
Late Start Studio

Hero6
Background Story Document

Setting:

The remote Valley of Albion is a somewhat recently settled area of the world - settled by humans that is. Deep in the forest and hills of this valley lie a far older settlement - Underhill. Underhill is a city of the Sidhe, a race originating from the magical realm known as Otherworld. While humans have resided in the Valley for nearly a century, the Sidhe have tended the Valley for several millennia. It is rumored that Underhill itself exists in Otherworld and not the mortal world. The entrance to the city is a closely guarded secret as it divides the two worlds.

The Remen empire was the first human nation known to have settled in the Valley of Albion. As the Remen empire expanded, it established outposts in fertile Valleys and rich mountains and harvested them for food and gold. Albion Valley was a farming outpost. The Remens built a fort and protected the Remen citizens from the dangers of frontier living, like attacks from the Formori - a race of giant Sidhe. When the Remen empire fell out of power, the Remen troops at the fort no longer received reinforcements. Many of the Remen soldiers either died off in Formori attacks or returned to their homelands. Those that remained joined forces with the Giants, mutant descendants of the Formori who wanted to break away from their ancestors control. The Formori eventually overcame the remaining Remen forces before they too disappeared from the Valley, but the Giants still roam the Valley today.

The primary settlement adopted the same name as the valley, Albion. Protected by the Duke and his men, this town lies on the edge of the untamed wilderness. The Duke's Keep was built atop the ruins of the old Remen fort. The hills and forest surrounding Albion are rife with wild magics, monsters, and legendary creatures.

As an aspiring adventurer, leaving your homeland and family behind, you travel to the distant village. Will you find the adventure you seek? And more importantly, will you survive the adventures you find?

Background:

40 years ago in a chance encounter in the forest, a Sidhe woman, Eloia, met the human Duke of the valley, Aruthredd. Despite the distrust and fear their races held toward each other, they fell in love. They continued to meet, but only secret. Duke Aruthredd was already married to Perth, an arranged marriage of political motivation. Eloia was unmarried, but was promised to another Sidhe in a similarly arranged marriage. Her betrothed was Anlimisar, a powerful master of the arcane.

One day, the two were discovered by a servant of Anlimisar who had followed Eloia to her meeting place with Aruthredd deep in the forest. Despite his rage at the betrayal, Anlimisar did not expose them. Instead, he became obsessed with vengeance and sought to punish Eloia and the humans who had “infested” the valley. Using his vast hoard of treasure and magical power, he summoned monsters and rogues to terrorize the valley, making it unsafe for all but the strongest and boldest of Human and Sidhe alike. Under Anlimisar’s direction, human rogues attacked innocent Sidhe while monsters attacked innocent humans. His plan festered an already unsteady balance between the Human and Sidhe of the valley. Hostilities were growing and it would not be long before an all-out war between the Humans and the Sidhe.

Falling prey to the influence of the mortal world, Anlimisar’s vengeance corrupted his mind and his magic. He became obsessed with punishing Eloia. His desire to regain her affections became a matter of conquest instead of love. His hatred of Aruthredd and all humans festered within his heart.

As conflict started to break out in the Valley between the Human and the Sidhe, Eloia and Aruthredd had more difficulty meeting in secret. Fortunately, their love was strong and several times they found themselves fighting back-to-back against the forces of Anlimisar. Anlimisar made a point of besetting his forces upon them when they met in secret. When Eloia discovered that she was pregnant with the Duke’s child, she had no choice but to hide it from the other Sidhe. Human-Sidhe relations were too hostile for any of her own kind to understand the love she held for Aruthredd.

Conflict escalated to all-out war and, at the same time, Eloia was no longer able to hide her pregnancy. She fled Underhill and sought refuge with the Duke. The Duke and his wife hid her in the Keep and bid their servants to care for Eloia as they would for him. While the Duke was fighting his war along the hillsides of Albion, Eloia gave birth to a son. Holding their newborn son, she surveyed the Valley from the castle window. Pillars of smoke rose from the treeline like the skeletal hand of death closing around the valley. She felt responsible as it was her love that drove Anlimisar to this madness. She resolved to stop the conflict and end any further casualties. She would save her love, Aruthredd, and preserve the Valley she loved for their son. She left the small babe in the charge of Perth, wife of Aruthredd, and departed to turn herself over to Anlimisar.

In the panic and desperation of the conflict, Anlimisar beguiled the Sidhe to allow him access to the Lifestone. The powerful magic contained in the Lifestone was the source of the Sidhe power in the mortal realm. Anlimisar sought to unleash this Ether from Otherworld in an attack on the human forces - a plan that any sane magic user would have known could destroy the

entire Valley, and possibly sunder a rift in the mortal dimension itself, leaving it defenseless against forces darker and far more evil than Anlimisar could ever become.

Meanwhile, Duke Aruthredd amassed his forces of able-bodied men and women in a final press on the Sidhe stronghold, Underhill. He encounters the Sidhe forces on the hillside. Without Anlimisar present to lead and strengthen the Sidhe with his magic, the Sidhe forces are driven back into Underhill. The victory was not without cost, as many human lives were extinguished in the horrific battle. Wounded and battle weary, Aruthredd set off in search of Anlimisar to end the source of this conflict.

During the Battle of Overhill, Shadow Mages lead Eloia to a small glade where their master prepared to unleash the power of the Lifestone on Aruthredd and the human forces. Anlimisar laughs maniacally at his good fortune - his ultimate victory is close-at-hand. Eloia plead with Anlimisar to spare the humans in exchange for her hand in marriage. He agrees and makes her swear loyalty in the form of a kiss. She reluctantly agrees as a Sidhe may not break an oath sworn thrice by word, by touch, or by blood.

At the moment of the kiss, Aruthredd appears in the glade. In a fit of passion, Aruthredd attacks the evil wizard. He is no match for Anlimisar's magical prowess, especially given their proximity to the Lifestone. Magical lightning tears through Aruthredd's body and he collapses in defeat. As a Sidhe, Eloia is not so helpless against the power of the Lifestone. She takes advantage of the distraction and stabs Anlimisar with her dagger, inflicting a mortal blow. Anlimisar screams a word of power and the Lifestone cracks unleashing raw power into the dark mage. His body, pulsating with energy, begins to levitate off the ground. Anlimisar continues his maniacal laughing when suddenly Aruthredd leaps onto his back! Anlimisar continues to cackle as Aruthredd attempts to choke him to death.

The leader of the Sidhe arrives and witnesses these last few moments. He too speaks a word of power and the crack in the Lifestone repairs itself. The beam of energy from the crystal stops and Anlimisar screams as he and Aruthredd explode in a burst of blinding light.

The lord of the Sidhe turned to Eloia, who sobs in a kneeling position. She looks up for a moment and says, "The madness is over. I'll face my punishment gladly for betraying my sworn oath to his insanity. My only regret is never seeing our child grow into a man." She begins sobbing again and slowly turns to stone.

After the conflict, the Sidhe restricted themselves to Underhill and remained clear from the Human settlers, whose numbers slowly increased with new arrivals. The Duke's wife, Perth, raised the Duke's son and even named him, Thorn, as a gesture of respect for the love her

husband had for Eloia. For the name Perth is also the name of thorny overgrowth that grows in the shadowy parts of her homeland and she would treat the boy as if he was her own.

Perth and Aruthredd did not love each other. They had an arranged marriage, but, as rulers, they respected each others private lives. Aruthredd had always shown Perth the respect of keeping his dalliances away from the prying eyes of gossips. As such, Perth would respectfully raise his son as if he was their biological heir. Perth ruled until Thorn reached his 16th birthday. She did not tell Thorn of his Sidhe heritage, but the Duke Thorn does know that Perth is not his birth mother. As regent of the Valley, his responsibilities take priority over his personal interest regarding his heritage.

Perth eventually retired to her homeland along with her private servants and, scandalously, the town's baker.

Thorn's reign over the Valley seems almost peaceful, but monsters and rogues still wander the valley and wandering doomsayers claim a great evil is returning to the land of Albion.

Recently, an increase in both monsters and rogues roaming the valley has the townsfolk fearful of a return to the old days of conflict. Many assume the Sidhe are responsible, while others blame the recent arrival of a wizard, Marvin. Marvin constructed his wizard's tower on a steep rocky hill overlooking the ruins of the Overhill battleground. As the player will discover, the increase of evil forces is actually Anlimisar slowly regaining power. Although trapped in a neighboring dimension, he has managed to corrupt Marvin, who is young and naïve despite his considerable magic abilities.

Marvin moved to the valley because he was attracted by the fantastic Sidhe and their magical abilities. Research in attuning his magic to Sidhe magic has, unknowingly, made him susceptible to the corruption of Anlimisar. The feral magics that resulted in the destruction of Anlimisar were born of pure Sidhe magic. The player will discover that the Lifestone magic did not actually consume the mad mage, but transported him to a neighboring dimension of Sidhe magic. When Marvin attuned himself to that dimension of magic, Anlimisar was able to influence the young wizard. Anlimisar gains more dominion over Marvin as the wizard continues to wield Sidhe magic. As the player begins the game, Anlimisar is already able to control Marvin's body while he sleeps. Using Marvin's power and wealth, Anlimisar has begun summoning monsters and rogues to the Valley so he can continue exacting his revenge upon humans and the mortal world. Marvin is unaware of this fact, but knows something is amiss. He suffers from a lack of sleep and has an increasing fear of the outside world.

In Albion, a call for heroes is sent out to aid the Duke and his men in reclaiming the Valley from the growing threat of monsters, rogues, and Sidhe. As part of this effort, Duke Thorn Custennin organizes a scouting party to search for the source of the problem. The Duke and his men are ambushed by a pack of shadow mages, creatures born from the twisted power of Anlimisar. When the Duke is wounded by one of the creatures, the men provide cover for his escape. Unknown to his men, the Duke seeks shelter in some nearby caves. Only one guard survives the attack and returns to Albion, Roderick. Roderick is only slightly wounded, but bittered. He spends his nights at the inn now, attempting to drown out the memory with drink. He knows little about the fate of the Duke, and carries a burden of guilt that he was the lone survivor. It'll have been several days since the Duke and his men were lost when the player arrives. People fear the Duke and the rest of his guards are dead. The Duke's daughter, Colleen, rules in his place while he is missing.