

Here is shown the Red Eye
Who is called also Rárandimathur and
Routhauger.
Who turns things awry,
Who is not what it is seen to be.
Who is the harbinger of Fate and chaos.
Who is the guardian of Fate.
Who is the symbol of the unknown,
Whose place cannot be marked; only the signs of
their passing.

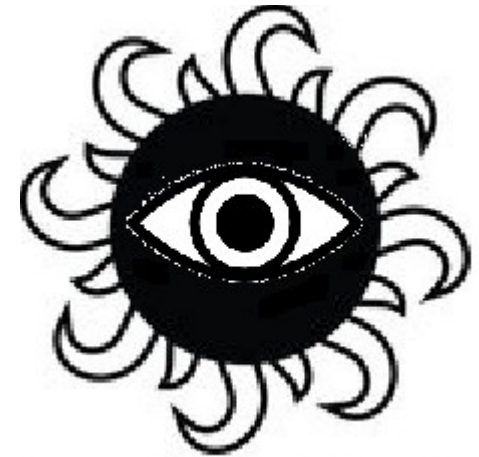
The Red Eye alone goes where it will.
It cannot be named.
It cannot be gainsaid.
It does not ask permission.
It tangles even the plans of the Dragons.
It rules the sky and is without rules.
Where it pauses, it changes the shape of the
skies.

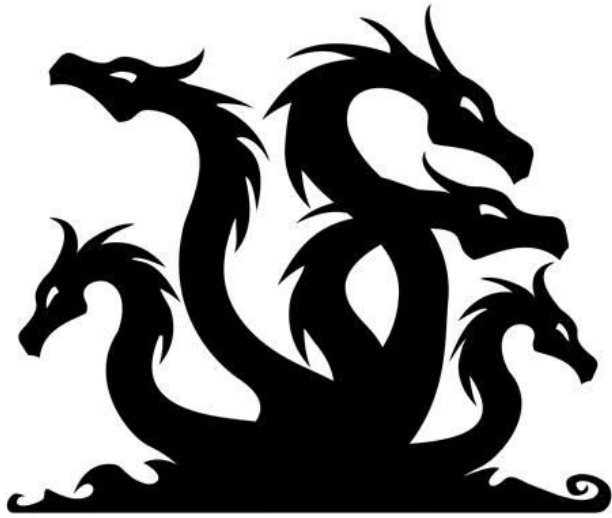
It alone of all stars is single-natured.
It stands alone yet not alone.
It is part of all things.
All things at their core are unknown.
It is the outcast who rules.
It is the star of ill omen.
Yet it is the star of opportunity.

The hunter shuns the red star.
It is inconstant; it is not to be followed.
The red star will lead you to the abode of horrors.
The red star will show you the path to doom.
The red star rules over the place of wings.

The red star fills the mammoths with rage.
When the red star rises the rusalka sing.

The warlock does not shun the red eye.
The warlock does not embrace the red eye.
Where it walks walks opportunity.
It lead the Dragons to the mountain.
It surmounts the great thrones.
It watches over the people of the north.
It is both gift star and plague star.





Here is shown the Dragon Throne

Who is called also Vithvarandir

Who endures all things.

Who resists the change from without.

Who is the warden of strength.

Who survives the Long Winter.

Who rises from the barren lands.

Who stands against the blizzard.

The Dragon Throne does not wither.

It gains strength as it endures.

It is the wall against the foe.

It is the shield of tradition.

It is the will to continue against the Night.

It is the fire that burns in the mountain.

It stands guard over the ways of the
people.

The Dragon Throne is the power that
preserves.

The guardian looks to the Dragon Throne

To grant strength to fight the vermin of
the south.

The warlock looks to the Dragon Throne

To grant surety of purpose.

The Hunter looks to the Dragon Throne

To show the way to travel.

The Five Dragons rest enthroned.

They are the soul of the people.

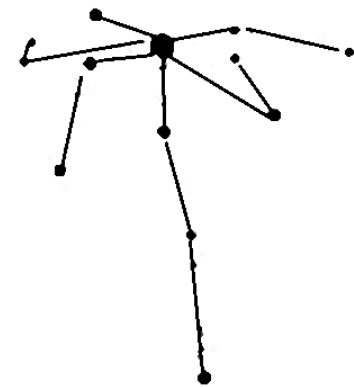
They are the anchor of the past.

They are the beacon of the future.

They are the mountain and the sun.

They are like the stars.

The Five Dragons endure.





These words exist because the Dragon
Hinodir has decreed they should exist.

Let any who gaze upon them by stealth be
blinded by the light of the heavens.

Let any who lays hand upon them without
permission be struck with wasting sickness.

Let any who takes these words from their
resting place be torn apart by chains of green
iron and their shrieking soul hurled into the
Abyss

to be unmade.

The First Coming of the Vermin of the South

In the days long ago, the people lived on the plains north of the mountains. They lived in the forests south of the mountains. Yet the old scrolls say that a human people came to the forest south of the mountains. They came from far beyond the lands of our people, lands known only to She of the Bright Orb.

They spread through the forests. Sometimes these human people met with the true people. Sometimes the two peoples contended for land, or wealth, or slaves. Sometimes they traded for land, or wealth, or slaves.

They had their own strange ways, and honoured human spirits, but they were careful, and clever, and wise enough not to raise the ire of the Five Who Sit Upon The Mountain Thrones.

And as the seasons turned, so there as battle and peace between the true people, and the people of the forest who dwell in the shadows beneath the trees.

In time, however, new humans came, who we call the Vermin of the South.

They were not like the people of the forest. They were not wise and clever, but cruel and hard. They came in great numbers. They contended with all people – the people of the forest and the true people. They came in time even so far as the foot of the mountains. They made war upon our people who lived in the forests as they did upon the humans.

In time, they came through the passes that lie to the east of the Traveler.

They came at first single-spy. Then in greater numbers. In time an army of the vermin of the south came from across the mountains. Their warlocks brought strange magic. Their warriors brought spears and shields of surpassing strength. They brought bloodshed and war.

The people resisted them and for a time they were held back. But then the voice of the Five spoke from the mountain. The Five spoke and said "We shall wait. We shall allow these creatures to come into our land. We will allow them to believe that they are strong. We will allow them to show us their weakness. We will allow the Winter itself to undo their design."

The people did not question. They fell back before the advance of the intruders from the south. They came through Hahlerm - and pressed into Stathas and Kögur.

The vermin of the south began to lay down their camps. Through the spring and the summer. Then autumn came, and the leaves fell, and the wind began to blow. Then the winter came, and the first snows, and the intruders died as the frost stole into their hearts and froze their blood. They fell upon one another, desperate for food, and in their foolishness they cracked the door to the Walker of the Wastes and he fell upon them when the winds howled their harshest.

Then the first day of Spring came, as it always did in these days. The armies of the people closed their warding arc and spilled the blood of the invaders upon the thatwing soil.

Those who did not die fled back across the mountains and the people of the forests met their weakness with chains and rope and spears.

Those who did not die, who did not flee, remained as servants of the People.

The Tear of Fire

A generation passed; a blink of an eye for Those Who Sit Upon the Thrones. A heartbeat for the Five who are One. Then came the time of the Red Tear - the child of Routhauger that brought destruction and power.

The Will of the Dragons joined with the people to one end - to guide the Tear-of-Fire and to reduce the damage that it would cause when it fell. It was their Will that the tear fall in Lughuren and their Will made manifest guided the tear to fall where they chose.

Yet as they turned their Will to this task, as every warlock worked to bind their will to the Will, the vermin of the south sensed that our focus was elsewhere. They sent scouts, who marked that we looked to the stars and not to the mountains. They waited, and they planned against us and the Tear-of-Fire fell where the Five commanded and the Face of Skuld was remade - but not beyond recognition.

Trees still stood, the mammoths and the gaks still roamed the tundra. The people still lived - although one sixth of them had fallen as the star fell. In time we would have rebuilt Skuld - but we were not given our chance to do so, because of the treachery of the vermin of the south.

They took advantage of our momentary weakness, and surged forth to contest Skuld with us. They sent their hunters north to try and steal the bounty of the Crimson Tear, and their builders to Hahlerm, and Stashas, and Kogur to raise their burning sphere above the trees and make war upon us and even these many years later, our command of Skuld is incomplete.



The Second Coming of the People of the South

The vermin of the far south came again, in the time immediately after the Fall of the Tear-of-Fire. They came in much greater numbers than before, and as the first hawk touched the soil of Skuld their armies came against us.

They came cautiously; their hubris leavened with fear. They came again through Hahlern to Sathas and there they stopped. They threw up their own arc of spears and shields. They resisted the traps the people laid for them. And as Spring turned to Summer they began to build. A tower of enduring white granite and precious mithril, a symbol of their challenge to the Dragons. And again the voice of the Five spoke. "We shall wait." they said. We shall allow these creatures to come into our land. We will allow them to believe that they are strong. We will allow them to show us their weakness."

So the people fell back again, and laid another arc of spears, and waited and watched.

As Summer turned to Autumn, the vermin of the south finished their tower and raised atop it a great sphere of polished orichalcum.

And then as the first sun of Winter rose in the east, the many lesser warlocks that had come with the armies of the distant south raised up their voices and their hands and they spilled their blood upon the cold earth and upon the stones of their tower and upon their golden sphere. They sang and chanted for five days and six nights. And on the morning of the sixth day as the first snow fell a great cry went up from the invaders and the golden sphere burst into light and a wave of heat, like the first sun of Spring, washed across Sathas

The Second Sun

The vemin of the south did not stop with a tower. Over the next year they built more towers both to live-in and to watch. They built tall walls of white granite.

They built a road south through the pass into the lands of the people of the Forest.

They laid out farms and fields.

They raised temples to their ancestors.

They swarmed and bred like ants.

As they did so the people called out to the Thrones, saying "Who are these invaders that they may build, and breed, and swarm upon our lands? Who are these vemin of the far south who have raised a tower and set a second sun upon it in defiance of your Thrones?"

And the voice of the Five said only "Patience. Wait. Watch. This too is as we Will it."

As the city of the invaders grew, we learned that they had paid passage-toll to the people of the Forest so that more invaders may come north. And the people cried out to the Thrones saying "Let us punish the people of the Forest. Let us fall upon them and take from them this passage-toll."

But the voice of the Five again spoke saying "Patience. Wait. Watch. This too is as we Will it."

At first the golden sun was weak but over time its strength increased. Where it touched the soil, it brought the life of Spring, and the fire of Summer, and the gold of Autumn.

The invaders laid out their farms and their fields and the soil was rich.

They raised golden grains such as the people had never seen.

They planted trees that bore strange fruit in colours rarely seen in the north.

They bred herds of sheep and cattle, and slaughtered them in their season, and feasted.

When Winter came the light of the sun diminished; the life it gave was lessened; yet even when the harsh winds blew from the North the snow fell lightly on Stathas, and on Hahlerm, and on Kogur. As the people wrapped themselves in cloaks of bear-fur, the vermin of the south walked abroad in cloaks of fine wool.

And as the first sun of Spring rose, they renewed the light of their golden sun and renewed its life-giving touch.

And the Five on their Thrones in the great mountain waited, and they watched.

The War of the Sun

Generations passed. A handful of heartbeats for the Five who sit upon their Thrones. The invaders became complacent. They sought to extend their control beyond the bounds of their city.

They found the people waiting for them. They found the arc of spears that lay across Kegursal and Luhguren, pointed toward their hearts. Spear and shield and shield and spear clashed and broke and ebbed and flowed.

For generations the Five had waited and watched and seen the weakness of the invaders. They saw their hubris. They saw that they judged the people to be weak. To be savages. They saw that the vermin of the south mistook the caution of the Five, and of their warlocks, for lack of strength.

They saw their pride had grown to eclipse their wisdom.

And the Five laid the stress of their regard upon the invaders.

Tahenon the Gyre, great in his wrath, walked with the warriors of the people, and smote the vermin of the south with lightning and thunder and punishing rain.

Night-Dark Fragnir, the one who waits, slipped through the shadows and wove curses of fear and despair against the children of the vermin.

Caridis Runebinder, speaker of the truth, wove the north winds into a shield and laid it between the people and the warriors sent by the vermin of the south.



Hinodir of the Bright Orb, who sees all, looked into the hearts of their warlocks and discerned their plans.

And Orobus the Chained, who brings and binds, brought allies from the realms and bound them to the aid of the people.

For all the vermin of the south had their warriors, and their lesser warlocks, they could not stand against the unbound wrath of the people and the Five who strode beside their in spirit and Will.

They were driven back to their city of Stathis, encircled by a ring of spears, and slowly and surely the people closed that ring of spears around their necks.

They cried out to their people of the Far south, but no answer came.

They fought, but they were driven back again and again.

They stood upon their walls of white stone and looked out with terror upon the Forest of our spears, and knew that they could not endure and that the punishment for their hubris was to be their absolute destruction.

The Sun Falls

In their hubris, in their knowledge that they were beaten, in their jealousy and spite, the people of the city of the golden sun raised up their magic. They could not harm the People, for the Five protected them. They could not strike against the Five, for the People protected them.

So they turned their magic on themselves.

Rather than allow the People to claim their prize, they raised up their hands to Rafandimathur and Routhauger. They called upon the Red Eye saying "Protect us! Raise a wall around our city! Are we not mighty? Have we not raised a second sun and brought eternal Spring to the lands of winter? Are we not more powerful than those who come against us, who have thrown a ring of spears around our city? Turn your eye upon us, oh walker in the sky, that we may show these ores that our power is greater even than that of their Dragons upon their mighty Thrones."

And the Red Eye looked down upon them.

And their tower cracked.

And their sun fell.

The Coming of the Greenhunger

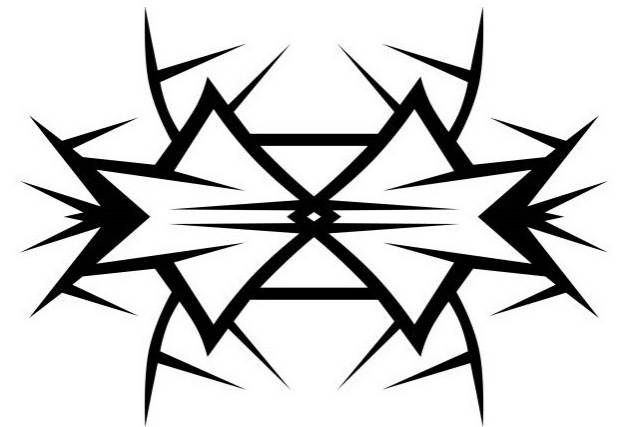
From the ruins of their tower, and their sun, the Greenhunger came. It rose as gyre of power possessed only of the urge To Be. As the boiling water of the hot spring gathers and rises, sending a plume of Fire against the sky, it came. Yet where the water of the hot springs falls back to the pool, ready to rise again, the tide of the Greenhunger did not ebb. It rose and rose and where it touched it tore down the city of the intruders.

And the Five upon their Thrones looked upon the folly of the invaders. They saw what they had unleashed in their hubris and their jealousy. They saw that it was a hunger that could never be sated, a hunger even greater than that of He Who Walks Behind The Wind. They saw it rising, and growing, and in time consuming all the world.

The warlocks among the vermin of the south raised up their hands, and spilled their blood, and spoke their words of power but their magic was weak. At best they could slow the Greenhunger for a time, time enough for their cowardly flight south.

Yet the Greenhunger followed at their heels, washing over Hahlerm and beginning to spread its hungry tendrils to Kogur also.

And, as before, once their hold was broken, the invaders found the people of the forest waiting for those who fled, with ropes and spears. This time the people of the forest sought no passage-toll, and took any of the invaders who fell into their hands as slaves, or left them for the dark roots of the trees to feast upon. The vermin of the south had been arrogant, and their arrogance had offended the people of the forest just as it had offended the Five Who Sit Upon Their Mountain Thrones.





Yet apart from the weak magic of the intruders, the land itself rebelled against the touch of the Greenhunger. With the second sun shattered, and its tower broken, the winds of Five generations blew down from the north bringing with them unseasonal snow and ice. And the Will of Caridis Runebinder flew with those winds, and the Will of Tahenon the Gyre roused them and wove them into a spear, and Night-Dark Fragnir stole the warmth from the land with the shroud of his Will.

And where the cold winds blew, the Greenhunger faltered and became sluggish, and its expansion slowed, and it fell to slumber. In this way was Kögur spared, although the thing could not be rooted from Stathis or Hahlerm.

The Five on their Thrones knew that the Winter would not last - nor should it for eternal Winter would be a curse as terrible as eternal Spring - but again it bought time for a true solution to be found.

And in the year that followed, the Five turned all their thought toward devising a solution. Orobos the Chained sought out the cunning Grandfather Shadow, and the wise Grandmother

Winter, and the knowledge of the King-of-Ruins, and the artifice of the Raiser-of-Walls and the Hammer-Forged-Flame.

And Hinodir of the Bright Orb called the warlocks to her Throne and set upon them the task of finding a way to contain the Greenhunger when the winter ended and Spring once again came upon the north.

The Great Warding

And so a great working was begun, to ward all the world against the Greenhunger.

First, guided by Orobos the Chained and by the wisdom of Grandmother Winter, and the artifice of the Raiser-of-Walls and Hammer-Forged-Flame, an arc of power was laid upon the land. Not an arc of spears but an arc of mithril woven with the Will of the Chained, to hold and channel the magic of the ward.

Then as the last sun of Winter set and the cold Red Eye rose, the Five bound their Will as One with their People and drew down the power of the stars of Year's Ending.

The Will of Caridis Runebinder carved the runes of protection into the land, and the Will of Tahenon the Gyre gave strength to the People that they might burn like beacons beneath the cold stars, and the Will of Hinodir of the Bright Orb brought light to the warlocks so that they might see one another and work as one, and the Will of Orobos the Chained bound all the People as one, and the Will of Night-Dark Fragnir looked outwards through the eyes of his watchers to ensure none came unlookedfor to the place where all their Will was made manifest.

Strengthened by the profligate gifts of Grandfather Shadow, and by sacrifice given to the King-of-Ruins, they placed a great ban upon the Greenhunger and upon all the land of Skuld.

And when the first sun of Spring rose the next morning, the Greenhunger slumbered, contained amid the ruins of the city of the Golden Sun, and to the path of fear the vermin of the south had forged for it as they fled back into the forest lands.

The Sacrifice

Yet the horror that the intruders had unleashed was a thing of the Red Eye, who some call the King-of-the-Heavens, and even the Five Unending must listen when the Red King speaks. And the Red King wove a ban upon the land and spoke to the Dragons saying "this thing is a promise, and an unanswered oath, and it lies within my eye."

And unlike the intruders, unlike the vermin of the south, the Five are wiser than to draw the eye of the Ráfandimathur and Routhauger, who turns things awry, who is not what he seems to be.

So the Greenhunger remains, sleeping, in the ruins. And each generation the Five draw their Will together and again lay down the magic of their ban upon it, and upon all the land of Skuld .

And this is the nature of our sacrifice, that keeps the Greenhunger contained and prevents it devouring everything that lies south of the Ever-Frost. For the magic that ensures the Greenhunger slumbers means that Spring comes no more to the land of Skuld , and that Summer and Autumn instead become a single season of cold rain, and early snows, and sour soil.

Life finds little purchase in the soil of Skuld , and the seed quickens slowly.

The people who dwell in Skuld , who watch the Greenhunger, and the mountains of the south have fewer children than the tribes of the west, and their herds are smaller.

Yet still the people endure, through the will of their warlocks, who bring the blessings of the Five, the touch of Caridis Runebinder, to quicken the seed in its season and ensure there is sufficient food for all who need it.



Yet it is not the Will of the Runebinder that every farm and ever herd bear the mark of that touch, so that the people may prosper.

Those who wish to raise a family to the glory of the Five will travel the road toward the setting sun and dwell for a time in Nithoggir or Verthandi before returning with their children to rejoin their tribes and raise their offspring on the plains of Skuld.

We pay the price of our sacrifice willingly - for one day we know that the Red King will speak again and say "The promise is fulfilled, and the oath answered, and I turn my eye elsewhere".

And then the Five will send us forth again to destroy the Greenhunger and there will be no more need to lay their Will upon Skuld, and our people will claim the ruins the intruders left behind and our land be whole again.

The Second Tear-of-Fire

The Greenhunger of Skuld slumbers.

Yet within a handspan of years since, a second Tear-of-Fire has fallen, a second Child-of-Rafandimathur-and-Routhauger has been born, and a second time have the Dragons reached out their hands and decreed that it fall upon Skuld .

In time, one who as a far descendant of the vermin who wrought the Greenhunger was brought before the Throne of Chains, and spoke respectfully, and the one who sits upon the Throne inclined their head to him and listened to his petition. This one was named "Merel of the Far Forest" and while he was of the blood of the vermin, still the Five Who Sit Upon The Mountain Thrones heard his words.

And when the Tear-of-Fire fell from the heaven, and the people of the forest wove their magic at the Will of the Five, and sent it to fall upon Skuld, we stood at the boundary of Stathas and looked upon the Greenhunger so that we might tell this "Merel of the Far Forest" what occurred.

For five days and six nights, the skies over Skuld were shadowed in twilight.

The earth heaved, like the branches of a tree in a great storm.

The hills turned and rolled, and the trees were snapped from their roots.

Ash and hot embers fell as rain that burnt and scored the face of the land.

Yet after five days and six nights, the smoke and the fire quieted. The rains came, and the sky was



cleared. For a time the rivers were choked with ash, but soon they ran clear again. The Dragons reached out, and laid their blessing upon the waters and with the power of the sign of the Dragon Throne, the waters ran pure and fresh and - feeble as it is beneath the wards of Skuld - the spark of life was protected.

The face of Skuld was changed, but not as much as the Memory says it was when the First Tear-of-Fire fell. Most of the forests still stood, although burnt by fire. The mammoths and the yaks still roamed the tundra. The people still lived - for this time the Five were ready for the touch of Rafandimathur and Routhauger, and had decreed the tribes of Skud withdraw to Vethandi and Nithoggir.

When the Tear fell, it scattered fragments of fire about itself, that fall upon the land. It rained fire and embers. These embers burned where they fell, and brought destruction.

Some of the shards of fire fell upon Stathas. Where they struck, they burned away the body of the Greenhunger. Yet for all their heat the fires burned fitfully. And within hours new growth, and the choking breath of the Greenhunger flowed back. Within days the harm done to the Greenhunger had been replenished. Within weeks, it seemed as if the places where the fire had burned were *more* green, and *more* savage than they had been previously, and the beasts that serve as the hands and eyes of the Greenhunger gathered close around.

The Dragons teach us that when the Greenhunger is hurt it grows back more furious than before, which is why we are patient, and watch, and wait for it to show its weakness just as its progenitors did so many turnings of the sky ago.