



*"Three Rings for the Foreign Kings, Apple of my Eye.
Seven for the Consulting Lords, with their hearts of stone.
Nine for Ordinary Men - doomed to die!
One for the Dark Lord, on his Dark Throne,
In the Land of Hellstra, Hypocrisy and Lies.
One ring to rule them, one ring to bind them.
One click, one touch, one button, one factory,
In the Land of Hellstra, Hypocrisy and Lies."*



Hearken now all you men of this forgetful age! Listen now you brave men, mindful of the courage of your sires of old; listen now you sluggards, ignorant of the deeds of those that came before you! For long ago, in a land far away, was the land of Trel. It had the bravest Knights, the fairest Maidens, the sturdiest peasants, yet their lot was naught but endless woe. Listen now to the days of high adventure, to the final days of Trel, listen now to

THE FINAL BATTLE

Being the story of the Knights' last stand against the Eye Of Solron, and The Return of The King.

The Eye Of Solron

The Ring of Power; The Black Riders; The Knight's Magic Potion

The Ring Of Power. In the early days of Trel, there was a fast flowing river called the Black Bourne. In this river, so the Wise say, there was found a ring of gold. It had the property to give the owner absolute power and wealth, but at a dreadful cost. For the owner of the ring must first forswear Love; and Holiness; and Temperance; and Chastity; and Friendship; and Justice; and Courtesy; and Decency.

Now by means none may say, the Ring of Power came into the treasure hordes of the Kingdom of Telcordia. There it lay, a mere trinket, amongst the heaped gold and jewels, for the Emperors of the Land knew better than to wield the Ring, and let it lie in the bowels of their strongrooms.

It is said elsewhere how the seat of Emperor was unfilled for many a month. Finally a new Emperor was chosen by the un-Holy un-Roman Emperor. His called himself "Le Roi de Soleil"; however those who studied these matters later discovered that his real name was Cortez.

Ted-E-Bear is bifurcated.

Cortez had by his side a sword called Snickersnee, and he called a great feast, so that the nobility of the land could swear allegiance to him. First Ted-E-Bear came forward to pay his respects. As Ted-E-Bear bowed before him, Snickersnee leapt from Cortez's scabbard, and it bifurcated him.

"Snicker-Snack" went the sword as it drank deeply from the victim's soul.

"Oops", said Cortez, "we really appreciate what Ted-E-Bear did for the country. Never mind, for my third cousin is on hand to assume responsibility for his lands."

Then the Caledonian King came forward to make obeisance, but his kilt fell down around his ankles, and as he fell forward Snickersnee again leapt from the scabbard and bifurcated him.

"Snicker-Snack" went the sword as it drank deeply from his soul.

"Oops", said Cortez, "we really appreciate what he did for the country. Never mind, for my second cousin's brother-in-law's chiropractor is on hand to assume responsibility for his lands."

One-by-one the lords of the land were led in. And one-by-one they were bifurcated by Snickersnee, and their lands handed over to Cortez's cousins, friends, family and acquaintances.

After the bloody banquet, Cortez wandered amongst the treasure-chambers of the land. He was amazed at the wealth and glory that lay therein. However when he saw the Ring of Power, he immediately recognized it for what it was. He took the Ring, and into it he poured all his cruelty, his malice, and his desire to dominate others; and as he did so he chanted the *Charm of Making...*

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As he chanted this he took a new name, Solron, and the Eye of Solron blazed red and hot across the land. Wherever it fell, men screamed and fell down, covering themselves from the evil glance. At his bidding, three Lieutenants of Solron did come to the land. Once they were mighty kings of men, powerful in nature and subtle in thought, but they were ensnared by Solron through their greed and lust. Soon they were but wraiths of fear and terror, and they took the form of Riders in black. Their names were *Sans Foy*, *Sans Joy* and *Sans Loy*.

The Riders in Black. The Bane Wolves.

They rode through the land, taking note of all things, and writing them into the Doomsday Book, so that all taxes due would be paid accordingly. At their feet ran a pack of Bane Wolves. Black and evil they were, and they hunted not for food but for the thrill of the chase. They smelt out sick lambs and elderly cows, and baying for blood brought them down and devoured them whole.

The servant speaks of the Knight's magic potion.

After finishing the accounting of the Kingdom's Wealth, Solron divided the land into three parts, according to the wishes of the unHoly-unRoman Emperor. Then a servant dared to approach him.

"O Great Solron, King of Kings. The land is not yet subdued. A citadel of indomitable Knights still resists you. For their Druids have found the secret to a magic potion. They cut beans with golden sickles, and brew a broth which the Knights do drink.



"Our spies have noticed the Knights arrive in the morning, tired and unable to concentrate. They stand around the cauldron, and drink of the brown potion. It gives them strength and stamina, and when their spirits flag during the day, they return to the cauldron for more.

"First there was only one large cauldron, but now every cohort and company have one. We can not catch them unawares whilst they have this advantage. And those denied the potion become crazed and irritable, and even more dangerous foes in battle."

"Furthermore we have noticed many strong and powerful eunuchs there. They are slow of wit, and men with special skill are needed to give these eunuchs commands. They have eunuchs support, and no-one else in the land can give them orders, for we do not know how to do research."

Eunuchs Support

The red eye of Solron blazed red with anger, and it searched the land looking for these Knights. For it knew that once he had found them, none could withstand the Power of the One Ring.

The Evil Wind

The Rearranging of Chairs; Nostradamus Predicts.

In the final days of Trel, an evil Wind did blow through the land. Wells dried up; granaries full of bread emptied overnight; curtains faded whilst hens stopped laying; The Good lacked all conviction, but the Weak were driven to a frenzy of activity.

the Council of Rowland

The Knights were all ordered to return to the cells where they slept and to Quest no more. Meanwhile the Council of Rowland was held. The greatest representatives of all Free Peoples were called, to determine what could be done against the growing evil.

Eagerly the Knights awaited the outcome of the Council.

"We notice that the chapel in Trel has 12 rows of seats, each holding 10 knights. We shall rearrange the chairs, so that there are 10 rows of seats, each holding 12 knights."



Now there was a good Abbess in that time, Mother Superior Fírinne. She took her vows early in her life, and due to her diligence and goodness was given the task of accounting for all the times the Knights spent in prayer and abstinence. Even Bishops and Cardinals feared her glance, for they remembered the smart of her ruler when she found them lacking. It was argued that rearranging the chairs of Trel would aid her greatly, for she could then count more easily the number and times when Knights knelt in prayer.

the sun became as cold and as dark as the moon



With great sawing and cutting, the pews in the church were rearranged to make ten rows of seats. However things did not improve for the Knights. A great silence enwrapped the land, such that the smallest whisper or creak of armour seemed loud and disturbing. No news did come through from outside. A shadow fell across Trel, and the sun became as cold and as dark as the moon.

In desperation, the Knights went to Nostradamus, to see what portend he could provide. Now Nostradamus was a Knight who was sorely wounded years before in the fields of battle. However he could still walk, leaning on his staff, and although many mistook his laughter for the ravings of a madman, he had a third eye that could discern the cloud of unknowing.



First Nostradamus took readings of his charts of astrology and star-lore. "Men and animals lie", quote he, "but the stars speak truly of what is to come". Then his hands began to shake, for he had never seen such a disastrous conjunction of planets. The heavens spoke not of peace or joy, but of doom and disaster. "But what fate for Trel?" he muttered. "It has always survived before."

Then Nostradamus took his rune stones carved of bone, and he cast them into the air. To everyone's surprise, they came down not up nor down, but on their edge. Then Nostradamus hid his head in the cushion on which he sat; and the despairing Knights went to write their last will and testament.

The Finding of the Grail.

The Battle of Black-a-Kadûm; the Grail is found; The End Begins

There was in those days a man known as *Mordred The Bastard*. He was from a long line of renegades, and he knew much of the mind of Solron; and was enamoured of foul sorceries and dark secrets. He called himself "The Mouth Of Solron", and as a reward for his cruelty he was given many dragon hordes to guard. Now one night he slept amongst the dragon's loot, and with a dragon's lust in his heart, he woke the next morn transformed into a great wurm. Nasty burns did he give to those who opposed him, and *Sans Foy* came to him from behind and rode him like a beast into war. His leathery hide was covered in gems and coins, and arrows and weapons bounced off harmlessly.

Now it came to pass that the location of Trel was revealed to Solron, and a great army approached, led by Sans Foy riding the beast. They found the army of Trel awake (thanks to its magic brown potion) and awaiting them. For across the Black Bourne, there was a narrow bridge known as Black-a-Kadûm, the last defence of Trel. There Frodlow The Grey waited alone as the foul demon approached. "You shall not pass" he cried.

Much is told of the battle between Frodlow and Sans Foy in the poem "*The Lay of The Leviathans*."

*The battle of
Black-a-Kadûm*



*He chanted a song of wizardry
of piercing, opening, of treachery
revealing, uncovering, betraying.
Then suddenly Frodlow there swaying
sang in an answer a song of power*

*"Macho-Macho man
I want to be
a Macho man"*

The Lay tells that the Knights hurriedly formed a choir and joined in to support their leader.

*"Lucky Lucky Lucky
I should be so lucky
I should be so lucky in love"*

Backwards and forwards the songs went. The Knights were at first like single notes in a chord, but soon they began to form intertwined melodies, like two strings beating in sympathy. And as their voices grew louder, they sung in a unified chorus that echoed memories of a profound theme of great significance.

*"We are the champions
We are the champions
No time for losers
For we are the champions
Of the world."*

And after each song, each Knight bowed low before the others, and the Wise remembered words of the ancient prophecies concerning the Grail.

"only the penitent man will pass"

And then the knights formed a long line, holding the hips of the knight in front, that did snake and turn its way around the battlefield.

"only in the steps of G-d will a man proceed"

And the Knights did climb across impromptu stages and jump out, and they were not hurt, for the crowd did pick them up and pass them down safely.

"only from the leap from the lion's mouth will a man proceed "



As they sung, glorious multicoloured lights surrounded them, and their voices grew loud and carried far, and a glowing golden cup appeared before them. One group of Knights rushed forward and seized the prize. Yet in the moment of their greatest peril, the Knights stumbled and failed. For another group of Knights, wearing brown coloured robes, did keep track and tally of songs sung, and notes missed, and they claimed that the ownership of the Grail belonged to them. As they bickered over the Grail, the Wise examined it closely.

The cheap, shiny plastic imitation copy of the True Grail

It was smaller than what they had expected, and had stopped glowing. On the bottom they saw the words "Proudly made by the children of serfs in the Orient". To their horror, they noticed that it was not the True Grail at all, but a *cheap, shiny plastic imitation copy of the True Grail*. Then they looked up and saw Sans Foy and Frodlow walking across the bridge, arm-in-arm. Frodlow had a crown on, with the words "Master of The Fates".

"Help us!" they cried, "Trel is about to die."
"Rubbish," said King Frodlow, "Trel is not dead, it's just sleeping, resting after an 83 year long squawk". Then he burst into song.

*"You're not dead yet,
You can dance and you can sing
You're not dead yet,
You can do the Highland Fling!"*

*"You're not dead yet,
No need to go to bed
No need to call the doctor
Cause You're not yet dead."*

*"You're not dead yet,
You're stupid, every little bit
You're not dead yet
Cos you're all full of..."*

At this point Sans Foy raised his hand and silence fell.

*"Yesterday I heard the hovel door slam
and the Plague cart took away my old man.
Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got till its
gone.
I'm going to tear down Trel
and put up a parking lot..
par-par-parking lot"*

"You can sing, but can you dance? Dance for me Gringos,
Dance! Higher! Faster!"

And he grabbed a crossbow and shot bolts at the Knights
feet. They shuffled slowly, but their knees were weak and
their armour heavy, and the Knights started falling down,
and they all knew that the battle had turned into a
massacre.

The Revolting Peasants.

The Beacon is lit, but no help comes. The Infernal Relations Act.

It was ordained in the depths of time, that earthly orders and hierarchies would imitate those of divine order. Hence below the Emperor sat Kings, and below Kings sat Dukes, then Marquess, Earls, Viscounts and Barons. At the bottom of the ranks were the serfs and peasants.

Now to advance the cause of the lower ranks, guilds were formed, and whilst the Lords of Trel were openly in conflict with them, privately they were glad of their presence. For they themselves did benefit from the improved conditions that the peasants had won with hard work and much sacrifice.



Now decades before, the guildsmen and apprentices of Trel did build a large beacon behind Trel, and in times of great peril it was lit to summon aid from outside the land. When the slaughter began, some peasants broke ranks and ran uphill to the beacon and lit it.

The flames leapt high, and then people cheered when they saw the fires of other beacons light up and carry the message far from the land.

But those who lit the beacon slumped in despair at the view they saw. Everywhere there were signs of war. The mountains were crawling like anthills, and there was deadly strife between Men and beasts. Smoke covered the sky whilst hords of refugees rushed towards Trel.

The Infernal Relations Act.

For the Un-Holy Un-Roman Emperor grew weary of the complaints of peasants, and the Lords of the Land found the stench of self-esteem and empowerment offensive to their nostrils. So they signed the Infernal Relations Act. The borders of the land had been broken, and hordes of mercenaries, led by a foul band of demons from Indescenture, were rampaging without resistance.

The French take the High Ground.

And honest and true soldiers of Hellstra were ordered to stand aside, whilst the French did take the high ground and battlements. Once they seized control of the heights, the French did taunt the people of the land with cruel taunts.

"You do not frighten us, silly pig dogs. Go and boil your bottoms. We blow our noses at you. Your mother was a hamster and your father smelt of elderberries."

And the People of Hellstra did approach the French very nervously. "Please gentle Knights, go to your master and ask if we can have an agreement that you won't overcharge us?"



"We already have one, now go away or we shall taunt you with zis outrageous accent. So, you think you could outclever us French folks with your silly, knees-bent, running-about, advancing behaviour?".

With great sadness the peasants returned to the battlefield, where they were promptly executed; for they had broken ranks without order and lowered the morale of the troops by showing initiative.

On the Beach.

The Thanatologists of Trel. The Yule Time feast. The Knights start to vanish.

Lighting the beacon did have some affect at least. Sans Foy had withdrawn, and the leader formerly known as Frodlow The Grey, now known as Baruman The Off-White, approached the troops.

A new Age cometh

"The Elder days are passing away, and the Age of Men is at hand. A new Power is arising in the East, and against it old allies and policies will not avail us at all. Its victory is at hand; and there will be rich reward for those that aided it. As the Power grows, its proved friends will also grow. The Wise, such as you and I, may with patience come at last to direct its courses, to control it. We can bide our time, deploring maybe the evils done by the way, but approving the high and ultimate purpose. There need not be, there would not be, any real change in our designs, only in our means."

"So we have ceased all hostilities, and a rescue ship will arrive to give us safe passage from danger. Not everyone will fit on it, so there will be no radicals, rabble-rousers, rebels, revolutionaries, reactionaries, or anybody who looks really, really weird. But now I must leave to go on a long and epic quest to visit the Eye of Solron."

The Doom or Gift of Men?

"A final piece of advice: Mortality - the eternal leaving of the circles of the world- is known as *The Doom of Men*. However it is also the *Gift of Men*, which even Immortals will envy as the world grows cold. So if you find yourself alone, riding in the green fields with the sun on your face, do not be troubled. For you are in Elysium, and you're already dead!"

if you are tired of Trel...

"And remember, *if you are tired of Trel, then you are tired of life.*"

So the hosts of Trel retreated to the plain between the river and the fortress. The weather was warm, and the sky was blue, and the Knights fritted their time away. The Wise nervously watched huge battlements slowly being built around them, and noticed that a fast, dangerous river lay behind them. Still, there was no immediate danger and the Knights feasted and drunk, wondering all the time what the future held.

The Thanatologists of Trel

To show that they were not without compassion, the Lords of Trel arranged thanatologists to come and visit the troops. Soon all the men were busy occupied writing and rewriting their last wills and testaments. Many wore their finest suits, practicing long and loud eulogies for themselves and their comrades.



Time passed, and soon the Yule-season festivals came around. Due to their perilous position, the Knights held their feasting on the beach. For the last time the choirs of Trel did sound with melodious voices, and all did applaud their efforts.

Some young men took a discus and started throwing it near the river, when they noticed a creature of red and blue emerge from the water, with a tube in its face. None could understand the sounds that came from its mouth, so they retreated back up the beach, and the strange creature returned to the water.

Soon after the festivals, Knights started disappearing. First they vanished in ones, and twos, but sooner larger and larger groups went missing. The Lords of Hellstra then sent a pack of Banshees to torment them. In life they were scorned by Men, and in death their revenge was cruel and vicious. The wail of these Banshees always pre-empted the death of Men. On arrival they would possess the body of the most senior knight present, which would start spinning. The Knights would see the spin, and hear the words that were not true; but their tongues cleaved to the roof of their mouths, and their hearts laboured, and they could not speak. Then afterwards a knight would find himself alone, and a piece of paper in his hand. On it, were but two words:

Dreaded Forms are delivered by Banshees.

"Memento Mori".

A few Knights felt in their hearts that it was not their time to leave, and the Lords of Trel showed their courage by personally appealing to the Banshees for a greater measure of time for them. They braved the supernatural cold of the Land of Inhuman Resources, to intercede on their behalf. Then these Knights would then have a brief respite to prepare themselves for the end.

The nobility of the Knights and their Lords.

The nobility of the Knights, Maidens and Peasants of Trel shone forth in that time of trial; and it was said that no malice was borne to those who were possessed, or who executed their grim duty; and much respect was earned by those who dared to plead these boons for those who needed them.

Charon arrives

Soon rumours came that the boatman Charon would visit knights when they were alone. He would touch them and they would immediately stand up and silently follow him to the river. There he would ferry them across the dark bourne, from which no man has ever returned.



Finally, on a night of fire and thunder, a dark ship with a dark sail came down the river. The rescue ship had arrived at last.

The good ship CATO.

They were told that it would be a three hour cruise – a three hour cruise.



The boat leaves

The knights were stunned when they saw the size of the ship. Barely a quarter of the Knights could fit on board. A few were optimistic "May it be that it is designed like an iceberg, with the greater part of it beneath the water?". The ship was called CATO, and its figurehead was a woman reclined on a bed, clutching something. A few learned Knights remembered of the Roman philosopher who sold slaves when they got too old.

The Knights went to their bed rolls, pondering what the morn will bring. During the night, a selected few stood up and touched others. Soon they all walked along the gangplank to the boat. The Knights awoke and tried to follow them, but they cast off, saying "No, we can not take you! There is no more room and we would flounder if you came on board".

A few tried to clutch onto ropes, but those on board said "We have to let you go.." and cut the ropes. As the boat sailed away they yelled out, "We have to move on. So should you."

When this happened, some on the boat woke as if from a dream, and jumped overboard. A few made it safely to shore, whilst others were swept downstream and were never seen again. So it came to pass that the ship sailed without a full complement, even though many were left behind.

The boat travelled down the river, and then out to sea. In the bridge the lieutenants and midshipmen met for the first time. Lo! They were all young and beautiful, and the vestments of power hung handsomely on their lithe frames. Out of the window they could see wizened greybeards standing in the rain and sleet, pulling on ropes, and they knew that the ship was in good hands. They sat in the captain's chair and gave orders and said "Make it so". They looked at the star charts and maps and said to themselves. "With a boat such as this, we can not only sail the seven seas, we can find the Straight Road, and sail away from the Earth. And all those in the mists below us can see our rising light and wonder." They gave orders to sail 140 degrees true, and they could hear a sailor singing outside.

*"Sing cheerio to sunburnt shores
And smiling friendly faces.
I wonder what they'll think of us
In bigger, bolder places?"*

*So Sing a song of journey
We're off to sea
But ripping up these roots
Could just be tightening the noose
closer on me.."*

*The Island of The
First Circle*

After what seemed like many days of travel, the silver-grey curtain of rain rolled back, to reveal a green island under a quick sunrise. As they sailed into a harbour, they landed at a pier with the sign "THE FIRST CIRCLE". They disembarked to see a fully armoured Knight waiting for them. He had a shield with the emblem "3CTO" emblazoned on it. The knight did not move, and when they raised his visor, they saw not a head, but a potato.

The creature came alive, took out a hat, nose, mouth, eyes and ears, and stuck them onto the potato. Then it began to speak.

"Welcome to the Island of the First Circle. We are proud, dot proud, to be here."

Then it took off its hat, nose, mouth, eyes and ears, and put on new ones.

"We are not here to joust, we are here to dot win. Wining is dot everything. Anything is dot possible. If a Knight wins a battle with a sword, could he not win ten times more battles if he had ten swords? And wear ten times more armour? There may be obstacles, but we can overcome them. Happy is the man who loses his soul, for he will gain the world."

Then it replaced its head once more and continued, in an even more excited way.

"We shall dot win. We shall dot overcome, because we are the dot superior beings in the universe. You shall dot win or you shall be dot exterm-

-in-

-ated."

The visor slammed shut and the creature menaced the knights in strange circular motions.

"exterminate. Exterminate. EXTERMINATE."

The Knights of Cato grabbed the creature, and with a mighty shove pushed it off the quay. It fell onto their boat, which burst into flames. Underneath the water they could hear it gurgling "SO DOT EXCITED".

With their escape burning, the Knights headed inland. As they wandered down the road, their shadows were taller than their souls. Then a cloud moved away from the sun, and in front of them was a green mound. On top of it was a golden castle with tall towers that looked very familiar.

New Trel

"It is New Trel" cried the Knights. "Here is our spiritual home, where we shall live at peace for the rest of our days." They charged up the hill, passing three signs.

The first said:

Onwards and Upwards!

"Onwards and Upwards" cried the Knights, banging their weapons on their shields.

The second said:

"Higher and higher, faster and faster, for ever and ever".

"Higher and higher, faster and faster, for ever and ever" cried the Knights.

The final sign made some Knights balk, but they were carried forward with the mob into New Trel.

"OR ELSE..."

But they were all deceived..

The cheap shiny plastic imitation copy of the True Trel.

Once inside foemen seized them and strapped them to hard tables. Once their eyes became accustomed to the gloom, they realized they were not in New Trel, but a *cheap shiny plastic imitation copy of the True Trel*.

Above their heads a razor sharp pendulum swung. With each slow turning of the earth they could see it inch closer and closer. And denied the hard exercise of Knightly duties, they knew their death would be one of slow, painful inevitable irrelevance.

The Return Of The King



But worse was yet to come. For there was a new law in the land, called **Approved Visual Rendition**. Artisans and weavers were commissioned to create a tapestry, drawing pictures of the wonderful places visited by King Baragorn, Master of The Fates...

... and by The Fates Mastered, the knights formerly known as knights of Trel, now known as knights of Cato, were forced to watch these pictures. And their screams were drowned out by the droning intonation of poets who told them long interesting discourses on each place visited. 'Twas a fiend's torment, and truly the Living envied the Dead.

The Hour of Doom

*This is how Trel Ends, Trel Ends, Trel Ends,
This is how Trel Ends, Not with a bang but a whimper.*

Back at Trel, the remaining Knights gave each other as much comfort as they could. "Strength and honour" they said to each other. Now a visitor made it through enemy lines. "Shall we stand and fight?" he yelled. But the Knights looked at their position. Their weapons were old, and their numbers reduced beyond belief. Abandoned by their leaders, they were surrounded by foes on all sides.

*Who is the
Chronicler?*

Sans Foy had a mind to play these mice cruelly before he struck to kill. He approached them. "Who is the Chronicler of Trel? What coward mocks us from the shadows? Bring him forward and your lives will be spared."

*The
Chronicler
is
revealed*



Then a Knight stood up. "I am the chronicler." Then another "No, I am". Soon all were standing up shouting "I am the chronicler."



"At my signal, unleash hell-stra upon them" cried Sans Foy.

The Knights of Trel were whelmed what time by the hosts of war. They fled and fought not, and were all cut down, like hay that lieth low in the lea where the long scythe goes. Before they died they saw the Citadel of Trel - the land of magnets and miracles, burnt, pillaged and destroyed. Not by Goths, Saxons or Vikings as they had expected, but by merchants, tinkers and scrap metal men.

The treasure towers were broken open and the sacred relics and artefacts were taken to be hocked at markets, or melted down into base metals. The great library of Trel was left open to be looted, and the birds and wild creatures took away the tomes to make their nests. Indeed, for centuries to come, travellers from far away lands reported sitting in the rude huts of barbarian kings, and seeing Holy Texts propping up the table, whilst drinking crude liquors from pewter goblets.

*The Great Hour
Glass of Trel*



The Great Hour Glass of Trel had for many decades sent a beacon at midday, and horologists throughout the land used it to calibrate their sundials. The enemy hoards swept through, smashing the glass, and the sand fell through the hourglass, just like the days of our lives.

Some fell to knees and sued for pardon, but no quarter were they given. A few were marked for thralldom, and foes enmeshed them and overbore them with fiendish numbers. "You shall build the dark satanic mills of the One Factory" sneered Sans Foy. "Your unhappiness is caused by attachment to material possessions, and too much red meat. We will take both of these afflictions away from you."

As they were lead away they too saw three signs. The first was very familiar.

"You are now leaving Trel. We hope you enjoyed your visit and come again soon"

Then they saw a second and more disturbing sign.

**Farewell happy fields
where joy forever dwells.
Hail Horror! Hail!**

Still some did not believe what was happening to them. Their eyes strained to the horizon. "Surely Lancelot and Galahad will come to save us, and return us to the Grace we had of old"

Finally they were marched to a disused silver mine which was being reopened. Above the entrance were words in an ancient language that none understood.



Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate

The Refugees of Trel.

The peasants flee. The rats of Trel. The unknown heroes. The hidden valley.

Such was the haste of Hellstra to destroy Trel, that many people managed to survive who otherwise might have suffered a cruel fate.

Some women were heavy with child, and were sent to the home of their kin as was the custom at that time. Unfortunately others returned too soon, and were caught up in the maelstrom.

*The peasants
flee*

During the battle, the peasants of Trel had been chained to the walls. As *Mordred The Bastard* blew fire all around, the wall sheltered them, and as he tore down the walls, he accidentally loosened their chains. They filled their pockets with the jewels that fell from the dragon's hide, and fled into the wilderness, for they had heard that the CessPool gave succour to the pure of heart. Indeed, for some peasants, long shiny black chariots took them away, in a style to which they wished to be accustomed.

The Woad Room

There was also a small group of cultists of Thor, who studied the arts of sending death from a distance. They called out to the unyielding grey of the skies, and Xeena did come to their aid. They took off their clothes, and crushed berries of woad all over their skin. Then they hid in the Room of Woad. Behold! The flaming red eye of Solron stared straight at them, and it did not see them, and they were saved.

*The Knights
use Plain Bee.*

Many men of Trel were granted the gift of foresight, and in the months before the end their hearts had misgiven them. In secret they prepared escape routes from the citadel. Behind Trel was Mount Bee with a great plain about it, and during the smoke and confusion of the siege, they resorted to Plain Bee. So full of refugees was Plain Bee, that some used Plain Cee and Plain Dee.



A few unlucky survivors were given the grisly task of burying the dead. In secret many peasants and Knights crept back to Trel in the darkness of night to aid them. A great plague of rats added to their torments, as they gnawed and ate everything in their sight. A man could fall asleep but for a short while and awake to find his sword, armour, shield and even his pillow missing.

Not all tales from this time are without honour. For the Citadel of Trel had kept a goodly store of goods in preparation for a long siege. Some saw the poverty of the land around them, and took these stores and distributed it to them, like the good king in Yule-tide carols.

*Brother Buddha
and Sister
Samsara*

Then Brother Buddha and Sister Samsara came to give assistance. Brother Buddha took the many relics left lying around, and put them on carts and sent them to the Museum of Integrity. Sister Samsara took the scrolls and chronicles of the days, and placed them in vases sealed with lead, and hid them in caves so that in some future time people could remember the mighty deeds of Trel.

Da Trel Code

Soon a rumour spread through Hellstra that a great secret lay in the library of Trel. This was known as the 'Da Trel Code', and it was thought that the secrets of the universe were hidden in the chronicles. They came and went through the remainder of the books, pretending to take what they could for further study at home. Callous indeed were the hearts that could do this.

*The
carpetbaggers
of Trel*

Two men came from outside, pretending to help, and bearing letters of introduction. When the peasants found out what they were really doing, they drove them forth with pitchforks and flaming brands. However they returned with bailiffs and strongmen, and the ruins of Trel were locked against the secret helpers.

Night was falling, and a cold wind blowing. The remaining peasants realized that there was nothing more that they could save, and it would be dangerous to remain.

None may say who the last knight was. For the buildings had become haunted with chattering ghosts, and lit candles in the windows drew the unwary wanderer to their doom. The bloodsucking bat and the rat and the stoat and the club-footed ghoul roamed the site.

*St Thomas is
buried.*

The few survivors went to leave, and came across the body of St Thomas the Doubter. They placed it on a boat, and around his feet they arrayed a mass of the finest swords and weapons. They lit the boat, and the flames engulfed it, as if it had been soaked in strong spirits. Then it sailed down the river, and across the seas, and with it went the last memory of the Elder Days.

*The secret
valley.*

The survivors made their way up into the mountains, following the route of the Black Bourne. In a secret valley they found its source - a crystal fountain. There they bathed their wounds and washed the tears from their eyes. In the gentle murmuring of the waters they could hear the poet Tasilien sing of the glory days of Trel, of the days of feasts and learning, when knights rode errant throughout the land.

Here they could look down at the darkness surrounding Hellstra. The survivors fared no better than the dead. Tall walls walled them; strong drugs doped them; wise lies lured them; black racks racked them, blood-baths rolled them; old men lectured them; bureaucrats hectored them; mountains frowned at them. The Priests of Pride made them till the soil of stone. Tyrants froze their humanity, dragooned them into lethal automatons, and turned them into cogs in a machine.



From here they could also see the survivors of Trel. Many rode bravely under foreign banners. Some taught and learned and loved. They could see ragged beggars stand up with a gleaming nobility in their eyes, whilst men around them wondered if they were actually princes in disguise.

And in this secret valley they swore they would meet again once a year, to remember the glory days of Trel. Soon stories passed into Legend: Legend turned into Myth. And afterward, it was said of even the least of the people of Trel, that they lived without fear and that they died without shame.

Here endeth **THE CHRONICLES OF TREL**. If it has passed from the high and the beautiful to darkness and ruin, that was of old the fate of Trel Marred; and if any change shall come and the Marring to be amended, the Oracles have not revealed it, and the Wise speak not of it.