

CHAOS IN THE WARHAMMER WORLD

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Background

We wrote this article as a writing sample that accompanied our formal proposal to write the Realms of Chaos sourcebook for Hogshead Publishing. This piece actually represents the entirety of the History chapter. A good portion of the text is a summary of the information contained in some of the 4th and 5th edition WFB army books.

Games Workshop wasn't particularly pleased with the paragraph where we detailed the time before the collapse of the warpgates. In their view, the text was too definitive for a period in which the events should be hazy at best. We intended to answer GW's concerns by presenting this legendary period of history as some heretical theory put forth by two renegade Verenan scholars. In this manner, we hoped to stake out a reasonable view without compromising anything GW was developing.

Introduction

The following text is based upon the ramblings of the late Brother Frederich Schliemann, may Mórr protect his soul. The unfortunate Verenan scholar had been plagued by nightmares over the past few years which drove him mad. He was taken to the Great Hospice in Frederheim where the Shallyans sisters did what little they could for the former Professor Emeritus of Imperial History at the University in Altdorf. Brother Frederich did have moments of lucidity and the Verenan cult sent Brother Joachim Weissburg to record everything Brother Frederich had to say in the hopes of gaining some insight into the nature of his ailment before he succumbed to his fate.

There are some who claim that Brother Joachim fabricated the information in the hopes of making a name for himself. The truth will never be known as the good brother died violently at the hands of a suicidal maniac several weeks before this work was published.

History of Chaos

Fought to a standstill after the First IncurSION, the Lords of Chaos embarked on a millennia-long plan to corrupt, weaken, and destroy the peoples of the Warhammer World. Each proceeded in its own way, biding its time, sometimes fighting each other, waiting for the moment when the Warp expands again.

Tendrils of Chaos

The Corruption of the Elves: the Cult of Pleasure

The seeds of the downfall of the Elves were sewn during the aftermath of the Great Disaster. In the midst of the fighting, the grieving Phoenix King Aenarion rescued the beautiful Lady Morathi of Nagarythe from a Slaaneshi warband. To everyone's surprise, he took the cool and proper noblewoman for his wife and settled his court in her homeland in Ulthuan. It was here Morathi gave birth to their son, Malekith.

Malekith inherited his mother's beauty and his father's stature, and he came into his own after the death of Aenarion. Though Aenarion's first children were found and his daughter became the new Everqueen, many wanted to see Malekith crowned Phoenix King. The Ulthuan Princes decided differently and crowned Bel Shanaar instead. Malekith was the first to bend his knee before the new Phoenix King in homage. In return, Bel Shanaar named Malekith as his First Ambassador.

Malekith travelled the world as the Phoenix King's representative. When he returned to Nagarythe, he found that the decadent Cult of Pleasure was prevalent throughout the region. The cult had grown so bold it performed obscene rituals of living sacrifice as a public entertainment. Malekith led a crusade to crush the vile cult despite (or perhaps because of) the rumour his mother was a founder and High Priestess. Fear gripped Ulthuan as rumours hinted the Cult had spread to other parts of the ringed island and increasingly associated the name Slaanesh with it.

In a war council called to debate the threat of the Cult and Nagarythe, Malekith openly accused the Phoenix King himself of being member. Overwhelmed by the accusation, Bel Shanaar poisoned himself. Malekith took the crown from Bel Shanaar's head, proclaimed himself Phoenix King, and released hidden assassins to murder every noble in council. Malekith was so certain of his destiny that he entered the sacred flame of Asuryan as the first two Phoenix Kings had done before him. Instead of emerging unscathed, the fire burned Malekith with an intensity to match the presumptuous of his soul. Wracked with unbearable pain, Malekith was rejected by the sacred flame. His followers took his broken body to Nagarythe to heal.

Once recovered, Malekith the Witch King made war on Ulthuan to regain his birthright. Arrayed against him were the armies of the new Phoenix King, Caledor the Conqueror. The war raged across Nagarythe with the followers of the Witch King slowly losing ground. Malekith then tried a dangerous gambit, attacking the Vortex itself in hopes of tapping into the Realm of Chaos directly. The wizards caught within the vortex fought desperately against the Witch King. The raw magic force unleashed was tremendous and the whole of Ulthuan shook under its might. The ensuing tidal wave drowned much of Nagarythe and Tiranoc, killing thousands of Elves. The Witch King and his followers escaped in the disaster's chaotic wake and fled overseas to a land they renamed Naggaroth.

This event has become known as “The Sundering” and forever fragmented and weakened the Elven people. The Civil War has continued through the millennia to the present day, ensuring the full might of the Elves would never again oppose Chaos and its designs.

Sidebar: The Coming of Chaos

“All right, where were we?” Theophilus Hochmütig inquired on a sunny day in the middle of Marktplatz in Nuln.

“We were discussing how Chaos came into the world,” replied Lodovicus Buchbinder with the hint of exasperation in his voice. “I believe that you were going to explain your theories.”

“Ah, right. Thank you, my good man,” said the taller scholar. “With what was available to me in Nuln and Marienburg, I have deduced that tens of thousands of years ago, long before Man walked upright or the Elves were anything more than savages, the Old Slann (or Old Ones, if you prefer) left a now-forgotten home world, much like this one, to travel among the stars. Through their powerful magicks, they conquered the vast distances between suns by learning to travel in the Warp, a realm of limitless probability that lies beneath and behind all reality. Mastering the laws of this other-realm, their voyages in the aethyr were reduced from centuries to just a few days or weeks, thus allowing the Old Slann to build an empire that spanned the Heavens. On each world they settled, they built great gates at the north and south poles to ease their ships’ entries and exits from the Warp.

“Blinded by hubris, the Old Slann never realised that among the infinite possibilities inherent in the Warp was self-awareness – that the other-realm itself could become sentient. Serene in their great ships, it never occurred to them that the psychic patterns left behind by their mighty minds would merge and coalesce with the mental echoes of millions of lesser beings in the eddies and currents created by their passage. Nor that this growing intellect, the mind of the Warp itself, would hate them.”

“I see,” commented Lodovicus. “So, you theorise that this ‘mind’ was a powerful deity? What happened next in your estimation?”

Theophilus pulled himself a little more erect before continuing, “The attack of the Dark Entity, as I style him, was sudden and violent. Hundreds of ships were destroyed in an instant, the psychic death screams of their crews adding to the life force of this new-born god. But it played its hand too strong and too soon, and weakened itself to the point that the magic of the Old Slann proved superior. They obliterated the entity, scattering it into millions of psychic shreds. Reassured of supremacy by their victory, the Old Slann were still blind to the truth: the mind of the Warp could never be wholly destroyed, for a portion of all living beings exists within it. Lesser eddies of these psychic shards form the beings we know as gods, spirits, and daemons.”

“Isn’t there a contradiction in your views?” countered Ludovicus. “If the Old Slann were so powerful that they could defeat this ‘Dark Entity’, where are they now? Why do we have Chaos in the world?”

“I’m getting to that,” replied Theophilus. “That’s the problem with the world today. Too many of the younger people don’t have the patience of their elders.”

“Elders, my foot,” retorted Ludovicus. “You’re bloody only 46 years old...”

“... and I’m still a year and a half older than you,” completed Theophilus. “So I am your elder. Now allow me to continue. As I see it, the scattered fragments of the Dark Entity flowed in the tides of the Warp until they encountered other sympathetic remnants. These bits and pieces began to coalesce on their own, forming new psyches. The first to gain awareness was the Blood God, Khorne, who some argue (incorrectly, I might add) is the most powerful of all. He was followed quickly by Tzeentch and Nurgle. The last of the Powers to gain awareness was Slaanesh. Other, smaller beings gained consciousness during this time.”

“Right. And where do the other gods fit in?” snorted Ludovicus impatiently.

“That’s a tale for another day,” remarked Theophilus. Where was I? Oh yes. The Four Great Powers retained enough of the Dark Entity’s memories that they inherited its loathing of the Old Ones. Khorne wished to strike immediately, but Tzeentch the Schemer urged him to delay. Their power was rising while that of the Old Slann would surely decline in time. The Four slowly created their daemoniac followers, hiding them from the Warp-travelling Old Slann, waiting for the day when they could tear reality apart.

“Through his cunning, Tzeentch slowly corrupted the mechanism of the Warp gates over the polar regions. When the time was ripe, they failed suddenly and exploded in a million colours, tearing great gashes in the heavens above and below our world. Great winds from the Warp blew its dust across the world, corrupting and twisting many of its inhabitants, making them slaves to the attackers. With these newly formed allies as the vanguard, the forces of the Four poured through the gates to destroy the Old Slann.”

“You realise, of course, that such a view runs opposite of what the good cult of Sigmar teaches its priests,” observed Ludovicus.

“No doubt,” smiled Theophilus followed by a cough. “Damn, the air’s getting a little thick hereabouts. At any rate, the forces of Chaos soon encountered lesser beings who shared this world with the Old Slann. The northern kingdom of the Giants was swept aside and their kind scattered. The Elves of Ulthuan were battered by the initial attack, but did not break. To the east, the Dwarfs marched from the safety of the mountains to take up the fight. But, these battles were merely side-shows to the real war.”

“Kingdom of the Giants? You’ve been reading those inane Norscan sagas again, haven’t you?” Ludovicus criticized.

“I’ve always said that there’s some truth behind the old myths of the world,” rejoined Theophilus. “My throat is feeling a bit parched at the moment. What I wouldn’t do for a pint of ale. Oh well, allow me to continue.”

“By all means, fellow scholar,” replied Ludovicus. “We have little time.”

“Indeed, friend, but I am almost done expounding upon my conclusions,” reassured Theophilus. “The utter destruction of the Old Slann was the only goal of the Four – all else meant nothing compared to it. They themselves engaged their ancient enemies and their servants, the First Spawn Slann, while Greater Daemons led the Chaos armies against the other Slann and their Lizardman warriors. The war devastated the land which later became Naggaroth as the titanic forces clashed for mastery. The Old Ones threw all their resources into the fray, but they were tired and decadent: it would not be enough to defeat the Lords of Chaos.

Yet, within the infinite possibilities of Chaos are the seeds of its own destruction. One of the Daemon Princes, Hashut, revolted against the Lords of Chaos. Khorne swatted Hashut away and sent other Daemon Princes with their retinues to slay the defiant daemon. As the forces arrayed against the failing Old Ones scattered, the divine Children of the Earth Mother entered the battle against Chaos. They were soon joined by the Law Gods, beings from the Void whose sole goal was the freezing of Chaos in one set pattern – something that would mean the deaths of the Four. The forces of Chaos were pushed northward until a stand-off was reached.”

“Yes, and we know the rest, do we not. Allow me to finish since your throat seems so parched,” stated Ludovicus, who then cleared his own throat. “The Elves and Dwarfs contributed to victory over Chaos. Many Elf sorcerers gave their lives to create the vortex that drained away most of the Warp winds, while the Dwarf Ancestor God Grimnir journeyed to the collapsed Warpgate to seal it with his bare hands. Though denied outright conquest, Chaos had taken hold in the world and its roots sank ever deeper.

“Now, allow me to point out where I disagree with your views...”

“For the love of merciful Verena, gentle sirs, please,” interrupted a pleading third voice. “This is not the time to debate your views on how Chaos came to the world. We are *being burned at the stake!*”

“This is no time for hysterics,” reprimanded Ludovicus. “Bloody librarian...”

The Destruction of the Goblin Kingdoms

Before the Great Disaster, the region now known as the Dark Lands was a well-watered and fertile region between the Worlds Edge Mountains and the Mountains of Mourn. Nomadic tribes

of Orcs, Hobgoblins, and Goblins roamed the land as hunters and gatherers. They fought each other with weapons of stone and bone, each wanting the land for itself.

The Goblins were the more organised and numerous. They were the first to establish kingdoms on the fertile plains and trade with the Dwarf clans that had migrated from the Worlds Edge Mountains. The Hobgoblins, on the other hand, were cunning hunters, skilled at ambush and setting traps. They were also more likely to cheat Goblin traders than deal with them honestly. In contrast, the large and brutish Orcs simply took whatever they wanted and killed anyone who stood in their way. Their love of fighting one another kept their numbers low, a fact for which the more civilised but physically weaker goblins were ever grateful.

The Chaos Incursion ignored the Dark Lands until Hashut's revolt against the Lords of Chaos. Fleeing from the Daemon Princes sent by the Blood God to destroy him, Hashut made his stand in the Dark Lands. The savage battles they fought boiled away the rivers and left the land a desiccated ruin. The servants of the Daemon Princes destroyed Goblin and Hobgoblin villages to deny Hashut any possible allies. The Goblin kingdoms crumbled under the onslaught and their people fled to the Orc villages for safety. The Hobgoblins retreated into the Mountains of Mourn to save their own skins. Only the Orcs fought back, gathering into larger tribes and joining the battle with relish.

These new (though unwitting) allies gave Hashut the opportunity to turn against his pursuers. He killed many, but Khorne always sent more. Knowing they would eventually overwhelm him, Hashut withdrew into the underground darkness to rebuild his strength. Khorne's slaves followed and finally cornered their quarry in a large underground cavern. Suffering from their own wounds, the followers of the Blood God imprisoned Hashut behind a great door of brass and darkened iron to hold him till Khorne saw fit to exact his vengeance in person.

As the Warp winds drained into the Elf-created vortex, Khorne's minions in the Dark Lands began to weaken. A huge Orc army descended upon the retreating Khornates and the bloody battle further devastated the land. Both sides suffered horrible losses, but the simple and brutish society of the Orcs survived the war against Chaos. The more advanced Goblin culture was destroyed, forever leaving the Goblins as slaves of the Orcs.

The Corruption of the Dwarfs: the Oath-breakers

Unlike their western brethren, the Dwarf clans of the Mountains of Mourn didn't receive Grungni's warning before the Warp gates collapsed and Warp dust seeped into their settlements. Yet, the eastern Dwarfs realised that something was amiss and closed their doors. A surge of Warp matter obliterated the Dwarfs' surface entrances and entrapped them below. For hundreds of years, the Dark Lands Dwarfs were trapped underground. No matter where they tunneled, impenetrable rock prevented them from reaching the surface. The Dwarfs burrowed ever-deeper, always seeking a way past the rock that trapped them.

They eventually tunneled into a magnificent underground gallery with walls of obsidian. Carefully exploring the cavern, the Dwarfs found a huge sealed door made of brass and darkened

iron with arcane writings inscribed on it. Rune Lord Grimdalf the Grey took it upon himself to translate the glyph learn what was beyond the door. After many years, Grimdalf successfully read the script and, as he mouthed the last syllable, the resulting blast tore him apart. The sound of it reverberated throughout the tunnels, as did the roar of whatever it was Grimdalf had set free.

The thing from behind the door was free and Dwarfs were dying. Even when they finally tunnelled out of the earth, the killings continued during the night. In time, fewer died and some Dwarfs were even allowed to return to their fellows with tales of a gigantic creature from the Darkness. With their Dwarfking dead (one of the beast's first victims), the remaining clan leaders selected a delegation to approach the creature in its lair to learn its intent. It told them that its name was Hashut, Father of Darkness, and that he would grant them great power if they worshipped him alone. Hashut told the Dark Lands Dwarfs that their Ancestor Gods abandoned them to the onslaught of Chaos. Should they refuse, promised Hashut, their lines would come to an end and their achievements would be forgotten.

A heated argument broke out between those who saw wisdom in Hashut's words and those who saw forsaking the Ancestor Gods as the first step to damnation. At the height of the debate, weapons were drawn and Dwarf slew Dwarf. Seeing the fight from afar, Hashut granted sorcerous power to those elders who favoured him, tipping the battle in their favour. To honour their new god, the victors sacrificed many of their brethren to Hashut, while they gave others to him as slaves. Some of these he mutated into the beasts that serve him: the Great Taurus and Lammasu. Hashut also took the most ferocious fighters for his cause and shaped them into the Bull Centaurs, his distinguished servants. Lastly, the victorious clan elders were permanently rewarded with powerful sorcerous abilities, which they used to Hashut's glory.

In a final desperate act against their now debased rulers, the remaining Runesmiths revolted against Hashut's new order. But, the corruption of the Dark Lands Dwarfs had even affected the power of the Runesmiths. The battle raged for months, but the Sorcerer-Priests were too strong. The Runesmiths were broken and enslaved, while the more powerful among them were sacrificed to Hashut after several days of ritual torture. With the last vestiges of their former culture removed, the corruption of the Dark Lands Dwarfs was completed. Hashut rewarded them with tusks to mark them as his own, while he granted the most devout cloven hoofs and horns.

Though they remained unknown to the Dwarfs of the Old World for millennia, the Chaos Dwarfs proved to be their nemesis. The campaigns of the Dark Land denizens forced the greenskins' western migrations that led to the ruin of several Dwarfholds and the decline of the Dwarf Empire of Karaz Ankor. The Old World Dwarfs never recovered from their loss.

The Rise of the Skaven

Scholars have written that one of the results of the magical vortex centred on the Ulthuan's Isle of the Dead was the formation of the moon Mórrslieb. Another was the creation of isolated pools of Chaos matter spread across the world. One of the larger pools was found in the underground caverns located beneath the fertile plain between the Tilean Sea and the Irrana Mountains.

More than two thousand years before Sigmar, several Human tribes forsook the worship of the Earth Mother to follow other gods, including Solkan, Law God of Retribution. They were forced to migrate to the plains north of the Tilean Sea where they founded the city of Tylos. Theirs was the first civilisation in the Old World. As the Tylean civilisation grew, the Chaos mass coalesced into a single malevolent entity. It knew of the Human activity above and came to hate the surface dwellers.

Dwarf clans joined the Tyleans in their plan to build a mighty temple in honour of Solkan. They sank the foundations deep into the earth, unknowingly breaching the domain of the Chaos entity. Wallowing in its hate, it plotted and schemed as the towers of the temple grew ever higher. When the Tyleans finished the temple after a hundred years of construction, the thing struck. Warpstone rained down from Mórrslieb and the ground buckled and ruptured as the Tyleans sought shelter in their stone houses. Many died in the destruction, while those who didn't came to wish they had. At the height of the storm a tremendous explosion from below tore Tylos' centre – the birth of a god. Tall as a mountain, the entity burst forth and took shape as the Horned Rat.

Some Tyleans survived, but they could not resist the effects of the Warpstone about them. There was no escape from the devastated land, which, within a year, had sunk and become an abysmal, disease-ridden swamp. The city itself settled into the marsh, its spires twisting into horrid shapes and swarms of giant rats roaming the ruined boulevards where Tyleans once walked with pride.

But, the Horned Rat was not quite finished. It wanted no less than to become one of the Lords of Chaos, but for this it would need worshippers. It changed the giant rats into parodies of the surface dwellers and blessed its creations with some of its own essence, including its hatred for the chosen races of the Old Ones: Elves, Humans, Dwarfs, and even the Orcs and Goblins. He the strongest of his new servants the power to wield the raw magic of Chaos while resisting its mutating effects.

The Skaven burst upon the rest of the world soon after. In the wake of the War of Vengeance between the Elves and Dwarfs, earthquakes and volcanoes ravaged Karaz Ankor. The Dwarfs reeled from the upheaval, and it was then the Skaven attacked from below, apparently coordinating their actions with the above-ground attacks of the Orcs and Goblins. Several Dwarfholds fell over the next thousand years before the Dwarfs stabilised their defences across the Worlds Edge Mountains. By then, the Skaven had begun their war against the Goblins, while searching far and wide for Warpstone for their Grey Seers. Ever since, their lives have been dedicated to conspiracy and secret war, all in the service of the Horned Rat

The Seduction of Man

Humans were few in number during the First Great IncurSION of Chaos, mostly confined to the south and east of the Old World. Though their involvement in the War was minimal, Human development was greatly influenced by Chaos. Warpstone fell far and wide when the Warpgates collapsed and no part of the world was spared. The influence on Man was subtle. In place of the

complacent subjects of Old One experimentation, the Humans developed the ambition and drive that would enable them to eclipse the declining older races.

Human population exploded as they mastered the ability to make tools and weapons, Some tribes migrated to the Old World while others congregated elsewhere. In time, Human civilisations first arose in Nehekara, Cathay, and Ind, while the worship of the Earth Mother spread throughout the tribes of the Old World, led by wise priests called Druids.

The religion of the Earth Mother, the “Old Faith,” was the common element binding the first Old World tribes together. Inevitably, it attracted the attention of Chaos. The fertility rites and symbolic sacrifices of the Old Faith were a lure for Slaanesh’s corruption. In some isolated tribes, these expressions of religious devotion devolved over time into wild orgies and Human sacrifices. During the second century IC, the hierarchies of the dominant cults (Taal, Ulric, and Sigmar among others) were appalled when they learned of these practices. The cult leaders mistakenly assumed these sick rites were typical of the entire Old Faith and declared a crusade against the Druids and their religion. Those that escaped fled deeper into the remote areas of the forest and borderlands where they survive today, deeply suspicious of the dominant cults.

In the first thousand years of its existence, the Empire of Sigmar became the richest and most powerful realm in the Old World. But the quality of the later Emperors never measured up to Sigmar and Sigismund II the Conqueror. With the hand of Chaos shaping the decadent opulence of life in the Imperial court, the early Empire reached its nadir during the reign of Emperor Boris Goldgatherer “the Incompetent” in the twelfth century. Lusting for the riches of the sorcerous orders, Boris conspired with the Grand Theogonist of Sigmar and the other High Priests of the Imperial cults to arrest the wizards and charge them with heresy. Many sorcerers died screaming in the flames of the stake while Boris carefully counted their wealth and properties.

The Lords of Chaos were smiling at the looming destruction of Sigmar’s legacy when the Skaven unleashed the Black Plague in the Empire. The Horned Rat's play for power almost ruined Chaos's game as their premature assault reunited the land under Mandred Skavenslayer. The Skaven tried to salvage their victory by assassinating Emperor Mandred , but Chaos had lost its great chance. Not all their efforts were wasted, though. In the wake of Mandred’s death, the arguments over the succession plunged Sigmar’s Empire into the Age of Wars.

Though fragmented, the Empire remained a powerful bastion against Chaos. More time was needed to let the corruption run deeper and the fissures widen so the road to damnation would be inescapable. One great step was taken in the twentieth century when many wizards were seduced by daemonic promises of power and eternal life. The ranks of daemonologists and necromancers swelled as sorcerers openly made pacts with Chaos. Merciless Witch Hunters and Templars fell on these slaves of Chaos in what came to be called “The Wizard's War,” but it was still a victory for Chaos: sorcery was repressed once again and it’s practitioners banned. Many nobles and city-states took this excuse to settle old grudges, ending any pretence of central authority in the Empire.

Minor Incursions

While the schemes of Nurgle, Slaanesh, and Tzeentch plotted to divide the enemies of Chaos, bloodthirsty Khorne lashed out. Subtlety was not his way: direct and violent action was the only plan.

The Dark Elves of Naggaroth were the first to feel the Lord of Slaughter's fury. Battles along the border marches were fierce and bloody, but the Dark Elves won each battle while all the time suffering terrible casualties. Khorne's armies suffered as well, but they kept the Dark Elves from exploring the lands north-west of Naggaroth, which held several ancient and unexplored Old One sites that might harbour secrets valuable to Chaos' foes.

In time, Khorne's armies sought other targets. Bretonnia looked ripe for the picking and the Khornates attacked it several times. They laid waste to the land and slaughtered whole towns until a last great host of Bretonnian warriors appeared. Having spent their strength in wanton bloodshed, they themselves were cut to ribbons by Breton steel. Though they had saved their land, the Bretonnians had won but a small victory. The real war was still in the future.

The Second Great Incursion

Anarchy spread across what had once been the Empire during the Dark Ages. The great provinces made war against each other and their own rebellious subordinates. It seemed Sigmar's dream had failed at last. Fear, despair, and suspicion fed the power of Chaos. Across the land, dark prophets openly proclaimed the coming end of the world.

In 2301 I. C., the Chaos grew so strong that the Wastes quickly expanded out from the polar regions. The Dwarfhold of Karak Vlag was overrun and vanished as if it never existed while Praag and Karaz-a-Karak were besieged. Having allied themselves with Chaos, the Dark Elves attacked their ancient enemies in Ulthuan. The millennia Chaos had spent dividing and weakening their enemies at long last looked to be bearing the fruit of ultimate victory.

Alone amidst the panic one voice sounded a cry of valour and hope. Magnus von Bildhofen, known as "the Pious", was a firm believer in Sigmar's dream and a gifted orator. He quickly united and energised the people of Nuln and the Reikland, convincing them it was their sacred duty to help Kislev and fight against the Chaotic invaders. Word quickly spread and people everywhere rose in support. Opposition to this upstart son of a minor noble withered even in Ulrican strongholds like Middenheim and Talabheim. The Dwarf High King of Karaz-a-Karak swore allegiance when he learned of Magnus' inspirational words.

The Dwarfs of Karaz-a-Karak repulsed the invaders at their gates after two months of heavy fighting and pursued them northward, but doomed Praag itself fell to the Chaos invaders after holding out for months without reinforcements. A second Dwarf army was sent to give aid to the Tsar of Kislev and they arrived before the triumphant Chaotic armies moved south to lay siege to the city of Kislev. Dwarf Engineers worked feverishly to strengthen its defences. They completed

the task as the gigantic Chaos host arrived. The fortifications held in spite of a fierce initial assault. The Siege of Kislev had begun.

Magnus gathered more troops in his Great Imperial Army while encamped near Middenheim. Having learned of the siege of Praag, he split his forces in two. One, with most of the lancers, would march towards Praag with the aim of relieving that city while the other Magnus would lead to Kislev.

When Magnus arrived, the Siege of Kislev was well underway. He knew time wasn't on his side so he launched an attack on Chaos' western flank early the next morning. The initial strength of the charge broke the Chaos battle line, but the foul creatures rallied and counterattacked. A breakout led by the Dwarfs from Kislev's gates also stalled after early success. The battle was turning against Magnus when the force he had sent to Praag arrived from the north and immediately attacked Chaos' rear. Taken by surprise, the Chaos army crumbled and scattered in panic. So great was the slaughter that the River Urskoy ran thick with inhuman blood.

The same swing of fortune repeated itself in Ulthuan. The Dark Elves and their Chaos allies enjoyed early successes and forced the High Elves southward. The atrocities the invaders committed solidified Elven resolve and their military and magical might began to tell. With the borders of the Wastes contracting again, the strength of the Chaos armies waned. The Dark Elves retreated to Naggaroth as Chaos fell before the High Elves.

Chaos failed even in the Dark Lands where Khorne sent a portion of his warriors to exterminate the Chaos Dwarfs, followers of his immortal enemy Hashut. The battles were fierce with neither side giving nor asking quarter. The Chaos Dwarfs survived, but their race was decimated.

The Chaos alliance was disintegrating on all fronts. Followers of Tzeentch battled the servants of Nurgle while Khorne's slaves attacked everyone, especially the followers of Slaanesh. Elements of the Human, Elf, and Dwarf armies pursued the vanquished Chaos forces in their quest for complete victory. The remnants of the Chaos army rallied in a forested region known as Grovod Wood, north of the River Lynsk and Erengrad. Here Chaos made its stand, for its generals knew what fate awaited them in the Wastes for their failure.

The thick woods prevented the massed formations preferred by the Imperials, forcing instead the use of small armed bands to eliminate pockets of chaotic resistance. The conditions so favoured Chaos and the battle progressed so poorly, the Imperial commanders considered withdrawal. Demanding vengeance for Karak Vlag, the Dwarfs refused to retreat and accused their Imperial allies of cowardice. With the Alliance army about to fall apart, the situation was saved by the arrival of the Norse Dwarfs and Kislevites from the Translynsk territory. These fearsome warriors had their own axes to grind with Chaos and were determined to avenge the loss of their lands and the destruction of their families.

The fighting continued for several months and, by the time winter's first snowfall arrived, only small elements of the once mighty Chaos host roamed the vast forests of the Empire and Kislev. The devastation wrought by the Great Enemy would take years to overcome, if at all.

Sidebar: Salvation – the Victory of Magnus the Pious

In the latter part of the 23rd century, the Nuln cell of the Tzeentch cult of the Rainbow Plume was worried. The date of retribution, as foretold in their sacred book “*Liber Dominicus*,” was fast approaching and there was much to do. The first task was to decipher accurately the sometimes contradictory, often confusing clues and form a coherent plan of action. Years of guesswork and study finally yielded a single event: a young man steeped in the self-righteous babble of a false god would rise above his decadent class and unite the fragmented Empire to oppose the Great Mutator’s schemes.

That narrowed the likely candidates to a few dozen individuals in Nuln alone. Killing the right person at the prescribed time posed a bit of a problem, however. Several members of the Rainbow Plume had different interpretations about when the crucial event should take place. After much debate (and a bloody nose or two), the cult settled on the earliest possible date. The leaders assigned cultists to shadow the identified individuals in the hope that the right one was among them. The great day was fast-approaching and time was of the essence.

Magnus von Bildhofen was a strong believer in Sigmar and the unity of the Empire. A gifted orator, Magnus studied a wide range of subjects at the University of Nuln. He excelled at History, Theology, and Tactics. His close friends included the scions of other noble families such as Sigmund von Krieglitz, Lorenz Haupt-Anderssen, and Anton von Liebewitz. Though their futures looked bright, Magnus’ thoughts were filled with foreboding for the future.

Not long after, Magnus and his friends realised they were being followed. The stalkers were hardly students, nor from well-to-do families. They also quickly disappeared whenever they found themselves noticed. Wary but unsure of the meaning behind it all, the friends continued their studies. Then, it happened. The band of fanatics attacked Magnus and his companions. The assassins were babbling gibberish, but Magnus clearly heard the name, “Tzeentch.”

Failing to kill the four, the cultists grew frantic. They still weren’t certain which of the young nobles was the one foretold. They also hadn’t realised how formidable these four dandies were with swords. The Rainbow Plume needed more men, but there wasn’t any time. A decision had to be made quickly, the leader of the cultists knew. With his faith in Tzeentch and risking all, the leader pointed to one of the nobles and proclaimed, “he’s the one!” The cultists focussed all their effort on this one young prince and overwhelmed him. The man fell dying on the street while his companions wreaked their revenge on the cultists. Only one or two managed to escape into the night.

Magnus knelt down beside Anton von Liebewitz as von Krieglitz and Haupt-Anderssen made short work of the remaining assassins. All he could do was cradle his friend’s head as Anton bled

to death. “Trust in your dream,” Anton whispered to Magnus, “for you are surely Sigmar’s chosen and great things await you. ”

“Your inspiration and Sigmar’s blessing will see an end to Chaos,” Magnus replied. “In your honour and memory, I dedicate all my life to see that this is done. Sleep now, my friend, and may Mórr protect you on your final journey. ” Anton gave Magnus one last squeeze of his hand before the light in his eyes dimmed forever.

*****End Sidebar*****

Today: the Chaos Wastes become active again

The defeat of Chaos by the Imperial army and its allies was far from decisive. Small bands of Chaos Beastmen and Warriors still roamed the dark forests and mountains. Country nobles hired mercenaries to dispatch these marauders and defend the isolated villages and farmsteads in their lands.

In spite of the occasional regional trouble, the Empire reunited under the firm and just rule of Emperor Magnus the Pious. The provincial Electors recovered their power and prominence, once again bringing stability to politics. In fact, the Empire as a whole entered a new age of prosperity and security that hadn’t been seen in over 1300 years.

This “New Golden Age” has lasted over 200 years, but underneath its lustre lingers the darkness that many hoped had been overcome. Unknown to the broad masses of the Old World realms, the insidious tendrils of Chaos has began to grow again as the Wastes in the north pulsate with renewed energy. Complaisant in their comfy homes, the people are blind to the clues about them. Cults grow again despite the warnings from a few that Chaos remains a threat to all. Even lands untouched by the Second Great Incursion of Chaos are now vulnerable to the Enemy Within.