

HISTORY OF THE FLANAESS

Early History

The original inhabitants of the Flanaess were the Flan tribesmen, hardy and tough nomads whose small, scattered groups made no major civilizing efforts. Some thousand years past, their lands were increasingly invaded by two groups of attackers: the Suel and the Oeridians.

The Suel fled from internecine strife within their own lands and the great Baklunish-Suloise Wars. They moved northeast across what is now the Sea of Dust, across the formidable Hellfurnaces and Crystalmist Mountains, and spread widely across the lands before them.

The Oeridians began their migrations north for similar reasons, fleeing the same war. Both Bakluni and Suel forces employed mercenaries, bandits, and any humanoids they could hire to swell their armies. Their undisciplined rabble were often only too happy to desert and attack the Oeridians, also forcing them eastward.

The Oeridians were fierce invaders. They drove everyone else, Flan and Suel, before them. Of all the invaders, they were most successful in establishing settled lands wherever they went, and any threat the Suel might have offered to their dominance was soon eliminated.

Suel mages brought down the terrible Invoked Devastation on the hapless Bakluni to the north, but the last act of the Bakluni archmages was a fitting reply. The storms of the Rain of Colorless Fire reduced the Suel lands to choking dust and ash. There were few Suel or Bakluni left to emigrate after that. The Oeridians had the upper hand.

The fierce Oeridian tribes hardly had matters all their own way. For two centuries, they fought the Suel and the fragmented humanoids for possession of the central lands of the Flanaess. The Oeridians incurred the enmity of the Flannae and demihumans of the lands as well. The arrogant Oeridians might have been overcome by this mix of forces, but for one thing: the Suel were far more unpleasant than the Oeridians were aggressive. The Suel invaders lied, cheated, stole, enslaved, pillaged, and killed out of hand. Over time, the Flannae and demihumans allied with the Oeridians to drive the Suel to ever more distant fringes of the Flanaess: into the northeastern Barbarian lands and into the southern jungles of Amedio and Hepmonaland.

On the main continental land mass, the Suel retained a foothold only in the southwest and in the lands that would eventually belong to the Scarlet Brotherhood.

Approximately 700 years past, the strongest Oeridian tribe - the Aerdi - settled the rich arable lands east of the great Nyr Dyv and there founded the Kingdom of Aerdy, eventually to be named the Great Kingdom. The Kingdom grew for well over a century, until it stretched from the Sunndi swamplands to the south to the southwestern edge of the Griff Mountains to the north; while from the islands now held by the Sea Barons to the east (where the Aerdi mixed with Flan blood), the Great Kingdom stretched westward as far as the borders of modern-day Perrenland. When the Overking of this mighty empire declared universal peace on his ceremonial crowning in Rauxes, he must have thought his writ, and that of his descendants, would extend across those many lands forever.

The Rise of luz

In CY479, the land called luz was only a fractious collection of paltry fiefs. Among its princelings was a minor despot of the Howling Hills who died in that year and left his barren holdings to a son of dubious origins: luz. luz used the strategy of dividing his opponents to weaken them, then assimilating their lands and residual forces, sowing rumors and lies to put the princelings at each other's throats. He began to expand his domain far beyond its original boundaries.

Refugees fleeing the lands told astonished Furyondians of luz's unbelievable evils: massacres; a road of skulls built from the Howling Hills to his new capital of Dorakaa; and watchtowers along the road with beacons fed on the fuel of human fat and flesh. luz was said to be a fiend himself, seven feet in height, red-skinned and feral of face. If Furyondy had acted then, luz might yet have been contained. But King Avras was opposed by southern nobles who resented excessive taxation levied to protect the northern lands, and luz grew steadily more powerful.

luz disappeared in 505 CY, imprisoned beneath the towers of Castle Greyhawk by a group including Zagig, aided by St. Cuthbert (it is said). But his armies - mostly humanoids - had learned the lessons he taught them. They held to their lands; their leaders said their master would return, and they were right.

War Beckons...

In the mid-sixth century, Ivid V ascended the Malachite Throne. A series of subsequent unsuccessful skirmishes against Nyronnd, the Iron League, and other adjoining states did not suggest to the distant Furyondians and Keolandians that the Great Kingdom offered much threat to anyone. But Nyronnd knew better. Ivid V was a weak military strategist, but his diplomatic skills were considerable, and undoubtedly he had fiendish aid in drawing both the North and South Provinces and Medegia back under his influence and control. Nyronnd saw, clearly, the Overking's preparations for a great war against the western state. Yet, when the first blow came, it did not come from Rauxes. It came from luz; meddling fools managed to release the fiend from his imprisonment in Castle Greyhawk in 570 CY, only a year after the forces of good in Furyondy and Veluna celebrated the sack of notorious Temple of Elemental Evil in the Gnarley Forest. Their celebrations would not last many years.

To the south, the existence of the highly secretive and paranoiac Scarlet Brotherhood was first confirmed by returning travelers in 573 CY. It seems incredible that this monastic sect of religious militarists could have escaped notice for so long, even given their isolation in the closed city of Kro Terlep and the remote plateau south of it. But while the secret of this land became more widely known, the existence of a veritable army of spied and assassins in the imperial courts of the Flanaess was not.

The marriage of the Prince of Furyondy to the daughter of the highest-ranking noble of Veluna promised to unite the states and help solve Furyondy's internal squabbling. The Prince's abduction, surely at the hands of Scarlet Brotherhood agents, destroyed those noble hopes. When the Provost of Veluna disappeared also, the forces of good were in some disarray. Yet no one suspected the Scarlet Brotherhood. Their red-robed emissaries had wormed their way into the good books of many rulers and nobles, beginning with the states of the Iron League. When rumors surfaced of their enslavement and martialling of armies of "savages" in Hepmonaland, men and women who should have known better dismissed such rumors. It was all too far away to be bothered with. Distant lands were not the object of their attentions. And such myopia cost the powerful states of the Flanaess very, very dear.

The Greyhawk Wars

If a Flanaess sage had been asked in 582 CY where the first strike in a continental war would most likely come from, he would not have replied, "from the Hold of Stonefist," which is exactly where it originated. Founded 150 years earlier, the Fists were usually considered to be slightly better-organized barbarians than those in the Bandit Kingdoms or in the neighboring lands of the Fruztii, Schnai, and Cruskii tribes.

All the barbarians were inflamed by a rumor that swept their lands: that four of five legendary magical swords, the Swords of Corusk, had been found, and that when the fifth was obtained, a "Great God of the North" would rise and lead them to conquest and greatness. The fifth sword never was found, but one calling himself Vatun and claiming to be the Great God of the North appeared before the barbarians of Fruztii, Schnai, and

Cruskii, and they swept west into Stonefist under his leadership. The Fists were overwhelmed and their leader, Sevvord Redbeard, underwent a dramatic, if not to say magical, change of allegiance.

Under Vatun's direction, the Fists swept into the Duchy of Tenh in 582 CY and conquered it quickly. The Duke and Duchess fled to the County of Urnst for safety. The Tenhas' former Suloise arrogance cost them dear; no help was forthcoming from other nations. Nyronnd was nervously watching Aerdy, unable to risk forces far to the north.

The alliance forged by Vatun soon collapsed. The Great God instructed the barbarians to invade the small state of Ratik, but their chief's refused; they had long allied with Ratik against the humanoids of the Bone March and indeed against the Great Kingdom itself. They began to doubt Vatun; very wisely, since Vatun was a sham and a lie, a mask worn by luz the Old. But now luz was ready to strike elsewhere, both south and east.

To the east, luz toppled with astonishing ease the Heirarchs of the evil Horned Society, long his enemies and a thorn in the flesh of the Shield Lands. With the aid of powerful fiends, his forces made the streets of Molag run red with blood for a week. luz's puppets then rules from that fell city.

This strike panicked Furyondy. It sought alliance with the Shield Lands to secure itself against the Old One, but stupidly, the petty-minded rulers of the Shield Lands refused, believing this to be a step in a planned annexation by Furyondy. They paid dear for their foolishness. luz feinted an attack westward. Meanwhile, his main body of troops struck far to the east and southeast, into both the Bandit Kingdoms and into the Shield Lands, which they flanked to the east from bases in the old lands of the Horned Society. Admundfort and Critwall fell swiftly. Lord Holmer, who had refused a pact with Furyondy, was taken to meet his fate in the dungeons below Dorakaa.

Furyondy was able to hold its eastern border at the great Battle of Critwall Bridge in CY583. To the north, however, a massed humanoid force, swollen with mercenary humanoids from the Vesve Forest hired with looted gold, advanced almost unto Chendl, the capital, and took Crockport. After many battles and a desperate relief of a besieged Chendl, both Furyondy and luz were stretched to their limits. Still, to many it seemed like a provincial war of northern states; which is when the true hammer blow fell. The Great Kingdom struck, massively and on many fronts.

The Final Act

Scene 1: Sunset in the West

Added to the phalanx of forces poised to strike came a new force; the hitherto unremarked humanoid rabble of the Pomarj. United under a half-orc leader of greater strength than had been seen before, one Turrosh Mak, they strove to reclaim the "birthright" their new tyrant stressed to them: their old homes in the Lortmils. Striking into lands poorly defended as the southern armies moved northward, Turrosh's armies annexed the eastern half of the Principality of Ulek (now unaided by any neighbor) and the southern lands of the Wild Coast with their squabbling cities. They were stopped at the Pass of Celene by brave dwarves, gnomes, humans, and a handful of elves furious at the unwillingness of Queen Yolande of Celene to help the main cause of good. But Turrosh was satisfied; his fief had swollen in size, and while stymied in further territorial ambitions, there was none to threaten him with retaliation.

To the north, Ket raiders beset Bissel, and the Ulek forces crucial to its defense dithered between defending that small state and protecting Furyondy against luz. Bissel was eventually forced to surrender by the fierce horsemen of Ket. This could have been avoided but for another fell stroke worse than the eruption of humanoids from the Pomarj. From the Crystalmist Mountains, great forces of giants and humanoids swept down into the Yeomanry. In the latter, they were repulsed by peasant levies as worthy in battle as many seasoned veterans. Geoff and Sterich fell, the Keolandish armies too distant to oppose the invaders.

The giant troubles, as they were called, have been ascribed to all manner of evil schemings. Some sages say that the tanar'ri power Zuggtmoy, freed from her prison in the Temple of Elemental Evil by the meddling Lord Robilar, allied with Iuz and drew forth the giants via agents in the Underdark. Some say Lolth had her own schemes and her drow organized the giants. Still others see the hand of the Scarlet Brotherhood in this, as in do many things. The truth is obscured from our view. In this matter, Istus spun her web impenetrably. But the effect was to present the Keoland- Furyondy axis and its allied with threats from the west when they were beset in the north. It destroyed all possibility of sweeping back the forces of Iuz.

But Iuz was well defeated by Belvor of Furyondy, acting with the elves and rangers of the Vesve Forest, to prevent his drive into Furyondy from gaining any further lands, and Chendl was secured. The forces of Veluna held off Ketite incursions aimed at Mitrik. If good could not win, it held evil at bay.

Scene 2: Death of a Kingdom

Overking Ivid V decided to command his armies personally in the campaign of CY584, the greatest mistake he ever made. Paranoid virtually beyond the limits of mere insanity, the Overking's assault on Nyronde was broken at the battle of Insspa where Aerdy forces were utterly routed. Ivid's response was characteristic; he executed anyone involved in leading the armies. He executed more of his own nobles. He executed servants, sages, and serfs.

Finally, Ivid V decided to create utterly loyal servitors among his generals and nobles. He expediently had them murdered and raised in unique undead forms; each was revived as an animus, an undead being possessing all the skills and talents of the former living person. With the logic of the terminally deranged, Ivid came to see this revivification as a reward for his favored courtiers.

Unsurprisingly, as Nyronde defeated Aerdy forces and their demented monarch offered them death and eternal restlessness as a gift, the nobles of the Great Kingdom schemed and plotted and had Ivid assassinated. Unfortunately for them, priests of Hextor (with fiendish aid, most agree) revivified Ivid who rose as an animus monarch. Executions were no longer enough for Ivid. Now he instigated wholesale massacres and genocide.

The North Province seceded, and with the aid of humanoids from the Bone March, succeeded in repelling Nyronde forces in the Flinty Hills. Wisely, the Nyronde held off from further massed battles, perhaps sensing the imminent collapse of Aerdy. The North Province's secession did indeed trigger the complete disintegration of the Great Kingdom. Animus nobles across the land (and the few still living) withdrew all support and the remnants of their armies from the Overking. The Great Kingdom was no more; a welter of petty states, ruled by disputatious nobles (many of them undead), was all that was left. An empire that had stretched from Perrenland to the Aerdi Sea had been wholly expunged in less than four hundred years. Sic transit gloria mundi (or its Oeridian equivalent): so passes away the glory of the world.

Scene 3: Those Who Watch...

The biggest winners of the Greyhawk Wars were those who never fielded a force of their own people on the plains of battle. The Scarlet Brotherhood pursued their own ends by treachery, deceit, intrigues, magical compulsion, and strategies unused by others: the breeding of special monsters and the enslavement of so-called savages. When the Great Kingdom sought to exert its power in 583 CY, the Brotherhood did indeed support the Iron League secretly: with weapons, equipment, funds, advisors, and mercenaries. The Father of Obedience wanted a buffer between the Brotherhood and the mad Overking. But at the same time, Brotherhood agents undermined the unity of the League, and when the Great Kingdom fell apart, the Scarlet Brotherhood demanded the surrender of the Iron League states. When they refused, assassins slew nobles and rulers by the score.

Far to the west, too, the Sea Princes capitulated to the unknown assassins of the

Brotherhood, and as Onnwal and Idee fell to the fleets and Hepmonaland armies raised by the men in red, the Brotherhood secured an iron grip on the Azure Sea. From the Sea Princes' lands and ports, the Brotherhood even sought to take Gradsul, the vital southern Keolandish port, but were repulsed.

Not all of the Iron League was lost. Wily Cobb Darg of Ironwall knew exactly where his support had been coming from, and had every Scarlet Brotherhood agent executed or exiled as Idee and Onnwal were falling. Sunndi still stood, its formidable natural defenses of hill, woodland, and swamp defying all attempts made against it. But the Brotherhood had time on their side. Alone of the major forces of the great wars, they were not spent. Not everything had to be achieved in one fell swoop. The Father of Obedience still had many agents in readiness.

War's End

For almost three long years, as 584 CY drew to a close, the nations of the Flanaess had schemed, murdered, and warred against each other until nearly all sides lay bloody and beaten. Proposals for a great peace treaty gained rapid acceptance in many quarters, aided by the persuasive whisperings of the agents of the Scarlet Brotherhood. In the month of Harvester, 584 CY, in the untouched Free City of Greyhawk, countless ambassadors assembled to inscribe their names on the treaty at the Day of the Great Signing. It very nearly didn't happen.

Magical scrying and the strenuous efforts of sages have not availed to give the full story of what happened that day. All that is known for sure is that, within the Grand Hall where the treaty was to be signed, a fierce magical battle erupted and spread havoc through the Old City. Afterwards, two members of the famed Circle of Eight, the great mages of Greyhawk, lay dead; Otiluke and Tenser were no more. Their magical clones likewise shriveled and perished, and their own bodies could not be resurrected. It is also known that Rary of Ket, another Circle member, was last seen fleeing with Lord Robilar into the Bright Desert, and that Rary had turned traitor and had slain his old friends. Why this is, is a tale yet in the telling. A sideshow to the main event, to be sure, but one that still shook Oerth.

Despite this, the treaty was signed and the Greyhawk Wars drew to a close. The Pact of Greyhawk ensured peace - of a sort.