

## **BACKGROUND - THE INNER REALMS**

The Inner Realms were once thriving, prosperous lands inhabited by the many races. These peoples either lived together in relative harmony or lived in their separate communities which traded with one another. There were occasional disagreements and even small battles, but over the centuries the Realms were largely peaceful.

However, as the villages and towns grew, so did the influence of the guilds. The two most powerful were the Arcane and Holy guilds. One had managed to tame and control the unpredictable, wild arcane magics that imbue the lands; the other used the holy powers granted by the gods themselves. Initially they sought to protect the towns and to improve the lives of the townfolk. However, their influence became stronger until they were effectively running the towns. Yes, there were small governments, mayors and elected officials but in truth, behind the scenes, the guilds were influencing the key political and economic decisions.

The guilds began taxing the townfolk, who were wary of uprising, given the magics that the guilds controlled. Eventually the two guilds became rivals, each seeking to control the towns.

Tension grew between the guild leaders, who were usually human, with rumours of disappearances and assassinations of guild members. It seemed that an all out war was inevitable.

The Arcane Guild started to prepare for war and put much of its gold and treasure in caverns and tunnels for safety. These wizards considered themselves intellectually superior and so often didn't actually 'hide' their treasures in the caverns, choosing instead to keep them in chests, protected by magical devices and puzzles, which lesser peoples and creatures could not disable or solve. It amused the wizards that others would be tempted by their treasures but be unable to get to them.

Eventually the 'Arcane-Holy War' did break-out, which lasted for several years at a great loss to the people of the Inner Realms. Towns were sacked and trade broke down between the remote peoples, leaving most of the lands in ruin.

With the peoples at war creatures and orc hordes started to successfully invade the Inner Realms. The 'greenskin' clans took a foothold in the region now known as the Wildlands. There were also rumours of 'the dead' returning and taking control of the Deadlands.

As the wizards from the Arcane Guild and priests from the Holy Guild battled, the wizards started to lose control of the arcane magics. They were using it too freely, without taking all the necessary precautions to tame it. The magic equilibrium of the Realms became imbalanced and a large rift opened up in the east, known as the Chaotic Canyon. Creatures and demons emerged from the rift, no longer kept at bay by the natural magical equilibrium. This horde quickly took over the eastern region, destroying all the peoples that called it home. Most perished, but some managed to escape west, back to the relative safety of the Homelands.

This new chaotic power would have quickly overpowered the Inner Realms but in an unusual act of pragmatism, the Guilds decided to cease their wars and join forces against this greater enemy.

The 'Chaotic War' was brutal but after several years the Guilds managed to drive the enemy back into the areas around the Chaotic Canyon. The enemy remains there to this day but its incursions to the west are rare, its powers greatly diminished.

After the war the Guilds called a truce - the Realms needed to be rebuilt... together with trust and trade. Several centuries have elapsed and the towns and villages have started to recover. However the peoples now generally live in the Homelands, with the capital city of Merchantia trading with distant lands through its port.



The Realms are largely peaceful now - the peoples have realised the need to keep together to keep the greenskins, chaos and other forces at bay. Common enemies have at least united the peoples. The peoples have never re-inhabited the Wildlands or Deadlands, allowing greenskins and other creatures to make these regions their home. Many of these dwell in the passages and caverns once controlled by the Arcane Guild. The magic that protects the Guild's treasures remains in place, the orcs being too dim-witted to overcome the magical devices and puzzles.

Over recent years there have been only a few incursions by the greenskins into the lands of the peoples. However the Mayor of Dragonholt recently sent a messenger to Merchantia, requesting soldiers or mercenaries to protect his village. Greenskins from the Wildlands have been seen in the region and the villagers are nervous and ill-prepared to fight them.

Merchantia will answer this call, but it could take a while to prepare and equip the soldiers. In the meantime a small party (you, the heroes!) have been tasked to go to the village to investigate and do what you can until the soldiers arrive...



