was talking to Farvo and Sivish, Goondagk noticed something shiny in the floor. With a wink, he bent down and touched it. The shiny metal within melted and was drawn into his hand. Goondagk molded the metal into a ball and then squashed it, working it into the shape of a chisel. The Favish looked on, greatly impressed. Goondagk had shown them how to extract and mold the metal urutik, which the Favish later used to create the mirrors for the

great skylight of Gadwyth and to create their tough and durable tools. The Favish were so delighted with this feat that they made him king, eager to learn whatever he could teach them.

Goondagk erected a silver throne in the heart of Gadwyth and the Favish surrounded it with a magnificent palace made of light stone. There Farvo and Sivish lived with Goondagk, but they were all too busy exploring their world to stay sedentary for very long and were often abroad, delighting in hewing new tunnels.

### *The Hress and Justarn the Gold*

The Hress lines were founded by Hrast and Jasin, two of the original twelve that were once Ænurin. Of all the places where men first arrived, Hrast and Jasin were given the fairest. They found themselves in a beautiful forest teeming with life, and through it ran a churning river. Hrast and Jasin explored their forest and named it *Raterweoud* which means “thick trees”. Raterweoud was divided into two sections. The northern part, called *Harnglom*, which means “foggy deep”, was perpetually covered in a thick fog. The southern part, called *Clæmwea*, which means “clear view”, was free of fog, and let in much sunlight. They followed the river, which they named *Grasmenflu* (running wild) until it met the sea, and though they were fond of their river, they did not much care for the sea, so they left it there and did not name it.

The Hress were tall, thick and muscular. Their hair was either red or blond and their men wore it long and braided. They clothed themselves with vines, branches and leaves and developed a keen ability to bend wood into nearly any shape imaginable. Hrast and Jasin were content within their forest and did not explore outside of it. Whenever the tree line stopped they would turn around and go back, and so over the course of many years they had covered every corner of Raterweoud, but they did not tire of it. They gave birth to many children who followed their parents in their ceaseless wanderings, and over time the tribe had grown so large that it split off into many smaller ones. Raterweoud was so enormous, however, that it in no way felt crowded, and indeed, the only time the Hressian tribes ever met was during their annual holidays. Though they loved each other, the Hress were a fiercely ambitious people and they were often concerned with their own desires and comfort. Each tribe examined another during their annual holidays, and when they went home they would copy the other tribes' clothing, hair style, woodworking and anything else they thought was superior to their own. They thought that in so doing they would better themselves, and when they discovered the existence of the other races, they examined them all to find ways to improve their lifestyle.

When Justarn arrived, he landed in the river Grasmeflu. He waded ashore and stretched, looking about at the great forest before him. He was as tall as a tree and muscular in appearance. His hair was long and golden, braided in the back. He wore loose-fitting clothing draped with gold cloth, and he wore golden boots that sparked like fire when he walked. The young and

flexible trunks of golden trees wound about his legs, and vines trailed from him. He entered the forest and found the Hress wandering from place to place, eating that which they found and living without care. He called to Hrast and Jasin, but they did not hear him for they didn't want to. Justarn frowned and thought for a moment. He looked around and saw a large tree, the largest that was in all of Raterweoud. He smiled as an idea sparked and he reached for the trunk of the great tree. He pulled it out of the soil, roots and all, and at this the nearby Hress cried out in dismay, for they loved the tree. Justarn silenced them with a wink. He took out a knife and began to whittle away at the tree. He peeled off all the bark and carved rooms inside and great staircases that wound this way and that. He carved balconies that could look out over the whole forest, and when he was done he blew on it. He then walked to the water and dipped the giant tree head first into the river. When he pulled it out, the tree sparkled and glimmered in golden hues. Justarn reached back and thrust the tree high into the air, and it came down, landing where it once rested. Its roots quickly squirmed and wriggled deep into the soil, and the leaves all spread wide and the branches stretched out far in all directions.

When Justarn was finished, the Hress looked up and marveled. Before them was a living house of great craftsmanship. At this they applauded Justarn and he bowed, and he told them the tales of the ancient times. They recorded these things on scrolls of tree bark from the living tree, which Justarn had crafted. They called this tree Goldenhæm, and it became Justarn's dwelling. The Hress became great craftsmen and forsook their nomadic

wanderings in order to build great wooden cities that rested both on the land and hung suspended amongst the trees. From Goldenhæm, their cities stretched out in all directions, growing so vast that they reached from one edge of the wood to the other.

It was only then that the Hress began to associate with the other races of men. The Peepkin were the first that they contacted because they were the nearest, and it was from them that they obtained bread and produce, though they preferred to live off of wild caught game, fruits and nuts that grew from their trees. The Peepkin were wary of the Hress at first, but the Hress sent them wooden beams to use in constructing their little homes, and the two became friends. The Hress liked the Peepkin but thought they were weak and couldn't understand their love for the fields and prairies, and so kept their association with them casual.

They next discovered the Favish and were put off by them. They thought that the Favish were ugly and dirty, thinking themselves to be handsome and manly, and could not fathom living underground. Justarn, however, scolded the Hress.

“Do not scorn the ugly and dirty,” he said, “for they could end up being your greatest friends. And do not love men for their beauty, for beauty often conceals disease.” At Justarn's words the Hress were ashamed, and so they sought out the Favish and befriended them. The Hress made leather shoes for the Favish and gave them wooden soles, which the Favish treasured, and the Favish sent them stone and tools to use in constructing their cities that rested

on the ground. Goondagk sent Justarn a scepter made from urutik and gold, and Justarn sent Goondagk a wooden instrument called a gurglebox which, when held to the lips and blown through, made music that sounded like the birdcalls that echoed through the trees of Raterweoud.

But of all the races of men, the Hress most admired the Glaksi, because they saw more of themselves in the Glaksi than in any other race. This ended up leading them into much trouble later on.

### *The Peepkin and Kerast the Green*

The Peepkin lines were founded by Orun and Seej, two of the original twelve that were once Ænurin. When they became aware, they were standing in a great field that stretched as far as they could see in all directions. In the distance to the north, they could make out the vague shape of a snow-capped mountain, and to the east, they saw the faint outline of a dark forest, but the mountain was intimidating and the forest was scary, and so they went west. After many months of walking and eating small creatures, Orun and Seej stumbled upon a patch of gourds and, not knowing what they were, became afraid. But when they saw that the gourds didn't move and smelled rather nice, they tasted them, and to their great delight found that they tasted really good. They ate them all up and were sad when they were gone, but noticed that after a while they grew back, as long as the roots were not disturbed. This is how the

Peepkin first discovered the laws of farming, and over the years, they developed the greatest crops of all of Ænurin.

Orun and Seej had numerous children and they built their first village right next to that patch of gourds. Their homes were constructed out of smooth river stones and, later, wooden beams. They were a wiry people with rosy skin. Some of them were almost pink, while others looked like cream. They had black hair, as dark as night, and it grew strait and long. As their population grew, the Peepkin spread out in all directions, filling the gently sloping valleys and building their houses against small hills.

Rivers and streams from Snowcap the Old cut through their fields, the greatest of which was *Rikarak*, delivering water to all of the seven portions that divided the Peepkin lands; Gourd Place, the original region where Orun and Seej lived, and then there was Billowbellow, Tobby Bottom, Kerast's Peak (the highest hill, which really wasn't very high), Waterlog, Cloverhæm, and Cattail Dale. The Peepkin made roads that led all over their realm (but never outside of it) and they loved the flat, treeless places where the tall grasses grew and tried their best to keep those areas wild. There was a certain beast that lived in the grassy plains which the Peepkin called the *ûmpa*, a fat, gray-skinned creature with dull, knobby horns on its nose and thick, gray hoofed feet, and the Peepkin domesticated many umpas to help them in plowing fields and doing other work. They also loved to ride, and would travel all over their lands, jumping and hopping around on their ûmpas.

Kerast arrived and found Orun and Seej constructing their first village near the gourd patch. They were terrified when they first saw him and went and hid, for Kerast was a striking figure. He was tall and clothed in green. He wore a loose-fitting cloak that flapped in the breeze, and when he walked by, all manner of greenery would reach for him. His hair was black as soot and trailed behind him, and it was interwoven with vines and stalks of grain. He held a green trident in his hand and when he saw the Peepkin hide, he laughed and sat down near the gourds. He was enormous compared to the Peepkin, but he managed to pick one of the small gourds and empty its contents. He poked a few holes in it and blew on it, and a beautiful sound came forth that caused the Peepkin to emerge from their hiding places and gaze at the giant in wonder. The music reminded them of their grassy plains, their fat ûmpas and their wonderful produce, and they lost all fear, flocking to Kerast curiously. He showed them how to make the little gourd instruments which they called *jookies*, and music (some of it not so musical) began to fill the plain as the Peepkin danced.

Kerast went all over the seven provinces and helped the Peepkin build their houses and tend to their crops. He never built his own house, but when he wasn't wandering the seven provinces, he would rest on a rock that crowned Kerast's Peak, the highest point in all of the Peepkin's lands. Due to his presence, green things of all shapes and sizes grew on and around the hill, and many small prairie creatures and wild birds made it their home.

Kerast showed them how to take ûmpa droppings and use them to make their produce grow to enormous sizes. It is because of the ûmpa droppings that the Peepkin have the greatest fruits and vegetables in the world, although they have been unsuccessful in growing the intrinsically Favish produce that only grows underground. Kerast desired for the Peepkin to become bolder, and so he introduced them to the Favish and the Rostic. The Peepkin learned much about the sky from the Rostic which aided them in planting and harvesting their crops, and from the Favish they received special powders that they experimented with to make their produce grow to specific sizes, colors and shapes, and the three races became stalwart friends. But the Peepkin still did not like the mountains or being underground and tried to keep to their fields as much as possible. They were then approached by the Hress, and the Peepkin thought that the Hress were scary with their big muscles and red hair, but the Hress offered them beautiful wooden beams to use in constructing their homes, and from then on the Peepkin cherished anything made from wood.

The sea absolutely terrified them, and yet they harbored a strange fascination with it. When Kerast arrived, he told them tales of a place where there were no mountains, no forests and no plains, just never-ending water that went on forever until it cascaded off Ænurin into the void. This imagery was seared into their minds from then on. The Peepkin both desired and feared the sea. Because of this they rarely came into contact with the Trellic, but all held them in fascination. The nearest the Peepkin would ever go to the sea was to the Cliffs of Feldend, which ended at the water south of Toby Bottom, the

southernmost of the seven provinces. Here, the rivers from Snowcap the Old, which crisscrossed throughout the Peepkin's lands, cascaded into the sea with a mighty roar. The deafening noise terrified them and only the bravest Peepkin would ever venture that far south, but when they returned they would bring with them fantastic and terrible stories of creatures that dwelt in the sea with large fins, pointy heads and dazzling eyes that would try to swim up the waterfalls to eat them.

*The Trellic and Sarvest the Blue*

The Trellic lines were founded by Segil and Kallach, two of the original twelve that were once Ænurin. They first awoke to the salty smell of the sea, and when they opened their eyes, all they could see was a blue vastness that went on endlessly in all directions. They were on a very small island—more of a collection of black rocks, really—which was most uninviting. Segil and Kallach ate fish and shelled creatures and of the fruit that fell from the island's lone tree. But one day, Kallach awoke and discovered, to her horror, that the tree had died during the night and fallen over, splintered into many pieces.

“Segil!” she called and awoke her husband. Segil came running and when he saw the sight, grasped his head in woe.

“Our tree, oh, our tree, what has happened?”

Just then, they noticed some movement around the splintered pieces. They came closer for a look and noticed that some of the purple fruit that the

tree had borne had fallen on the ground. These pieces began to sink into the soil. Green sprouts suddenly sprang up and grew steadily until, when Yalis had set, the sprouts were nearly as tall as Segil and Kallach.

“We lost our tree, but have been given four more!” said Segil, and the two were relieved. They built a boat out of the wood and used it to paddle further away from the island in order to catch bigger fish. The trees would grow into adulthood in a matter of months and then die, but when the fruit was ripe it would always produce saplings at an incredible speed. In this way, Segil and Kallach collected enough wood to construct their first floating city that they named *Frestwasser*, which means “Blue Adventurer”.

It was then that the two began to produce children, and very rapidly *Frestwasser* was filled with men and women building homes and planting the wonderful trees with the purple fruit. The *Trellic* were a short, flexible race with hair the many shades of the sea—mostly bright blue, but sometimes it grew in greens, purples and even bright reds. Their facial features were soft and blunted and they could both run and swim at incredible speeds, faster than any of the other races. They did not cut, braid or tie up their hair, but preferred to let it grow freely and wild, sometimes straight and other times wavy. Their skin was always pale, even more so than the *Rostic*, and they did not grow hair anywhere but their heads.

Soon other floating cities were built and the *Trellic* race grew at a rapid pace atop the boundless sea. Their navigation at sea was flawless, and the other races of men have yet to match it. Yalis could be sleeping, the stars and

Halis could be obscured by the darkest of storm clouds, but with just the scent of the sea and the lightest of breezes, any Trellic could sail a floating city to wherever he wished without wandering. No one but the Trellic knows where the original island with the fast growing trees lies and the Trellic are incredibly protective of this information.

When Sarvest arrived on Ænurin, she hovered over the water and scanned the horizon. She saw the floating Trellic cities and called out to them. Her voice enamored them, and the Trellic drew their floating cities near to her. She greeted them and told them who she was and they were captivated by her every word and motion. She was draped with the colors of the ocean. Her blue hair was long and tied behind her in a loose braid, intertwined with brilliant sea plants. Her body was smooth and clothed in a silky, navy cloth that shimmered. Green and blue sea plants wound about her being. From her waist hung a dazzling horn of shell and she wore a starry cloak on her back.

“Come and follow me,” she said, and she dove into the sea. The Trellic glanced at each other, confused, and Sarvest’s head reemerged.

“What do you mean?” asked Segil. “We can not breathe under water.”

“Have you ever tried?” said Sarvest, and with that, the Trellic all dove into the water. To their amazement, they could breathe and they swam in circles, delighting in their newfound ability. Sarvest motioned for them to follow and she led them to the very bottom of the ocean where tall pillars of green coral sprung forth like mighty towers. As she passed by, she touched them and the ones she touched began to glow a light blue, illuminating the seafloor. The

Trellic took in every wondrous sight that they saw, and from that moment on were never content to sail alone, but desired to penetrate every corner of the ocean and discover her mysteries.

Sarvest came upon a large stone that rested on the seafloor and she pondered for a moment. She then bent down and lifted the stone up, casting it aside and revealing an opening beneath. In it she went and the Trellic followed. It was another one of those peculiar chambers like Gadwyth that Nurin had created long ago, but this one was submerged. She named it *Chruneflass*, which means “Throne Room”, and there Sarvest built for herself a throne made out of blue, red and green coral, and all matter of sea life made their homes at her feet.

Sarvest found a large crystal growing from the floor and she pulled it out. She squeezed it and it began to glow a bright golden color, and then she shattered it. She gave the pieces to the Trellic and the men used the glimmering shards to construct the great lamps and lanterns that illuminated their realm. The Trellic built new cities around the base of Sarvest’s throne, but their numbers grew so large and so rapidly that they quickly filled Chruneflass. They then spread out over the seafloor, and some of the Trellic went back to their floating cities, for they still dearly loved to ride the crests of waves.

The sea giants saw the spread of the Trellic as an intrusion. After all, they had been there first, and for as long as they could remember, they had ruled the sea and instilled fear into all manner of beasts that caught sight of

them. Rage built within them at the impudence of the Trellic, and this hatred later led to great sorrow for the Trellic.

As they explored the depths of the sea, the Trellic came upon other chambers filled with water. Some of the chambers went very deep but then opened up into dry areas. Here the Trellic met the Favish and they startled each other. The Favish declared that the Trellic had trespassed on their ground, but the Trellic insisted that the Favish had delved into their passages and invaded their seas. Goondagk was summoned. He came to the Trellic and looked at them sternly.

“If not for my sister,” he said, “I would stomp on you all for trespassing on our ground. But she is dear to me and you are dear to her, so I will do no such thing. 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 onto any dry places under the ground. The Trellic shrugged and said they didn’t want to anyways, and ever after there was tension between the Trellic and Favish.

### *The Glaski and Talitar the Red*

The Glaski lines were founded by Klist and Glost, two of the original twelve that were once Ænurin. Klist and Glost awoke to find themselves in a deep jungle, north of Raterweoud and east of Snowcap the Old. The trees were thick at the base and thin at the top, squat and knobby, and within a short time one could

climb to the top of any tree and look out over the entire jungle canopy. It was a wet place and the temperature remained warm all year long, but it was not all that humid and Klist and Glost lived a comfortable existence, lost amongst the bright green trees, entangled vines and rugged terrain. They named their jungle *Tlakrin*, which means “Place of Bounty”.

The reason for such a name was that fruit grew from every single tree, vine and plant. They came in a myriad of colors, but by far the most common was the light blue fruit which Klist and Glost called *grimptu* that grew from the trees of Tlakrin. The fruit was hardy, did not bruise easily, and was sweet and delicious. The area within the jungle where Klist and Glost first arrived was filled with this fruit, and so the couple had little reason to venture anywhere else. Little pools of water dotted the jungle floor, and so Klist and Glost made their home amongst the roots of the fattest tree nearby, drank from the pool, ate from the tree and gave birth to the Glaski.

The Glaski was the most beautiful of all the races of men. They were blessed with black, glossy hair, which both sexes wore long and strait. Only the women ever braided their hair and this was seldom, usually when they were working (which was also seldom). They were tall and pale, and yet the faintest rosy hue highlighted their faces. They were athletic and delighted in climbing their trees and racing across the entwined network of branches that made up the jungle canopy, with the vastness of Tlakrin before their very eyes.

They collected birds of all kinds which had no fear, and would fly from the Glaski homes to feed and come strait back in order to sing their beautiful

songs. The Glaski made clothing out of discarded feathers from their birds, thin, tough vines and hides from the small animals that lived amongst the roots of their trees. They knew no troubles since their existence was so easy, and they played games every day, challenging each other to races, eating contests and tests in weaving.

Over the years, the Glaski eventually became so numerous that they had to spread throughout Tlakrin. It wasn't long before little groups of Glaski could be found at the furthest reaches of the jungle, and the songs of birds and laughter could be heard everywhere. But Klist and Glost stayed at the very spot where they first arrived, and built for themselves a magnificent wooden palace made from the roots of their beloved tree. The palace itself sprouted branches and bore fruit, and there was a throne at the top where Klist and Glost could sit and look out over the entire jungle to watch their children race and play atop the canopy.

One day, while their children there were entertaining Klist and Glost was a loud, piercing scream that echoed throughout the entire jungle. The Glaski did not know what to make of it. No beast they knew made such a noise. They clutched their ears in pain and Klist and Glost raced to their thrones while their children climbed the trees. From there they looked to the skies and their mouths went wide with astonishment. A blazing ball of fire fell from the stars, and the shrill scream emanated from within it. The Glaski watched as the ball of fire passed from one end of the jungle to the other until it struck ground.

At that moment the sky lit up with a burst of white, and a thunderous noise pierced the air. The Glaski closed their eyes and held their ears and many of them cried, unable to process what it was they were witnessing. When the thunder ceased, the Glaski opened their eyes and realized, to their great relief, that the screaming had ended. Klist and Glost saw a dark gap in their canopy, and from it rose a thick, black smoke.

Klist left the throne room and raced down the stairway of entangled roots to the ground. He found his staff, he found his cloak, and without a word, he left his palace, making for the rising smoke. When he stepped outside he was greeted by a throng of his children.

“What happened? What was that noise? What is that smoke?” they asked, and Glost came out of the palace quickly to join her husband.

“I’m not sure,” said Klist, “but I’m going to find out.” He marched off towards the rising smoke alongside his wife, and his children followed him curiously.

It took many hours of brisk walking, but at last, they began to grow closer to the smoke. The trees were no longer green but were gray, and as Klist traveled deeper, they became black as coal, until finally there were no standing trees at all. Instead, they were fallen, shorn of their leaves and fruit and splayed out strait, all pointing away from the thick, black smoke. The Glaski grew afraid and would no longer follow their father, but Klist and Glost went on, albeit cautiously.

At last they arrived at a black-rimmed crater, lying and smoking where once a number of trees and creatures lived. Klist crept forward and peered over the edge of the crater. He gasped and his wife joined him.

A tall, dark figure squirmed and wriggled in the bottom of the crater. He was on fire and as he squirmed he cried out in pain, patting the flames on his arms and legs. He flung dirt and ash everywhere but nothing he did could douse the flames, and he bit his tongue in agony. He saw Klist and Glost gaping at him from the rim of the crater and he cried out to them.

“Help me!” he said, but the two founders of the Glaski race were too astonished to move. They had never met anyone before who was not their child. They didn’t even know there could *be* anyone who wasn’t their offspring. The figure wriggled and screeched, crying out to them for help, and finally Klist leapt over the rim of the crater and slid down the side. As he approached he could feel the heat, until it grew so intense that he could go no further.

“If I come any closer, I will burn up!” said Klist as his eyes began to water. The heat emanating from the figure distorted his features so that Klist could not make them out. He at once looked dark and beautiful, but then he would twist and screech and his face contorted into something inhuman and terrible. Klist looked away in fear, and then an idea struck.

“Follow!” he called, and then he scrambled up the side of the crater. Glost met him at the top and the dark figure turned towards them. With a leap he cast himself out of the crater and onto the jungle floor. The shockwave sent

Klist and Glost reeling. Klist regained his footing and looked off towards the tree line.

“This way,” he said, and with that he raced off towards the trees with Glost close behind. As they ran the figure followed, squealing in torment, and soon Klist couldn’t remember whether he was running towards something or away from the horrible being. But at length he came to the tree line and just beyond it he arrived at a large, sunken pool. He and Glost stepped aside and pointed at it, and the dark figure leapt into the water.

All at once, steam shot from the pool, surging upwards and tearing the leaves off any branches in the way. It was a large pool, big enough for twenty men to swim in comfortably, but the figure was so huge that he filled half of it. The heat from the steam caused Klist and Glost to turn their faces away, but soon the figure’s screeching stopped and the steam began to dissipate. When the steam had all gone, there was nothing left within the hole except for the dark figure. But he was no longer on fire.

The figure arose and sighed in relief. He looked up at Klist and Glost and his eyes began to sparkle. He hesitated a moment and then bowed graciously before them.

“Thank you, kind souls, for dousing my flames. Consider me in your debt.”

“Where did you come from?” asked Glost curiously, when she had mastered her fear.

“I came from there,” said the figure, and he pointed at a faint red orb that rested near the horizon. “My name is Talitar, and I am your maker.”

“Our... maker?” asked Klist curiously, for he had only ever used that term when making things like clothing and toys. He never once thought that *he* had a maker.

“Yes, your maker. You don’t think that you have always been, do you?”

“Well no, I remember the day I...”

“The day you were made, maybe?”

Klist blinked, bewildered.

“Why were you on fire?” asked Klist, and at this Talitar’s countenance grew dark. His face twisted into a grotesque frown, but almost instantly he regained himself and smiled.

“I was flying through the sky,” said Talitar, “and I grew too close to Yalis.”

“What is Yalis?” asked Glost, and Talitar checked himself, realizing that they had no memory of ever being Ænurin. He pointed up at the fiery ball which was just on its way towards the sea.

“Oh,” the couple said in unison.

“To repay you for your kindness, I will teach you many things, for there is much yet that you do not know.”

“What can you teach us?”

“I can teach you...” started Talitar, but he didn’t have anything to teach them that they would have been interested in. He couldn’t teach them a craft or

skill. He was good at one thing only, and as he thought about how to veil his words his mouth curved upwards ever so slightly.

“I can make you rulers of this world,” he said, “and I can make you and your children desired and envied by all the other races of men.”

“There are other men besides us?” asked Klist, and Talitar chuckled.

“Oh yes, many more, but you are by far the most beautiful and talented. I made you that way.” Klist and Glost glanced at each other, and Talitar could see that they were a little uncomfortable. He walked to the edge of the empty pool so that he was face to face with them. They stepped back a little.

“Don’t you *deserve* to be the greatest race of all?” he asked in a soothing, disarming voice.

Klist paused but nodded slowly.

“Don’t you have the *right* to live better lives than you do?”

“Yes,” they said in unison.

“And aren’t you *owed* respect, glory and power?”

“Yes!”

“Then listen to Talitar, for he knows what is best for you.”

Talitar leapt out of the crater and stood beside them, and the fading rays from Yalis highlighted his every feature. Klist and Glost realized that he looked just like them, with long, black glossy hair and pale skin. He shook himself and the dust and ash fell from him. He wore black clothes that were finer than the trappings that the Glaski wore, and he stood proudly, with his chin held high. A gentle breeze kicked up and his hair was tossed about, and the couple

became enamored with this beautiful being that fell from the sky. Images of greatness filled their minds, and they looked at their existence up to then as one of squalor and stupidity. But now, with the help of Talitar, they would be a great and wise people with dignified clothing and magnificent palaces, and no other people would ever be able to match them. They smiled brightly and all fear left them. They led Talitar the Red away from the crater towards their makeshift homes where their children awaited them, and as they walked through the jungle Talitar wore a broad, crooked grin.

Klist and Glost summoned their children and announced that Talitar would be their guide, and through him, they would become the greatest race of men. It was then that Talitar dictated the history of the world from the beginning until then, and this history was corrupt. It placed Talitar at the center of everything. Talitar made man, made the world and made the heavens, and Nurin was described as an insignificant spec of a creature that existed to cause trouble. It was Talitar who was powerful and beautiful, and all the other races of men had gone astray, led by his meddlesome siblings who puffed up Nurin to be more than he was. The Glaski, on the other hand, were free and independent, and so Talitar chose the Glaski to be his subjects, for only they were deserving enough.

Talitar's influence with the Glaski was minimal, at first. He stood behind the thrones of Klist and Glost and advised them in all their decisions. First dress was normalized, and everyone wore red in Talitar's honor. Then certain

behaviors were banned and others demanded, for the Glaski, as the best and fairest race of men, must act like it. Songs were outlawed unless they were in honor of Talitar or the Glaski, for nothing else was deserving of their singing. Posture was prescribed, and it was demanded of all to walk in an upright manner with shoulders back and chin held high, for such was the proper way for a Glaski to hold himself. Once these changes were made, Talitar's recommendations became more demanding.

It was due to Talitar's influence that Klist and Glost made a decree, saying that their children must no longer inhabit the furthest reaches of Tlakrin in small groups and communities, and instead flock to the palace and live around it. Thus the edges of the mighty jungle were abandoned, and all the Glaski relocated to just outside the palace of Klist and Glost. There were so many of them, however, that despite being compacted they completely surrounded the palace and indeed, the number of Glaski homes stretched out from the palace a great distance.

Klist and Glost then decreed that everyone should eat the same thing, for no one should be made to feel that his brother eats better than he does, and so the fruit grimptu became the only food that they were allowed to eat. Then they decreed that, since the ground was filthy and the Glaski were above filth, they should construct for themselves houses made of wood that stood upon stilts, thereby keeping the Glaski away from the wretched soil. And so the Glaski cut down their trees and built for themselves houses upon stilts, and each man built a house to his own liking. But Talitar noticed the great variety in house

designs and it displeased him, and so Klist and Glost decreed that all houses should look the same, for no man should ever feel that his brother has a better house than he does. The houses were torn down and rebuilt in grids that circled the palace, based upon designs by Talitar. When this work was completed, the trees near the palace were all gone and in their place stood a vast network of wooden houses and wooden roads, all propped up above the ground. This was the first city ever constructed upon Ænurin, and the Glaski called it *Lattrak* which means “Great Nation”.

Klist and Glost looked out from their thrones at the vast city before them. The trees and birds were all gone. The only green that could be seen was a faint line on the horizon, but this line dwindled with each new generation. Klist felt saddened and he did not know why. They had accomplished something that no other race ever had. They were more organized and egalitarian in everything they did. They knew the *real* truth, as revealed to them from Talitar, yet despite it all Klist felt uneasy. But he kept these thoughts to himself.

Over the years, the pools began to dry up and the soil became hard. With no shade trees nearby, the city grew hot, the wind blew furiously, and the Glaski spent as much time indoors as they could. It was therefore the responsibility of the men on the outskirts of the city near to the jungle edge to harvest the grimptu fruit, which was their complete diet, and find fresh water to drink. They would eat and drink what they pleased and send the rest towards the inner parts of the city which were deposited in repositories and cisterns near the palace. The little food that did make its way into the heart of

Lattrak could not sustain the population, and so rations were placed. Each man, woman and child was allowed one fruit and one cup of water a day. Consequentially, the Glaski in the heart of the city started to lose weight and they became bony and unhealthy. This led to much griping and strife between the Glaski on the outskirts near the jungle and the men near the palace. The city was hot. The Glaski were famished. Things were not as they should have been, and someone needed to be blamed.

Whispers spread through the city. Some said that the other races of men had poisoned the soil, making it hard. Others said that Talitar's siblings had cursed the Glaski, making Yalis shine too brightly upon them. All these rumors were of Talitar's making, and in the end it made the Glaski bitter and they resented the other races. They pitied themselves and whined and moaned, cursing and blaming the Favish, Trellic, Peepkin, Hress, Rostic—everyone but themselves.

But Klist was not ready to see his children waste away. He announced that the Glaski would undertake a new great work, a work that would solve all of their problems. He gave his children designs that he had spent days making, without consulting Talitar, and soon the men were hard at work. New trees were felled in the jungle, but sporadically and not all from the same area. They were brought into the city and made into a track, and soon this track stretched from the palace all the way to the jungle interior. Then he ordered a hunting party to kill the great lizards that wandered the jungle, and out of their skin he erected giant windmills that followed the track from one end to the other, and

he lined the track with the leather. He then connected the windmills to the track with jungle vines, and when the fierce winds kicked up, the windmills spun, and the track began to move. Klist then segregated the city into fourteen sections, and each section was responsible for harvesting fruit for the city for one month, based upon the Glaski calendar. The fruit was placed on the track and conveyed towards the city, and the inhabitants ate when they wanted by simply walking to the track and picking some fruit. An aqueduct was then erected that led off towards the jungle, and through a system of pulleys and windmills, water from the giant pools was lifted and dumped into the aqueduct, which then ran swiftly towards the heart of the city.

Due to these innovations, the city was never out of water or food. It was still unbearably hot and the wind was oppressive, but at least the Glaski would not starve. Talitar, however, was furious. Klist had done all of this without even consulting him. Talitar had designed the city, but to have his designs modified by Klist infuriated him, regardless of whether it benefited the Glaski or not. The Glaski praised Klist for his ingenuity, and Talitar was jealous.

When Klist and Glost came back from constructing the track and the aqueduct, they found that their thrones were gone. In their places stood one throne made from glossy black rock, and in it sat Talitar. Talitar stood up from his seat and approached the founders of the Glaski race.

“I see you’ve been keeping yourselves busy,” said Talitar.

“Yes, our children were sick and we had to do something,” said Klist.  
“Where are our thrones, O great Talitar?”

“Great, am I? Evidentially not great enough to keep the Glaski healthy. That’s why you saw it fitting to revise my designs, isn’t it?”

“I meant no disrespect, O great one,” said Klist. “I simply did what I needed to for my children.”

“You wretch!” shouted Talitar, and the blast from his voice knocked Glost and Klist to the ground. The air around them crackled and Talitar’s eyes lit up like fire. “I am the one who makes the decisions. I design things, I make decrees, I do everything. You and your pitiful wife are maggots, and are vapor compared to me.”

“O Talitar,” said Klist with a shaky voice as he staggered to his feet. “I only did what I felt was right—”

“I decide what is right, not you!”

“But if you made me,” said Klist, “why did you give me this sense of what is right, and why does it conflict with your own?”

The edge of Talitar’s mouth curved up. It was then that Klist understood.

“Don’t question me,” said Talitar. He stared at Klist, and his gaze made Klist tremble.

“I’m just saying that if—”

“Don’t question me,” said Talitar and he stepped right up to Klist. He bent over and took Klist’s chin in his hand. Their eyes met for a moment, and then Klist began to scream. His face started to smoke and then his hair burst into flames and shriveled away. Klist flailed his arms wildly and Glost shrieked but Talitar did not let go. His crooked grin broadened and his eyes widened

with glee, but at last he cast Klist aside and turned away, walking towards the black throne. Glost ran to Klist and held him in her arms. His face bled and he continued to cry out in pain, and Glost wept. Talitar laughed.

“Your children are mine,” he said, “and I will do with them as I please. Now leave.”

Glost struggled to bring Klist to his feet, and the two stumbled around clumsily.

“I said leave!” shouted Talitar spinning around, and the shock from his words sent Glost and Klist flying. They were flung out of the throne room and landed on the wooden planks below. Glost regained herself and fetched Klist, and the two of them left the palace, forever. They found a gap in the wood and dropped down to the ground beneath, and in this way traveled beneath the city towards the jungle.

Talitar announced to the Glaski that it had been Klist and Glost who had poisoned the soil and cursed them. He said that their parents had fled the city once Talitar had uncovered this truth, and had traveled towards Snowcap the Old to stay with the Rostic. The Glaski were in shock and many of them wept, but they had no reason or ability to believe that Talitar was lying, and so they heaped curses upon their parents. Talitar now had the Glaski under his complete and utter control, and they followed him unwavering, forever hoping for the day to come when they would be masters of the world and rulers of all men.

Klist and Glost actually never left Tlakrin. They fled as far away from Lattrak as they could and made their home amongst the roots of an old tree at the very edge of the jungle. They discarded their red clothes and made humble garments out of feathers, and the birds of the jungle flocked to them and sang for them. Klist's face was forever scarred and his hair grew back in patches, but Glost never left his side and professed her love for him daily. They had twelve other children, six boys and six girls, and the couple found joy again in that dark and forgotten corner of the jungle. But the memory of a mighty city on stilts, far away to the south, where their offspring lived under the tyrannical hand of Talitar the Red, consumed a dark portion of their minds.

### *Conclusion*

And so the universe, the world, the creatures that inhabited it and mankind that depended upon it were all flung into being by the mind of Nurin. Nurin retired from his creative tasks and did not make anything new. But in his mind he had a story, completed from beginning to end, and this story played out within the confines of Time, which Nurin sent spinning at the breaking of the Shard. Mankind was the principal player in this story, and though men were given the power to mold the world around them according to their own designs, the Ultimate Design was Nurin's alone, and he reached into Time whenever he pleased to direct the story towards his perfect conclusion.

Death was not yet known by humanity and men grew numerous in each of their realms. In those early days, mankind knew a joy that was not tainted by the sourness of death, and none have since been happier than they.

The Rostic made great discoveries in the heavens and could predict the rising and setting of Yalis and Halis to the slightest moment. They mapped the paths of the stars and taught the skill to their children so that every Rostic knew exactly where he was at any moment simply by looking at the sky. They could predict storms and fair weather alike, and this talent became of enormous importance to the Peepkin who relied on the Rostic predictions in order to better plant their crops. The Rostic were friendly to all the other races of man, but were particularly close to the Peepkin and the Favish during those days.

The Peepkin were kings of the field and grew such fine produce that they made enormous profits trading with their neighbors. All men except the Glaski traded with the Peepkin on a daily basis, and the roads in and out of the seven provinces were filled with carts loaded with goods going to and fro. They traded more often with the Hress, since they were so near to each other and they were great friends with the Rostic. They feared the Trellic and were in awe of them due to their acquaintance with the sea, and though the Peepkin had dealings with the Favish, they were a little wary of them.

The Favish mined urutik from stone, and this metal became prized by mankind for its strength and sheen. The Rostic loved the metal for its ability to be molded into nearly any size and shape, the Hress valued it for making saws

and axes for cutting and refining wood, and the Peepkin had tools made out of it for tilling the earth. The special powders of the Favish were of use only to the Peepkin, who coveted them. But of all these things, the Favish were best known for their Dako Jewels. These precious stones were many in number and each had a particular quality. Some were repelled by the soil and could hover mid-air. Others attracted certain elements, like water, and could absorb them. Some were attracted only to other dako jewels and others responded only to human touch. The kinds and uses of the different Dako Jewels are too numerous to recount here, but the Favish collected, stored and classified these jewels meticulously. They traded them only to the Rostic, who marveled at their usefulness, and who turned them into fantastic gadgets and machines that could perform wondrous things. The Dako Jewels were fragile, however, and only the Favish knew the secrets to finding them within the hard earth rock.

The Hress were concerned with how the others perceived them, and went out of their way to make friends. They sought out the Trellic and were closest to them, providing them with wood for their floating cities, but they considered themselves to be on good standing with everyone. They were the sole provider of wood to the other races for this was their primary resource, and they took great pride in their excellent woodworking and craftsmanship. Indeed, whenever an expert woodworker was needed to build a house or store, a Hressian would arrive, pleased to do the job. When the Hress sought out the Glaski, they were at first rebuffed, but due to their persistence, the Glaski

eventually allowed trade to commence between them. The Hress admired the Glaski and desired to be more like them.

The Trellic, however, were complete opposites of the Hress. They were reclusive and did not venture onto land often, if ever. They were not unfriendly and they allowed guests on a regular basis, but they did not seek out companionship outside of their race. They were closest to the Hress, only because the Hress pursued them, and they genuinely liked the bold, warm assertiveness of the Hress. The Trellic found wonders beneath the waves; creatures too bizarre to be imagined and precious things that never appear on land. These they traded with the Hress, who then traded them with the other races, and Trellican jewelry and trinkets were greatly prized. The Favish held the Trellic with contempt, but the Trellic could care less what the Favish thought of them.

The Glaski hated everyone. They were incredibly suspicious and blamed all of their troubles on foreign interference. When the Hress arrived to make friends the Glaski told them to leave and never return. But the Hress did return, for they had a strange fascination with the Glaski. Talitar then thought for a moment. Perhaps he could use the Hress. Maybe his goals could be best achieved if he had at least one ally in the outside world. So Talitar announced to the Glaski that they were allowed to associate with the Hress, and the Hress alone. Minimal trade then formed between the two races, but the Glaski's reluctance to befriend the Hress only added to their allure, and the Hress desired to know everything about the Glaski. Through the Hress, Talitar

learned all the rumors of the day and he made a point to keep himself aware of what his siblings were up to.

Glost and Klist remained completely isolated in their small corner of Tlakrin, so much so that Talitar had no idea where they were. They approached no one for they were still in fear of the other races, and they sustained themselves solely on what they found close at hand in the jungle. Little did they realize that it would be their future deeds and those of their children that would shape the destinies of uncounted human lives.

Here ends The Foundations, to be continued by The Histories.