

Basium and the Boiling Sea

At the end of the Age of Rebirth the demon plagued lands of the Fane of Lessers were conquered and the Throne of Hell destroyed. Not content to just cleanse creation, the archangel Basium led his angelic army into hell to continue his war.

Decades passed and in that time the Bannor used the Crucible to weaken the world's magic. Powerful artifacts of past ages became dusty relics, and those with the talent to be mages in prior ages were rarely able to manifest their power. The Age of Invention had started.

During this age three new goddesses appeared on creation, they were known as the Matronae. Morrigan was the goddess of fate and a great white temple was built to her on the cliffs of the Elohim city of Niveus. From Niveus came the gas Effluvium, which powered city lamp posts and caused divine visions (and would also be used by the Kuriotates to build airships). Sarabride was the goddess of vengeance and her temple was a great foundry built in the reclaimed city of Braduk the Burning. From her city came all sorts of wonders including coal powered trains. The citizens of Braduk built rail systems to connect the major cities of men. The last was Clidna, the goddess of dreams, and her temple was built on the docks of the Bay of Laurus. From her temple came great steam powered ships that opened up travel to the distant shores of creation.

All three goddesses were active in creation and their religions grew quickly. The religions of ages past, of distant gods who might answer occasional prayers were forgotten, or destroyed by the followers of the Matronae. What use is myth when gods walk among us?

While this was happening Basium's angelic army battled through hell. They fought their way down the frozen slopes of the Throne of Hell, they waged war with frost giants, aquilan and the nive. They pushed through the draining swamps at the mountain's base and past the

demonic locusts and the strange things that live beneath those dark pools. They laid siege to the iron city of Dis. Eventually they broke through the walls and Basium called to the citizens.

“You are born of the gods. Do not sacrifice this for trivial rewards. Your immortal soul is worth more than safety, pleasure or power.”

And though most cowered before the archangel, some cast aside their fear and joined him.

Then Basium destroyed the Balor's that guarded the gate at the heart of the iron city. He trapped their souls in his great maul and walked through into the Bloodfield, and his army followed.

Basium's army fought for years in the Bloodfield. And though they were tempted, none of them betrayed him. Yet one by one they died, torn apart by the Tormentors, the Umbral Horrors, the Pit Beasts and the Hell Wyrms. And this was Agares's plan. To draw Basium into hell, where no god could help him. Where he would be beaten, trapped and corrupted.

Eventually Basium stood alone against the demonic hordes of the Bloodfield, countless demons trapped within his maul, his arms straining with the weight of it. It was then that the unholy god Camulos appeared.

Camulos was a mountain of flesh, a creature with parts of a gorilla, snake and vulture. He had a hundred arms and screaming mouths scattered over his giant body. Their locations constantly changed as his flesh twisted, split and reformed. Hundreds of eyes covered him, those of animals and others never seen in creation. Barbed chains wrapped around his body and cut deeply into his skin, causing rivers of blood to pour from him and leaving his skin slick and red as if the spilled blood from every battle on Erebus flowed through him. As hideous as the demonic hordes were, they were nothing but dim reflections of the madness of the dark god of rage and war.

All of Camulos's mouths roared and his roars were echoed by demons across the Bloodfield. He towered over the archangel, and without warning Camulos attacked.

Basium could do little against the fury of a god. Basium was grabbed and pulled, beaten and slammed into the ground. Camulous beat him until Basium's chest collapsed, until his arms broke and his hips were crushed. All while a growing swarm of demons howled in triumph, and bit and tore at the battered archangel.

Until a ring of golden fire sprung up around the broken Basium. Fire so hot it burnt demonic flesh. And even Camulous paused in his attack.

A great rumble was heard across the Bloodfield. The ground shook and everything stopped. A great wave, so large that it dwarfed even the mountainous god, rolled across the Bloodfield, and it crashed down on them. Demons were scattered like dried leaves before the storm, many falling into the pits and ravines of the Bloodfield. Only Basium was unaffected as the golden fire turned all the water that struck it to steam. Camulous was knocked back, shocked and surprised as three masked goddesses flew overhead.

Clidna summoned up the water again and a dozen long tendrils of water stretched out from her, each with a dragon-like face on the end. Together they bit and tore apart any demons that came close. Sarabride floated over the Bloodfield, glowing like a new sun, and cast down javelins of golden fire that destroyed demons and caused the new sea to boil.

Morrigan landed over the broken Basium. She glared up at the raging god of war.

"Come at me." Morrigan said. "And I will show you that even gods die."

Camulous charged and Morrigan raised her hand, a stone so black it looked like a hole in creation was set in her palm. Out of it came a beam that consumed all it touched. Even the air of hell was destroyed by the beam. As the air was consumed more air rushed in and was

destroyed as well, creating a screeching that grew louder as ebon tendrils and arcs twisted out from the beam.

The beam struck the shoulder of the charging god. Any part the beam touched was simply gone. Not rotted, not burnt, not stabbed but unmade as simply as a candle being put out.

And Camulous fled.

As shocked as the demons were by the mountain sized tidal wave and the appearance of the three goddesses. The sight of Camulous running from battle shocked them even more. Across the Bloodfield demons crawling out of the flooded pits or even those on fire stopped to watch as Camulous disappeared.

Sarabride and Cliodna landed by where Morrigan stood over Basium.

“We have to go.” Cliodna warned.

“We could go deeper.” Sarabride said. But the comment only received disapproving glances from the other two.

Morrigan reached down to pick up Basium.

“Who are you?” Basium asked, though his crushed chest made the words difficult.

“Calm yourself my brother.” Morrigan whispered. “I have you.”

And together the goddesses flew up and out of hell with Basium in their arms.

Epilogue

Gosea the Dwindling wandered through the wastes of hell. Once a withdrawn and abused girl in a Sheamic asylum, the voices had drawn her out. They had been the first ones to talk to her, to comfort her and to possess her. They transformed her from a quiet, terrified girl to

a fearless summoner and mage. Until a battle on the streets of Bourne the Gleaming forced her to sacrifice those voices, to become once again timid and afraid. To be captured and executed for her crimes.

Which brought her here, to the endless torments of hell. To be hunted and tortured until all mercy was lost, not that Gosea had much to give.

Until a battle waged on the Bloodfield unlike any the eternal battleground had ever seen. In the wake of that battle the Bloodfield was eerily calm. Water still filled the fissures, the sun that briefly lit up the world was gone, blackened earth and burnt demonic corpses lay scattered about. The blood soaked ground showed where Camulos once stood.

It was almost perfectly quiet. Almost.

Gosea could hear whispering voices, so faint she thought it might just be the memories of the voices from the asylum.

Following them led her slowly through the battlefield. Past the remains of Basium's angelic army, past a shattered gore fiend, to a place where a perfect circle was burnt in the ground.

But the voices weren't from the circle, but a short way off. From a small dip between the rough terrain that was still filled with water.

Gosea waded into the pool. It was dark and muddy with the overturned earth. The water came nearly to her waist and she reached in, feeling rocks and the slick corpses of destroyed demons. But she reached beneath and felt something cool and hard, and in the instant she touched it, the voices flooded her mind with strength, purpose and power.

She lifted the Angelorum Cavea, the great maul of Basium, out of the pool. She could feel the tens of thousands of demons trapped within the weapon. Centuries of demons defeated

by Basium. Creatures from the Godswar, armies defeated right here in hell, all held within the
rune inscribed weapon. And all available for her to channel.