Musings of a Dreamer

A journey through a strange and dreamlike world



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About this world

This is a world-building project of loosely connected, suggestive and dreamlike short stories and artwork. Inspired by H. P. Lovecraft's *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* and by Lord Dunsany, it is more interested in the strange and eerie than in horror alone.

Its centerpoint is not its characters, but the places and mysterious, unexplained things that inhabit them. If you prefer the mystery to the explanation and the side quests to the main quest, you may feel at home here.

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The First Emperor of Pand

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Before the age of the Great Empires there were a great many independent citystates, smaller duchies and emerging kingdoms scattered across the lands. When the Lord of Lornobal – one of the emerging powers in the north – died at an early age he left behind a young heir who proved to be quite the prodigy at military strategy and political intrigue. It was not long before he managed to subdue and unite the divided nobility of Lornobal, bringing their various personal guards under his own banner. Through military reforms he modernised the Lornobal forces and crafted himself a formidable army. The other great cities in the north – Armuk, Tararag, Hugrond and Adahal – were ill equipped to deal with this new military threat and one after the other they succumbed. Thus the great empire of Pand was born and the five great cities in the north came to form the centre of power in the empire.

Forming the first of the great empires had not quenched his thirst for power and glory. With his mind set on expanding his domain from one end of the world to the other, his army – great chariots pulled by terrifying beasts of war, well armored foot soldiers, cavalry and earth-shattering cannons – was unleashed upon the world.



For many years he campaigned and the empire grew vast. Eventually its borders reached from the rivers of C'cael and Orustan in the east to Tuulqeq steppes in the west, where the reclusive clans of Maôlg made their homesteads. The steppelands were feared and outsiders seldom ventured there. It was rumored that the shamans of the clans were descendants of the strange *Things* that inhabited the world in the ancient past, before the advent of humans.

The emperor was however not dissuaded and wanted the steppes for himself. It was also rumored the clans possessed vast riches and that the land contained large deposits of precious gems and metals.

And so the invasion began. Many legions strong the army seemed unstoppable and morale was high, despite rumors and superstitions among the men, for they had yet to encounter a foe they could not beat.

Reports from the frontline were frequent at first. The forces of Pand pushed into the steppes, crushing any resistance. Spoils and plunder were being sent back to the empire in long trails of caravans. Exquisite lacquerware and various artifacts made from expensive metals. And gold, lots and lots of gold.

A handful of weeks after the conquest began a terrible storm raged across the steppes. Thunder roared and crashed as if the sky would shatter and fall like splinters of glass to the ground. The storm lasted for three full days and nights. After the storm all communications with the emperor's army ceased and

the caravans stopped. Had the imperial army finally been defeated? Had the emperor's soldiers finally met their match in the Maôlg clansmen? Had they been undone by the natural forces of the terrible storm? Among the border guard there was a strong sense that something very sinister had happened to the invading forces but for now, nothing could be done but wait for answers.

Concerns of aggression from the clans grew among the border generals as more troops were rallied to the western edge of the empire in preparation for a possible assault.

Months passed without any news about the emperor's army, nor any activity from the Maôlg clans. Months eventually became years, investigators were regularly sent out into the steppes to find out what had happened to the great army, and the emperor himself. Not so much as a trace was ever uncovered. It was as if they had vanished into thin air, or simply never existed in the first place.

The empire was now in effect governed by the emperor's council and one of his most trusted statesmen had been appointed steward to rule in his place until he returned, or some news surfaced about his fate.

With time fear morphed into a stale feeling of uncomfortable uncertainty and the imperial leadership slowly shifted focus elsewhere and prepared to arrange for a more permanent replacement for the lost emperor who had left behind no heir of his own. Eventually the steward was sworn in as the new emperor.

After nearly a decade they returned. A scattered and ragged band came hobbling across the steppelands, a mere fraction of the invading forces' original numbers. The missing emperor not among them.

Some were severely crippled and maimed, others only lightly injured, but they all shared the same strange bruising on their necks. Marks that looked like symbols in some unknown language, brandished into their flesh as if written with burning ink. Even those with some familiarity with the writings of the Maôlg did not recognize the symbols. An old healer and advisor of the border generals however knew what they were. She identified them as one of the forbidden languages, believed to have been used by the arcane beings of the ancient past. Their meaning unknown to her.

When interrogated the survivors had no recollection of what had happened to them since they set foot on the steppes nearly a decade prior.

Although most of them could be sufficiently rehabilitated to take up normal lives in the empire, none recovered their memories. The marks also remained as an ominous reminder of whatever grim fate the great emperor's army had encountered in those cursed steppes.

The empire maintain its border in the west but no emperor since has attempted any further expansion westward. No retaliation from the steppefolk ever came. What became of the emperor remains unknown to this day, even his name curiously forgotten. He is known simply as The First Emperor of the Great Empire of Pand and has become a cautionary tale of the dangers of the outer lands, and the

mysterious *Things* that may still dwell there.

Trade and other exchanges with the people of the Tuulqeq are limited and these days only the most foolish and stubborn of explorers and adventurers ever venture into those treacherous lands. Few are ever seen again.



Yibbeth

Read the original post on Zonuvak's blog

In the furthest east of the known world lie the Webland. The scavenger lords of Jahiir'Lalaga'Haarr (*"the empire of the Jahiir people"*) hunt the great spiders that live here. Their chitin are used to make armaments and their silk glands are known to fetch an impressive price among the giant tribes in the south where they are regarded as delicacy. Even the spiders' meat is preserved and is used as a staple in Jahiir households.

The Webland is the realm of great, ancient Yibbeth. It is home to countless spiders, but even the most gargantuan are easily dwarfed by her. She is believed to be one of the immortal beings who hold the world together, possibly the biggest and most ancient of them all. Perhaps she was shaped in some primordial ooze at the very beginning of time. Perhaps she is even older still.

In the depths of the Webland sits her throne. Perched on a massive pillar of stone she keeps watch over her domain, her web stretching beyond the horizon in every direction. Little to nothing is known about what lies beyond her lair. What creatures might exist there remains also unknown, but it is believed there must be other things of similarly frightening size in this mysterious wilderness, for something must provide Yibbeth nourishment.



The Birds of Roslapec

Read the original post on Zonuvak's blog

Life is tranquil and modest in the valley of Roslapec. Located right between the great empires in the west, yet we have seen little war and conflict and are seldom forced into the political games of the rivalling empires.

In early spring they come. Ethereal, otherworldly birds with the most wonderful song. Hearing them sing fills one with a strong sense of serenity and peace that lasts for many days. They are somewhat larger than any of the birds endemic to the area and project such elegance and majesty. Where they come from no one knows, nor why they choose to roost here in Roslapec.

We Roslapecians are known for our health and longevity, typically living to be nearly twice the age of an average man from anywhere else. It has been suggested by mystics and scholars that there must be a reason for and connection between our peace, our good health and the birds, but what this connection could be remains unknown.

Perhaps the most extraordinary quality of the birds is their plumage. I see a lovely, bright green with a violet hue. My brother however swears they are a yellowy orange and our sister looks at us like we are colorblind. "Obviously they are a blueish brown" she says. No two men exist who see the same colors when they look upon the birds of Roslapec.

By late spring their young hatch. They grow unnaturally fast and learn to fly within a few hours already. A few days later they are indistinguishable from the adults. All summer they make their home here in Roslapec.

Come autumn one day they will sing a different song, signalling their imminent departure. Never have I met someone who knows where or have seen them anywhere but here. For only a day they sing this song and unlike their normal song, anyone who hears it is overcome with an uneasy feeling. They leave that same night, all at once. We have learned to stay indoors when they do, for anyone who is caught outside is never seen again.



The Watchers in the clouds

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Once every one hundred years or so, a peculiar wind blows through the great empires, covering the skies in large, heavy clouds. Perceived widely as an omen of strange things to come, most folk make offerings at their local temples or huddle up inside their homes to avoid misfortune. Those who venture outside might, if they look up, catch a glimpse of large rocks with eerie obelisk towers on top, floating among the clouds. They are known to the peoples of the empires as the Watchers in the clouds and stories of them are known from before the time of the great empires. The towers are believed thus to be very old, their origin and purpose long lost to time.

