

A collection of documents on Rhonwen's Fall, in Miaren

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To be presented to ~~Mera Eternal~~, Advisor on the Vallorn

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The documents I have found are the most accurate that I can recover about Rhonwen's Fall, however, they do contradict themselves. The issue with looking at pre-Imperial history is that a lot of the writing is based upon conjecture. There are little writings remaining from that time and what we had were destroyed in the reign of Emperor Nicovarr.

I have tried to annotate where possible, although after my recent ordeals I apologise that I have not been as thorough as I would like to be under normal circumstances.

## Rhonwen and the Vallorn

In the early years of the Empire, with the assistance of their new allies, the Navarr launched a major offensive into the territory surrounding the Terunael city known as Seren. A combination of the (relative) peace wrought by the nations that would become the Empire, followed by their unification, had allowed the trods to expand more than at any time since their initial creation. Increased security and the protection of the Imperial law allowed the Navarr stridings to travel the trods in greater numbers than ever before in their history.

The time being right, the Navarr engaged on one of their most ambitious projects to date. Specifically, the attempt to reclaim an entire territory from the vallorn. The central city of Seren was chosen because of its location. Since the trod network was completed, Seren had benefitted the most from the slow leeching of the vallorn's power and was judged to be ripe for liberation.

The vate Rhonwen helped to lay the groundwork fifteen years before the first major offensive. A quiet, introspective woman afflicted with profound deafness from birth, she nonetheless became an adept wielder of ritual magic— and archmage of Winter on three occasions.

She put forward a theory that the vallorn energies were nothing more than a massive, hitherto unknown, regio of the spring realm. Her theory was extremely radical— she theorized further that the problem was the relationship between this magical energy— this super-regio— and the plants and animals that lived inside it. She pointed to the way that Winter regio were known to spontaneously coalesce around battlefields and burial grounds. While not all Winter regio occupied such locations, there was almost always a connection between the area where the regio occurred and the resonances of the realm it was connected to. Indeed, eternal had been known to be capable of actively exploiting these connections for centuries, and several were known to offer boons relating to the creation of regio (most especially Prospero, Sadogua, Sorin, and Yaw'nagrah).

She believed that the anchoring effect of the vallorn was tied to the fertility and vitality of the creatures in the area, just as it reinforced and heightened those qualities. Her plan was relatively simple— she and her coven would invoke the ritual known as Wither the Seed in Seren, provided an appropriate regio could be located. In the end, Rhonwen prevailed upon one of the eternal of Winter— believed to be either Sorin or possibly Kaela— for a boon relating to the temporary creation of a strong winter regio in the heart of the area now known as Rhonwen's Fall. Her coven— the Silent Word— and a cadre of thorns managed to secure the area and evoke the regio. They performed the ritual, but were overwhelmed by ettercaps and a veritable army of vallornspawn husks— some clearly dating back to the fall of Seren itself.

The ritual had the usual effect, but it is not clear how much benefit this was to the eventual campaign to reclaim Seren. Indeed, some historians point out that the ritual effects lasted for a further decade after the territory was reclaimed, and may have been responsible for the slow speed of the Navarr rebuilding there. Worse, it robbed the Navarr of a powerful and influential figure who might have helped them arrange the campaign against Seren earlier had she been around. Historians do agree that her ritual had an effect— the ettercaps were sluggish and slow to respond to the initial Imperial invasion of the territory, at the very least, allowing the human armies to liberate an additional region before they (and the other vallorn beasts) were fully roused to murderous fury.

## Sanctuary Falls

Rhonwen's Fall was originally known as Sanctuary Falls and has been a key location in Miaren since the fall of the Terunael Empire. When Seren fell, historical accounts suggest that it was at Sanctuary Falls where the majority of refugees went. Sanctuary Falls is built into cliffs behind the waterfalls of the Gancio River, and it is almost impossible to see the caves from the bottom of the cliffs. The path to the caves are narrow and winding and can be easily guarded (although easily blockaded too) and it is a defensible position that can be trapped or protected by archers. There are reports that more than once the pathway has been flooded to make entrance to the caves totally impassable.

It is well known that the cliffs around Sanctuary Falls contain intricate swirling designs that are thought to contain some insight into the creation of the Trod network. There are many modern Navarr who believe that these were carved by their founders, Navarr and Thorn, who travelled to Sanctuary Falls before the creation of the Trod network. There is no evidence, that this is the case however. There are some accounts from Terunael documents (what few we have) that many of the carvings were in place well before the fall of their Empire. There are also no reports that Navarr or Thorn travelled to Sanctuary Falls, although there are very few records from the time of Navarr to make it possible to know if this is true.

There are, however, documents that a powerful vate by the name of Star<sup>1</sup> travelled from Seren to Sanctuary Falls. It is believed that Star was the daughter of a powerful magister (one of the ruling council of the Terunael cities) and when the city started to fall she was asked to take those she could (especially the younger citizens) to Sanctuary Falls to keep them safe from the Orcs who were attacking Miaren at the time.

What few documents there are about the history of Star tell of Rhonwen's Fall and it is believed that she carved several of the newer markings on the cliff faces during her time there. There is archaeological evidence that both Druj and Jotun were prevalent in the area at the time, although from what we know of them at the moment it is unlikely that they were working together to invade Miaren. Although it is known that Star joined with Navarr upon their journeys and was instrumental in the using of magics to hold back the Barbarian Orcs, often by creating fortresses of living wood or to envenom the weapons of all those who would fight beside them,

There are records that Star returned to Sanctuary Falls several times and it is even thought that she died there, although any investigation into her life from the falls has been met with

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<sup>1</sup> It is unlikely that the Vate's name was Star – this is more likely an honourific based upon the meaning of Seren which seems to translate from laith to Star.

resistance from the Navarr over that time. It is unknown why, although it is more recently claimed that all records from her life have been lost.

Since the fall of Seren, then Sanctuary Falls has been used as a Steading or a place of sanctuary for Stridings in times of danger or over winter. It is thought that over the years the simple caves have been excavated and the steadings there have secret chambers and libraries that run back hundreds of years. There is a saying that "Sanctuary will keep you safe when the waters run red"<sup>2</sup> which is an obvious reference to the Orcs slaughtering the people of Miaren and them taking sanctuary in the caves.

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<sup>2</sup> There could be a more literally meaning of this staying referring to the literally running red of the water every 90 years.

## The carvings on Rhonwen's Fall

Looking at the carvings on sanctuary falls there seem to be twelve key points that are marked upon the cliffs, joined by a complex pattern of spiral carvings. Of these twelve points there are eight that are marked more deeply, with more complicated carvings between them. Although there are rumours that these were carved by Navarr and Thorn, they are of a variety of ages and only the most recent carvings seem to relate to the time at the fall of Terunael, the rest seem a lot older. It would be fair to surmise that there are older carvings that Navarr and Thorn used and deciphered to understand the magics and create the Trod network.<sup>3</sup>

The most commonly held theory is the points relate to twelve or eight vallorn hearts. It is possible that there are four lost cities or four dormant Vallorn hearts, although this is purely conjecture. There are eight vallorn hearts that were aware of (if we include the destroyed heart in Seren), the five within the Empire, one in Thule lands to the North and one in Beantel Dol ruled by the Druj. There are several theories or reports about a sunken Vallorn heart off the Cazatar Bay.<sup>4</sup>

Several scholars have tried to map the carvings onto a map of the Empire but in doing so there are problems where they do not line up with where we know the Vallorn hearts in the Empire are and it is not possible to map the Trods using this methods.

A little known account from 176 YE tells of the Vate, Siroi Leafstalker, who claimed to have been able to map the markings on Rhonwen's Fall to a map of the Empire. Siroi had worked with a group of Urizen Stargazers to predict changes in the Spring Realm over time, and the mapping of the Vallorn hearts under this algorithm was accurate to fifty miles within the Empire. Siroi was declared a Sorcerer in 179 YE by the conclave and her theories were widely discredited.

It is not known if the full details on her theories were lost in the reign of Nicovarr or deliberately destroyed by the Conclave, but second hand reports show that it was believed that she believed that the three points not in the Empire were to be found in Otkodov, The Mallum and The Broken Shore. The mapping of the four other points using Siroi's theories showed the other four markings to be mapped in Narkust, The Lassambrian Hills, Axos and The Vore

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<sup>3</sup> Other reports imply that it was Star that did the carving rather than Navarr, although it is hard to cobate these accounts.

<sup>4</sup> I can find no evidence that there is a sunken heart in the Cazatar Bay.

## The Fall running Red

Records from the time when the Silent Word performed their ritual at Rhonwen's Fall were that the waterfall ran with blood. Here is one of the contemporary accounts of the event.

"As Rhonwen took her stand, the host of the Vallorn came from the Forests. Almost a thousand husks came from the heart of the Forest. As they marched up the narrow path, led by a host of foul ettercaps. As they pushed forwards through the mouth of the Fall, the brave defenders took down many. Vates called the powers of Spring to make their staves drip with venom whilst spear and bow felled a multitude of the host. All those who watched from the shadow of the Fall saw at that moment as the clear waters of the Fall turned a dark red and blood started to run down the mouth of the caves."

There have been many followers of Rhonwen over the years who have stated that this was a miracle, and one of the signs that Rhonwen should be declared an Exemplar.<sup>5</sup> The opponents to this have either argued that this is a magical affect from the Winter Realm or the more cynical have put this down to coincidence with impurities from the Orichalcum mines that are at the top of the Fall. It was generally accepted that the bleeding that was seen during Rhonwen's ritual was due the Orichalcum, and this has occurred three times since in known history.

In the rule Empress Aenea there was a report of the Fall bleeding. Although it was heavily debated whether this was due to the Orichalcum,, the conclave sent a small group of skilled mages including the Spring Archmage, Badden Eternal and the Winter Archmage Enchanter Blaihot of House Bascombe of Dawn. The two were close friends, and spent some time investigating the fall. The next season, the two archmages were summoned to the conclave to explain what they had seen and what had happened there. Both archmages were highly respected and their actions took many of the conclave by surprise. When ordered by the conclave to speak of their findings they refused to speak of anything they had seen or heard there and after several hours of arguing including declarations of sorcery being placed against them both and challenges from several other mages for their roles. Their reputation was such that the declarations of sorcery both failed and their positions as archmages looked secure. It was thought that they Synod was planning on condemning them and pushing towards excommunication and so they eventually stepped down, refusing to contest their positions.

In the years that followed, Badden formed a wayhouse in Miaren where he settled down and tended to the needs of any who were passing. It is said that Blaihot returned to Dawn and removed himself from active life, although his daughter became a highly successful general.

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<sup>5</sup> Liberation, Recognition, Benevolence, Inspiration, Miracles, Pilgrimage, Salvation, Legacy.

There were, however, rumours that her success was due to the fact that the Eastern Sky was always backed up by a host of undying spirits summoned by her father.<sup>6</sup>

The second time that there were reports of the Fall bleeding was in the Interregnum before Emperor Nicovarr and Empress Marika. The senator of Miaren at the time was a Merrow Broker by the name of Leri Ravenswing, who ordered a full investigation into the bleeding. The mines at the top of the Fall were closed, and the small Steading of Long-Shadow was created this day as the mines were relocated to the bottom of the fall inside the long shadow of the cliffs.

There were still reports that there were still deposits of the Orichalcum in the water, and so Leri visited Rhonwen's Fall personally. She spent over a week at Rhonwen's Fall and investigated the mines and the routes personally. She claimed the moving of the mines to be an economic success and it was soon after this that she started her campaign for Empress.

Leri was a polarising figure in the Senate and it is said that it was her nomination for Empress that caused many of the other candidates to pull out and to place their support behind either Leri or Marika. Reports of the time tell of rumours that Leri cursed Marika to scare her from standing for Empress, some say that Marika was cursed to age where as there are other stories that she had nightmares that caused her restless sleep. There are other reports that the curses were placed by Tekupala to remove the support of Leri from the senate. The curses definitely did not help Leri's campaign, and she returned to her Steading after this and destroyed all records of her time as senator. There are no records of Leri returning to Anvil or political life.

The last time the Fall bled was during the reign of Empress Deanne. As a native of Miaren, Deanne arrived to Rhonwen's Fall personally where she met with members of the Silent-Word coven and a young guide by the name of Dewi Shadowbirch.<sup>7</sup> With the mines having moved to the bottom of the Fall it was believed that it was flooding of the old mine shafts that caused the bleeding of the waters.

There are once again no records of the meeting. Senate records show that when Empress Deanne was about her time there she commented on the hospitality of her hosts but laughed away the blood talking about the fact that sometimes things are mysteries for a reason. There are no other mentions of the meeting. Dewi never returned home and went on to become the host of the Navarr Egregore Spirit. It was said that he spent his remaining years walking the Trods and giving guidance to those who would listen.

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<sup>6</sup> The casting of Quickening Cold meat was rarely cast before the fall of Britta due to the potential side effects of where the Spirits go after the ritual finishes. However, the Eastern Sky was known to have this ritual cast upon it twice during this time

<sup>7</sup> Shadowbirch Steading is based in Therunin in the Steading of Return.



## Rhonwen's Fall

Rhonwen's Fall is home to several groups, some are Stridings based there and others are Steadings that use Rhonwen's Fall as a sheltering point over winter.

Fallshome Steading is the major steading that is still based in Rhonwen's Fall. They have skilled brokers and artisans and often trade the rich Orichalcum that is found in the area.

Gerallt Fallshome was the Cardinal of Vigilance in the Reign of Empress Giselle and members of the Fallshome steading have been General of the Quiet Step three times in Imperial History. Fallshome Steading are welcoming for any Navarr who would need sanctuary, although they have set up waystations to trade away from the falls themselves.

Silent-Word who are a small striding that return to Rhonwen's Fall most Winters to rest, they claim to be the descendants of Rhonwen herself and have made sure that every time that the Fall has run red that they open up their halls to those who would come and witness. There are no records that they have ever been active in Anvil although there are records of their involvement in political matters where Rhonwen's Fall has been mentioned on in records. Fallshome Steading say that Silent-Word have their own rooms and accommodations in the Fall which only they can access— this includes a full banquet hall that is used when they invite guests to the Fall.

The small steading of long-shadow still exists at the bottom of the fall providing Orichalcum for the artisans in Fallshome. This steading was established by the Miaren Senator Leri Ravenswing<sup>8</sup> when she relocated the mines at the top of the Fall to the foot of them. Although long-shadow is a small steading it has a proud heritage and refuses to be named as part of Fallshome itself.

The striding of Ivymoon, although based in Trejii, used to regularly walk the roads from Rhonwen's Fall to Trejii although the steading has not been heard of since the Gatekeeper of Loyalty, Adain Ivymoon, was slain at the fall of Trejii. The Ivymoon steading has had a renowned history<sup>9</sup> since it was formed after the Death of Emperor James.h

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<sup>8</sup> See above for details of Leri.

<sup>9</sup> Deanne Ivymoon was one of the original founders of the Ivymoon striding.