

Translator's note: This is the oldest version of the classic tale that has yet been found. It probably spent generations as a work of oral tradition, and this version retains traces of this; the quotes between the paragraphs were likely meant to be spoken as a chorus by everyone listening. Footnotes indicate particularly unusual translations.

The Story of the Three Brothers and Father Wolf

Long ago, the brothers three returned to their sounder from Jotunheim¹. They were all three clever boars, and in their travels they had learned the way of Shapes. Each carried the Essence of mankind with him, and shared it with the sounder. With the hands they brought home, they made homes of brick. With the feet they wore, they ploughed fields and raised crops, ensuring that the sows and the piglets were protected. They did all this, and the sounder thrived. They grew proud, and said,

“The shape of man has brought us power in the Wild². We are the greatest of beasts.”

Father Wolf was wise among his kind. One day he came upon the village and marveled at what the pigs had wrought. He went to the brothers and asked,

“Teach me the way of Shapes, that I might join your village and live inside your walls, where my cubs can be safe.”

The brothers scorned Father Wolf and cursed him, using their hands to throw rocks at him. He fled into the forest, and they told themselves that they had been wise and strong, and reminded themselves that wolves had eaten their people since ages long past. They said again and again,

“He would have turned on us. The wolf is no brother to the pig.”

They had mistaken suspicion for wisdom, and their pride became too great. One night, a djinn³ came from the realms beyond, found the youngest brother outside the walls and tempted him with a wish. The youngest brother thought himself clever, and though his brothers counseled him against it, he returned to the djinn, believing he could best the djinn and gain honor for himself, as he had always felt that his brothers were greater than him. He wished to be honored above all others in his presence, so the djinn took him and made him the centerpiece of a grand feast. His brothers cried to know that he was gone, and said,

“We do not trust the Djinn. The people of Mhaian do not care for beasts.”

They built high their walls of wood and drew their gates closed, and looked with suspicion on all who approached. But one day, a mighty guest came. A powerful god had come from the realms beyond and knocked on the gates. He demanded food and shelter, for he was on a journey. The oldest brother, fearful, declared him unwelcome, and ordered him to leave; the god responded by calling down lightning and slaying the oldest brother where he stood. The middle brother cried, for the safety of the sounder had fallen to him, and he was but one boar against the forces of many worlds. He said,

“My brothers were my strength. I cannot stand alone.”

¹ Lit. ‘strands of the Giants’

² Lit. ‘land through which the essences flow’ - a crude but effective distinction from the other realms.

³ ‘One who offers power’ with strong connotations of ‘liar’

But stand he did, for many years, until the day he returned from foraging to find his walls burned, his home torn open. The ferals⁴ had come in force and slain his sows, and taken his piglets to be their fodder. Though he could track them, they knew the ways of fighting boar, and he and his hunters could not triumph against them. But he remembered one that the feral men feared, and sought him out in desperation.

“Father Wolf. I was wrong to insult you, and it cost me my brothers. Please, hear my cry, forgive me, and save my children.”

Father Wolf came with his pack, and they stalked the ferals while the middle brother taught them the way of Shapes, sharing with them the rest of the essence that he carried. They taught him and his boars their ways, and at night, they attacked the ferals, stalking them through the tall grass. At the end of the battle, Father Wolf had fallen, and the middle brother was grievously wounded; he knew he would not walk again, even in the form of a man. He had learned the wisdom of Father Wolf, but feared that his son would not honor their agreement. On his cot, he talked to Father Wolf’s son, the new leader of the pack. He said,

“My children will be your slaves if you will protect us and not eat us.”

But Brother Wolf was as wise as his father had been. He shook his head and said,

“Wolves do not need slaves, only brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers. Wolves only need pack. To need slaves is to be less than wolf; we wish to be more. We will live by your laws and you will live by ours. You will teach us the Shapes of men, who can eat bread and fruit, and do not have to kill for food, and we will no longer be forced to prey upon Beasts. We will find other Beasts and teach them the Shapes of men, and bring them to the village to live by our laws. And when we are strong, you will teach us to go realms beyond, and we will hunt for game that does not speak.”

And the middle brother wept, both for his own old folly and for the wisdom of Brother Wolf. And Brother Wolf fulfilled his promises, and the Beasts grew strong, and the middle brother lived long enough to teach three generations the way of Shapes.

The story varies from location to location, but nearly every Beast was taught a version in the crib, burrow, or, in my case, nest. The brothers three are usually depicted as pigs, but have been known as hares, raccoons, squirrels – even badgers, in some northern areas. Father Wolf, however, has always been Father Wolf; it is hard to depict him as anything other than the grand protector of legend. The Story of the Three Brothers and Father Wolf has such reach, it has even been rumored to have found a way to the realm of Men, although no copies from there have found their way back.

*** Edit line. After this hasn’t been reviewed and may be choppy, messy, or non-canon.

⁴ ‘Men of twisted essence’

An historical analysis of the fall of Olympus

Year of Odinsreign 1464

Fifteen hundred years ago, the grand empire of Olympus ruled the known world. It had endured for over two thousand years, rose from the ashes of Jotunheim, weathered war with Mhian and the Wild, and stretched its influence as far as the realm of mortals. Now all that remains are legends and cursed ruins – along with a very slim amount of primary sources.

First we must determine the day that it fell. Traditionally that is accepted as the first year of Odinsreign, but I argue that it should properly be dated approximately twenty years earlier.

Most records of the War were lost when Olympus fell. What we know for certain from our allies in the Wild can only tell us one half of the story. My cousins Geri and Freki, trusted advisors who sit at the sides of my grandfather's throne, were able to retrieve their people's records. We can concretely state that, in the year 34 before Odinsreign, High King Apollo sued the Wild for peace and requested aid for an expedition to the newly-discovered Realm of Dis. He received only the former, as trust was in short supply. Critically, though, twenty of the horses on the expedition were in fact spies for the Wild. Their reports – unknown in Asgard until now – shed significant light on events.

The first expeditions to Dis met with the pattern that has held throughout the centuries; all explorers who return report that Dis is hostile, but that they encountered no organized assaults. While the water was foul and occupied by Selkies and worse, while half of the biting insects were in fact already dead before they stung and the dead of any sort would rise in foul mockery, it was nothing that brave warriors with firm leadership couldn't handle. At the outset, probes into the newly-located realm had a greater than eighty per hundred success rate.

It would be folly to assume that the losses to come were due to any incompetence on the part of the expedition commander, Aureum II, first cousin of Apollo. Reports from the equine agents indicate that he maintained good levels of discipline and morale as he led the Second, Fifth, Eighth and Fifteenth Legions into Dis. From them, the lords of the Wild eventually received the only credible accounts of what happens to expeditions that enter Dis deeply enough that their retreat can be cut off.

The agents who survived to report back were members of the Second Legion, as during the third night in Dis, strange and unsettling noises were heard. Neither the Eighth Legion nor any of the Second's scouts who had investigated were anywhere to be found in the morning. Aureum II had been camped with the Eighth and the Second's commander, Ogyges, found himself in charge of the expedition.

It was his admittedly reasonable decision to spend the fourth day in Dis seeking the remains of the Eighth Legion in order to gather information. He camped the Second in place and sent the Fifth and Fifteenth to search, as there is no way for five thousand men to disappear without leaving some evidence of their passage. None of the surviving agents learned of his conclusions, but one of them witnessed elements of the Fifteenth straggling into camp. Reports indicate an army of the dead, captained by an oversized, skinless centaur. Whether this was the infamous Nacklavee itself or another of its kind cannot be determined, but it is the first account of any surviving encounter with the creature.

Ogyges, having lost the bulk of his forces and his superior officer to an enemy he did not even see, made the prudent decision and attempted to open a portal back home. It was then that they discovered that most pernicious magic of Dis – that when the monsters wish it, intruders may only exit Dis through the same point that they entered. Ogyges called for an ordered retreat and was met immediately by the creatures we now call Nidhoggr and Leviathan. Under the assault of at least three Princes of Dis, the fleeing Legion lost all semblance of organization, and the mounted cavalry abandoned the infantry at full retreat – which is probably what saved the equine spies, as a horse moving at speed can travel in an hour the distance that an army can traverse in three days.

The creatures of Dis gave chase. While at the start, over a hundred cavalry had left the Second Legion, only twenty came within sight of the gate home. Only two riders reached the gate; both of them were undead by the time they slipped through. Eight horses escaped, however; it is probable that none of them would have had the inhabitants of Dis realized that they were capable of speech.

From there, there was consternation throughout Olympus, as Apollo attempted to suppress news of the loss of over twenty thousand warriors. The entire empire was on edge. Worse, the unliving riders who had made it home were not contained successfully and a blight of undeath began to spread across the land. This blight was subsequently stomped out by the combined efforts of the First and Third Legions but the damage had been done. Olympus was on the verge of open revolt, and the Legions were poised to lead it.

Then the impossible happened. Aureus II and the Second Legion returned from Dis, a month after they had entered. They were battle-scarred and close-mouthed, but they lived. At least, they appeared to.

Apollo gave them the welcome of heroes – a full Triumph on their arrival. Likely the High King believed that the people needed a celebration to knit their society back together; he had no idea what was to happen.

On the steps of Olympus, in full view of the public, Aureus II embraced Apollo and dissolved into a mass of worms. Only his head and his arms, visible outside of his armor, were spared; the rest had been consumed by the familiar Hades' Bane parasites. The rest of the Second Legion, in the sway of the corruption of Dis, began its infamous rampage across the mountain. Where the members of the Second fell, foul plants and vile creatures rose from the rot inside their bodies.

It is possibly a miracle that the Legions' commanders managed to rally and reclaim Olympus at all. With the line of Apollo extinguished, once the immediately apparent corruption had been dealt with, the throne of Olympus was the subject of an intense civil war between the many bastards of Zeus and the lines of his brothers. Within ten years, the Legions had been reduced to a grim shadow of their former numbers.

At the time, historians blamed the civil war for the dissolution of the Olympian empire, cursing whichever claimants to the throne they considered unworthy, but it is entirely possible that the intruding flora of Dis may have had more to do with the fall than they could have suspected at the time. Explorations of Olympus have found that ragweed is now so common as to be ubiquitous; the effects of its pollen are well-documented and likely contributed to the hostilities.

Ultimately, the line of Zeus gave way to the Pretendship of Jupiter. Jupiter's strategy of associating his line with the old High King failed spectacularly, as his attempts to rewrite the old myths fooled nearly nobody. The few remaining allies left to Olympus, the Heroes of the Mortal realm, took it as the final insult to their intelligence and left – except the one that Jupiter really wished would leave. Persephone's Harrowing is well-documented elsewhere and served as the final tribulation of Olympian rule.

As an Imperial Prince of Asgard, the lesson I can draw from this is simple. No matter how long a stick I find, don't use it to poke Dis.

This concludes my essay. Don't even think of saying I cheated by using my family's connections, you crotchety bastard.

Signed,

Imperial Prince Fenrir Lokisen, First of the Name, Heir Secondary of the Odinate Throne

The Book of Dis

Chapter 1

On the first day He created the light

It caught Our attention

On the second day He made water and sky

And some of Us claimed the sky

And some of Us claimed the water

On the third day He made land, and the food that grows in it

And some of Us slithered onto the land and made it Ours

On the fourth day He made the light hate Us

For He had realized We were there

And He had not made Us

But only some of Us hated the light

Some of us learned to embrace it

On the fifth day He made food

On the sixth day He made food

On the seventh day He rested

That is when We found Him

He did not see Us coming

We were Hungry

We are ALWAYS Hungry

On the seventh day He was food

Found in the cleansing of the chapel at Felstaag after the city was overrun by the spawn of Dis. Author unknown.

The Writ of Brenn

Once upon a time, there was a warrior. His name was Brenn, and he was one of the elves of the high places, but he ventured into all the lands.

Brenn was a great warrior, and had had many adventures. He was known throughout the land for his wisdom, his skill, and his power. After the passing of the Djinn, he would grant wishes to the mortals, and sometimes he was so munificent, he would give them even more than they asked for.

Brenn felt a need to settle down for a time. So he sought out the great Faerie Courts of the north. It was there that he met the Queen, Mab, whose sign was the lake, and fell in love with her. He went to her by the moonlight (for the moon was his most powerful sign) and offered her his love, but she spurned him.

“Only one who has done three tasks for me may sit at my right hand,” she said. “For things must always happen in threes.”

“I am Brenn; there is no greater. Name the tasks, and I shall go and do them.”

"I must have the secrets of the giants," she said, for she had made war with them since before the fall of Jotunheim, and their powers, though not greater than those of the elves, were beyond her understanding.

"By the moon, it will be done," said Brenn, and he went forth into the wilds. But his confidence was a lie, for he had fought the giants as well, and knew how well they kept their secrets.

But Brenn was crafty and persistent, and found his answer elsewhere; for although Jotunheim is fallen and little remains to be learned there, others have brought home their secrets. In Odin's realm he sought out the skull of Ymir, and marveled at the roads that led into it. When he entered the skull, he found that it contained a world as large as his own home within – which the Aesir called Midgard.

Through many years of work, he sought out the pieces of Ymir that could be found within. With great care, he took scrapings of the skull's interior, which was the sky of the strange world. With great persistence, he sought out the things others had forgotten; the bones of the giant's ears. Though it took him years, he brought them to his love and laid them at her feet, for he had discovered the secret: the power of giants rests not in their muscles, but in their bones.

"There must be a second thing," Mab told him. "It is the way of things."

"And so name your task; it will be my honor to perform it."

"While you were gone, a mortal wizard forced his powers on me. He forced me to make an enchanted sword and scabbard, and much of the power of Faerie rests in them now. I would have them returned."

And Brenn swore that it would happen. He made his way into the mortal realm with great difficulty, as the accursed Patrick had closed the last gate between the mortal realm and Faerie, only to find that the wizard's watch was impeccable. The wizard had not chosen to wield the blade himself, but to gift it to his lackey, though, and Brenn saw his opening. While he could work no enchantment on the wielder of the blade, nor injure him while he wore the scabbard, he enchanted the mortal's kin, causing the lackey's sister and nephew to conspire against him, then breaking the faith of the mortal's friends, all without ever being caught. When the dust settled, the lackey was left on the battlefield, alive only for the magic of the scabbard. Brenn took him to Mab's court, where he was sealed in amber, alive but sleeping, as an example to impudent mortals.

He delivered the sword and scabbard to his love, who wept at his cunning and persistence.

"Brenn, there must be a third thing. The world demands it," she said.

“Ask. There is nothing too great,” he said.

“Swear a mystical oath, to love and serve me until the end of your life,” she said.

In a heartbeat, he had done so, and soon they were wed. As her consort and champion, Brenn had the right to the title Au, which he wore with pride and joy.

For centuries, Au Brenn ruled with Mab, and Faerie flourished. It was thought a golden age, and mortals learned that elves were better than the Djinn had ever been. Many mortals were brought to live in the Faerie court, where they learned to be proper servants and accorded Au Brenn the respect that he was due.

But one of the mortals rebelled, and before the high court, insulted Queen Mab. Au Brenn chose to strike down the whelp, whose name was Tam Lin, but decided not to provide him with a quick death. Au Brenn dueled with the mortal there before the court, but as the challenger had to allow the mortal to choose his weapon.

Tam Lin chose the same sword that Au Brenn had rescued from the mortal realm, and with it, the scabbard. Au Brenn knew that he had been betrayed, for only he and Mab knew of the sword's existence – but he could not refuse, for his wife called upon his oath and ordered him to face the mortal in a fair fight.

Au Brenn died that day at the hands of Tam Lin, who took his place at Mab's side. There were many challengers to Tam Lin's right as Queen's Champion, and Tam Lin fought duels nearly every week. But so long as he wielded Mab's sword, he could not be defeated – and with every challenger he defeated, he gained in power. After a century and a half, the challengers stopped coming, for although they acknowledged that paying fealty to a mortal was a disgrace, they knew they could not defeat him.

Mab, the treacherous, reveled in her Champion's abilities, and sought out the rare and powerful creatures of Faerie to place in the arena with Tam Lin. One by one, he gained the power and durability of rock trolls, the enchantments of hags, the dread stealth of the Knockers. It is even said that Mab found one of the last of the free Djinn and had Tam Lin execute it, betraying our heritage to the mortal.

But death could not hold Au Brenn forever. He came back, to wreak justice upon Tam Lin. Though he lived again, he felt the grip of mortality on his body, for he had to defeat his killer to regain what had been stolen. He had one advantage: He knew exactly what the enchantments on Mab's sword and scabbard were, in a way that the mortal wretch could not understand.

He chose his time carefully, learning when and where Tam Lin would be traveling. When he knew what he needed, he headed the thief off at a bridge, armored and disguised himself, and claimed the bridge, declaring that none could pass without fighting him.

Tam Lin had grown lazy, knowing that while he wielded the sword and scabbard, he could not be struck by a blade, nor would he bleed. He feared nothing, and laughed at the challenge. They clashed on the bridge, and Au Brenn learned something: when he was near the thief, he could use his magic, but neither could use their power against the other.

It mattered little, in the end; Au Brenn followed through with his plan, tackling Tam Lin off the bridge and into the water. Though he could not bleed to death, nothing in the scabbard's magic prevented him from drowning.

Thus did Au Brenn reclaim his magic and return to the Faerie Court in triumph. Mab – surprised – welcomed him with open arms, and called him to sit at her side.

Au Brenn smiled, and said, “My oaths to you ended when my life did. I come to cast aside my old life, throw you out and claim this court as my own.”

Such was his power that Mab had no choice but to flee; that very day, he crowned himself king, and has been a wise and powerful ruler for over a thousand years. In him is the power of all of Faerie; he is our rightful lord. Serve him faithfully.

Retrieved from unoccupied royal nurseries at Haven's Blooming. Document was nearly destroyed by incendiary wards; was assumed to be high-level intel because of the defenses. Relevance and veracity unknown.

I remain your loyal servant.

K

The Treaty of Nowhere

I, acting on behalf of the Mortal Realm and with the informed consent of all governments which have participated in the conflict between the inhabitants of Pandemonium and the Mortal Realm, hereby submit the provisions of the surrender of all inhabitants of the Mortal Realm and the acceptance of the terms as outlined below. I include my humble thanks at your graces' mercy at accepting this document and agreeing that all inhabitants of Pandemonium and the Mortal Realm shall be bound by the conditions within.

I offer this surrender to the assembled leaders of the Weird, Strange, Yokai, Oni, Unled, Chaotics, Tsukumogami, Outlanders and Obake, hereafter referred to as the Outlanders.

As of the receipt of this document, all hostilities between the Realms of Pandemonium and the Mortal Realm are to cease immediately. Organized hostilities launched from one realm into the other are therefore to be punished by the forfeiture of one peach tart, baked by Yamamoto Seiko of Inuyama, Japan, or a descendent thereof, to Momotaro or a designated alternate thereof. The forfeiture must be paid for with legal currency of the Mortal Realm at a price to be negotiated by the baker. Should the line of Ms. Yamamoto have gone extinct, a suitable replacement may be named at the time of forfeiture by Momotaro or designated alternate.

The Outlanders are responsible for policing the transgressions of their people, things, inanimate objects, kinetically charged concepts and mobile locations. Invasion of the Mortal Realm is acceptable for the acceptance of specifically designated tribute, sightseeing, and participation in various rituals. Consumption of mortals via physical, intellectual, or spiritual means is hereby prohibited without a license. Licenses to consume mortals are to be issued at the sole discretion of Momotaro or any authorized agent thereof. The penalty for consumption of a mortal without a license is to be determined on an individual basis at the discretion of Momotaro.

Tribute to be provided from the inhabitants of the Mortal Realm to those of Pandemonium will take the form of offerings, to be found at shrines, outside of homes, and by the side of graves. Grave offerings are only to be collected by Outlanders who have a connection to the deceased mortal residing in the specific grave. Other offerings are to be collected as situation allows. The inhabitants of the mortal realm, as a whole, are to provide no fewer than one meal per day to the inhabitants of Pandemonium. A meal is to consist of one cup of cooked rice and a shot of sake, or its equivalent in nutrition and intoxicating qualities. Tribute is submitted by mortals by being left in the aforementioned locations, burnt as a sacrifice, or poured out on the ground. It is the sole responsibility of the mortals to leave the tribute out; all responsibility related to collection of the tribute, including any complications related to difficulty in acquiring said tribute, belongs solely to the inhabitants of Pandemonium. Payment in advance is permitted.

The Outlanders are also required to submit a message to one Kintaro, champion of the Mortal Realm, the text of which is as follows: "It worked. Pay up."

Further addenda to the treaty can be added at the sole discretion of Momotaro, and will remain fully binding until such date as he declares that they are not.

Hereby signed, the pi of $\frac{3}{4}$ day by the reckoning of Pandemonium,

Momotaro

