

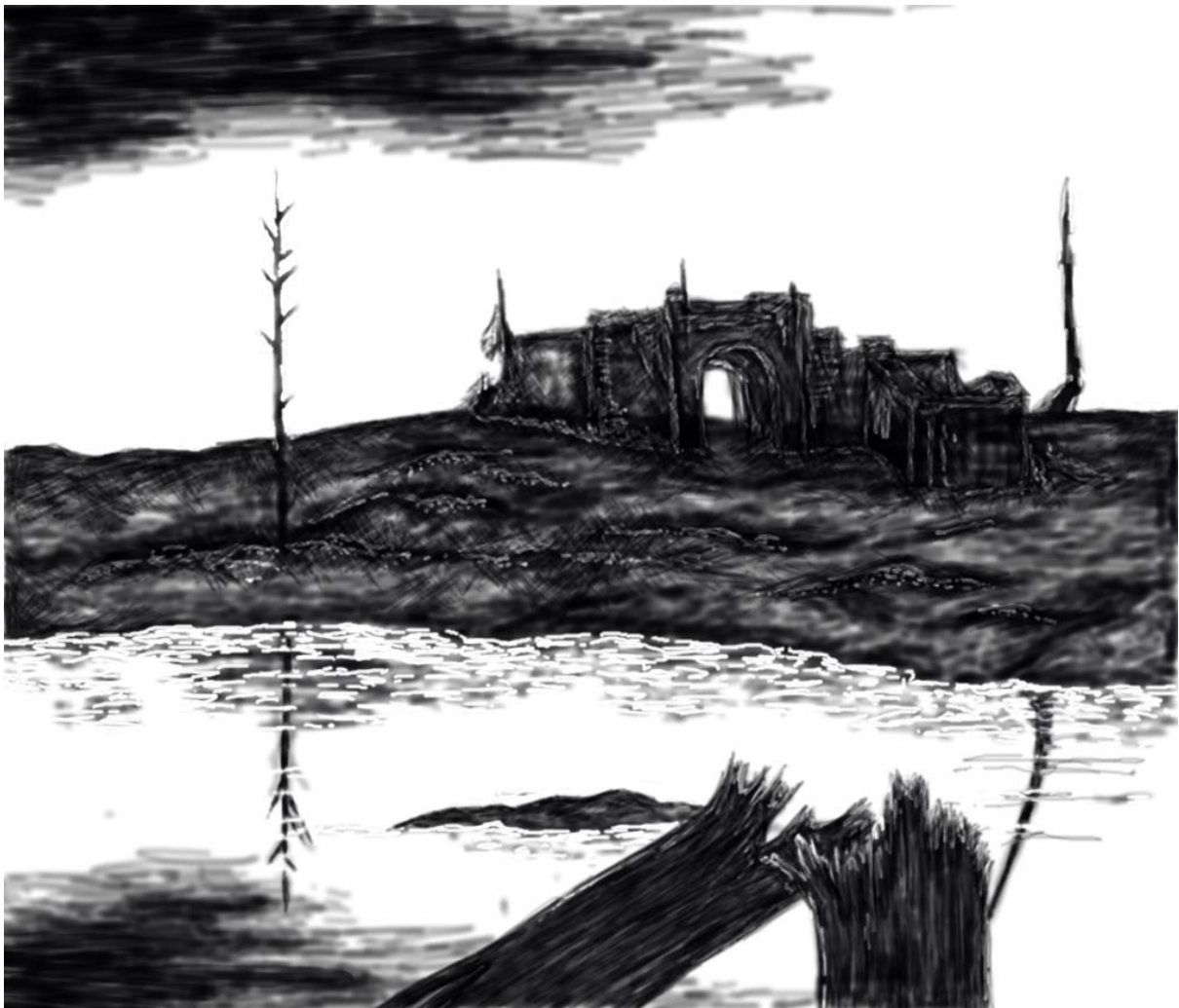
Over the Top

Guide to the Past



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2364: The war, mostly on the continent of Magos, between the Elven Compact and the Alliance of Many. Now nearly a year old, the Great War has seen trench lines divide Magos and war divide her nations. Across the continent the magic of Magos' antiquity mixes with the industry of her today, producing monstrous mechanisms for a conflict with no end in sight.





History of Magos

Magos' history stretches back over two-thousand years, of which the Great War is only a small portion. In contrast to the year old conflict, the Elven Imperium stood for over a thousand years and shaped the future of Magos as much as it did the past. Indeed, the war itself is a product of the Imperium even if there is no more Elfish empire to speak of.

The Deep, Dark Times


Anything prior to the year 0 falls within Magos' prehistory, the time before speculated events and recorded history. The prehistory of Magos is often referred to as the Geist times. The faithful of Helios preach that the world was formed from pure magic transmuted into soil, sea and sky. If this was the case, it is pure speculation but at the very least, the prehistory of Magos was also its most magical time dominated by the Geist, entities of a largely magical biology.

Antiquity or the Long Age of the Elves (0-1796)

Magos' Antiquity is also referred to as the long age of the Elves. Recorded history begins with the foundation of the Elfish City-States in Svartheim, expanding their civilization northward through conquest and trade. By 405, the Elven Imperium had formed, coming to rule all of Magos from the island of Isla to foothills of Durwuz Ruf's mountains. Under the Imperium, Dwarf, Halfling, Human and others came to be indoctrinated in Elf culture. Where the city-states had been largely Elfish, with non-Elves denied citizenship the Imperium reforged the Elf as a noble ruling caste of extended families. The Imperium constructs many great works, such as the Ivory Tower – a receptacle for all of Magos' magical lore and energy. It also changes the face of Magos forever. When the Ivory Tower is destroyed in 1012 during the Imperium's civil war, magical innovation and learning stagnates into repetition of existing arts. When the Imperium fell in 1414 under a mixture of economic pressures, internal strife and external pressures, only politics fell with it. The Elven families that once took the Forum floor under the watchful eye of the Regents and Emperor of the Imperium retained their holdings and personal armies. In the wake of this disintegration, Alheim, the Border Crowns and Svartheim retained the trappings and title of the Imperium, while Isla, Keltoin and Albion emerged as independent kingdoms.

A Craze of Witches, the Dark Age (1797-2208)

The Dark Age of Magos followed the Geist Sickness, caused by the awakening of the old magic by Dis Pater, a Wizard of dubious origin. While the sickness itself occurred only for two years from 1797 to 1798, it killed over sixty percent of the population. Elves are particularly harshly struck, being more magical within their biology. Dis Pater attracts a large cult with the Mage himself being worshiped as a witch-god. The cult of Dis Pater itself is illegal and condemned by Magos' legitimate faiths. Still, Dis Pater's followers become numerous and provide a contrast for the older, established religions, themselves hailing from the pantheon of the Elven Imperium. The poor folk often seek a way out of the drudgery of their lives and protection from the Geist itself. The wealthy seek social advancement, profit, intrigue and adventure. Aside from the turmoil it causes, however, the awakening of the old magic does result in the first new magical research and innovation in Magos since the destruction of the Ivory Tower. This is also an age of turmoil for Magos as the Oruk Empire invade from the south. The Oruk take the Border Crowns in 1902, and lay siege to the Imperium's capital of Venden in 2032. While the Oruk are turned back from Venden and greater Magos, the result is over a century of border warfare that results in the long anticipated death of the Imperium. The area that will become the nation of Svartheim one day reforms into the Elven Princedoms, a loosely federated league of small kingdoms akin in spirit to the city-states of old. While Alheim retains the title of the Imperium internally, its contemporary title is used everywhere else.





The Age of Industry (2209-present)

With the invention of the Steam Engine in Durwuz Ruf the ages change again. Zerom Amber Mountain, the Dwarven inventor of the device, intends to use his engine for pumping water out of mines. But in the kingdom of Albion has a large work force, ample colonies and little land compared to other nations. In desperate need to revolutionize labour, Blake Wallance introduces a steam engine into his factory, with roaring success and ample imitation soon following. More reliable, accessible and with repeatable effects than magic, industrial power soon becomes common place. The change is profound, with the wealth of Albion's old Elven nobility outstripped by the Captains of Industry in just a decade. A mixture of being outstripped in production and resistance by local Elfish noble families to suffer the same fate as their neighbours plunges Keltoin into economic depression and famine culminating in a bloody revolution from 2238 to 2249. During these years, Keltoin's Elven nobles are forcibly stripped of their wealth, political power and lives. The result is a democratic government in Keltoin and a constitutional monarchy in Albion, with the latter's own royal family seeking to avoid a similar fate. Yet, even as industrialization overtakes Magos the Imperium's legacy lingers. The Elven Princedoms unite into the industrial nation of Svartheim in 2356. Svartheim's role in Magos is uncertain and it is quickly wooed into an alliance with Alheim. Concerns over an Imperium renaissance prompt a similar alliance from Albion, Keltoin and Durwuz Ruf. For a while the web of alliances holds.

2363: The First Year of the War


When the war begins, everyone expected it to end quickly and efficiently, just like the factories that produce its weapons. In truth no one in Magos is prepared for the war, especially her generals. Colonial skirmishes against technologically inferior enemies or small forces of industrial rivals have not taught its soldiers or their leaders what will happen when industrial nations throw all they have against one and another.

The Border Crown incident

The bond with Svartheim emboldens the old guard in Alheim who see this as their time and push for expansion into the Border Crowns, a political hotspot with a civil war and uncertain future after the retraction of the Oruk Empire from the region in 2271. While the Border Crowns have a long history with the Imperium, the Oruk presence has given it a high Orc population. But even before the Elves and the Orcs, the region was home to Dwarves. With the Oruk Empire having withdrawn their claim, both Alheim and Durwuz Ruf lay their claims. For a time, however, it seems a three-way civil war is in the process between Dwarf, Elf and Orc factions and this will determine its future. In the civil war itself two of the factions - Elf and Dwarf - have the backing of Alheim and Durwuz Ruf respectively, with the Orcish being the wild card middle man. That is until Alheim's ambassador to the region, Prince Dinalah Gosben, is assassinated. While rumours persist that it was neither the Dwarves nor the Orcs but the Mab-mor, a secret society of Necromancers descended from Dis Pater's worshippers, who conducted the assassination. The rumours go fail to be investigated, however, as Alheim responds by invading the Border Crowns. In response, Durwuz Ruf declares war on Alheim and Svartheim. Svartheim promptly follows with declarations against Albion and Keltoin.

The Initial Foray

Svartheim is bold and young, its Generals believe if they can strike hard and fast Keltoin can be removed from the War. Between the nations of the Elven Compact it is hoped that such a strike will cause the Alliance of Many Races to crumble. In this plan, it is Alheim's task to keep Durwuz Ruf at bay. Svartheim march for Lights, and in a lightning series of victories manage to push their way to the



city's outskirts. But before the Compact can capitalize on these victories, the Dwarves respond more firmly than anticipated causing Alheim to falter and calls for reinforcements from its Svartheim ally. Forced to defend its eastern border, and pushed back by the combined forces of Keltoin and Albion, Svartheim adopts defensive tactics. The industrial age has given militaries across Magos many tools to fight defensively such as barbed wire and machine guns and Svartheim uses these tools well, creating a long series of trenches across the east and west of the Compact nations. But while industry has advanced warfare, it has not touched the minds of the Generals who still use tactics suited for the colonial struggles beyond the continent. When the Alliance cannot overcome the Compact's trenches it thus builds their own to match.

The First One-Hundred

In the first hundred days of trench warfare the Alliance loses one-hundred-thousand soldiers, most of whom hail from Keltoin, but amongst whom many are counted as the Queen's Guard from Albion. The Compact suffers similar loses. The impact sees the Generals turning to Magos' inventors and wizards in the hopes of finding weapons that will win the war. Tanks, Golems, mustard gas, necromancy... hideous new innovations are mixed with the monstrosities of the Antiquity and Dark Age. But nothing in those first, frantic, days brings with it the decisive breakthrough that the Generals are expecting and as the state of affairs settles in, attrition becomes the nature of the conflict.



Magic Items

Geist Stone

Made from pure magic, solidified into the form of a crystal-like stone, Geist Stone is a lingering relic from Magos' prehistory. Often found deep underground, in the cavernous reaches below the earth, Geist Stone radiates magic and automatically infects those who touch it. Anyone who touches Geist Stone to their bare skin may cast Spells as a Level 1 Magic User. If the Hero is a Cleric, Elf, Magic User or other class with spell casting abilities, they may cast Spells as if they were 1 level higher. However, the effects of Geist Stone are highly toxic and anyone who uses a Geist Stone must make a Save versus Poison. If failed, the Hero's STR drops by -1, with all attacks and damage rolled with a -1 penalty (a minimum of 1 HP of damage is always dealt). This effect remains for 1D4 hours and is cumulative. Thus if the Hero uses a Geist Stone three times and fails all three rolls, the suffer -3 STR, -3 to all attacks and damage rolls with the effect remaining for 3D4 hours. While most Geist Stones are quite small, it is speculated that larger ones exist deeper.

Magic Firearms

While swords are far more traditional, and it is seen as vulgar by many traditional nobles, magic firearms are becoming more common in the trenches by the day. Typically magic firearms are the work of a Squads magic user or some rough traditional enchantment. If randomly determining the nature and powers of a magic firearm, roll firstly for the type of firearm on Table A, then the magic properties of it on Table B. If ammunition is rolled, the item is determined by the type of firearm.


Table A: Type of Firearm.

Roll 1D4	Item
1	Machine Gun
2	Pistol
3	Rifle
4	Shotgun

Table B: Magical Properties.

Roll 1D00	Item
01	Single Bullet or Shell, One Shot
02-20	Ammunition +1 (one box, belt, magazine)
21-30	Ammunition +1 (one box, belt, magazine), Acid
31-40	Ammunition +1 (one box, belt, magazine), Exploding (5' Radius)
41-50	Ammunition +2 (one box, belt, magazine)
51-55	Ammunition +2 (one box, belt, magazine), Paralysis
56-60	Ammunition +3 (one box, belt, magazine)
61-70	Firearm +1
71-75	Firearm +1, +2 versus rats
76-80	Firearm +1, Charging
81-85	Firearm +1, Fast Reload
86-90	Firearm +2
91-93	Firearm +2, +3 versus undead
94-96	Firearm +2, Detect Enemies
97-99	Firearm +3
100	Firearm +3, +4 versus dragons

Charging: Anyone wielding this firearm may move an extra 20' during combat as a free action.



Fast Reload: Anyone wielding this firearm may reload as a free action.

Detect Enemies: Once per day, anyone wielding this firearm may use the Detect Enemies Spell as if they were a magic user of equivalent level.

One Shot: On a successful hit, a target struck with this bullet or shell must make a Save vs. Death or die instantly.

Valve

Emerging during the Industrial Age, Valves were a combination of magic and mechanism. A Valve itself is a sealed container with a heated filament running through it. The filament in turn heats the vapour inside the Valve, causing the emission of the energies that give the item its effect. Valves typically have clockwork mechanism attached that, when wound heats the filament. The mechanism takes one full round to wind, and once wound lasts for a further ten rounds. The effects of the Valve vary based on the mechanism, though while active all Valves emit a glowing light within a 3' radius. When found in a Labyrinth, roll to determine the Valve type:

<u>Roll 1D4</u>	<u>Item</u>
1	Aether Valve
2	Ectoplasm Valve
3	Luur Valve
4	Mana Valve

Aether

A type of lighter than air gas from the upper atmosphere, acquired only by specially designed airships, Aether is a type of celestial energy. When activated, an Aether Valve will reduce gravity for the Hero. While active, the Hero may walk on walls or ceilings as if they were the floor. Should the Hero become unstuck, however, with both feet off the wall, floor or ceiling they remain fixed in place - hovering in mid-air until they can either reach a surface or the Aether Valve runs out of time.

Ectoplasm


Ectoplasm is the bodily substance of ghostly creatures such as Spectres. While active, the Hero wielding an Ectoplasm Valve gains some measure of a ghost's body, becoming incorporeal. As such, the Hero can walk through walls and pass through solid objects with ease. During this time, only Spells, magical weapons or foes can harm them.

Luur

Luur is Elven for the "Fire of Life". It is an electrical-like energy that flows through every body and living creature - magical, mortal and immortal. Each round a Luur Valve is active, it will heal all within a radius of 3' - friend and foe - 1 Hit Point each round the Valve is active.

Mana

The energized form of magic, Mana is raw arcane power. While a Mana Valve is active, any Elf or Magic-User within a radius of 3' from the valve can cast any Spell they have access to at their level without it counting towards their current total of Spells per day. Raw Mana is, however, quite volatile and for each Spell cast, the caster suffers Xd6 damage with X equal to the level of the Spell.



Monsters

Baedhel

The Baedhel - or Elf-Wight - are the honoured ancestors of Elf-kind. In the high days of the Imperium, many honoured leaders, beloved poets and other esteemed examples of the Elfish race were embalmed, resurrected and entombed in deep catacombs. Dwelling in vast underground necropolis', the Baedhel were kings of the dead. Not only did they keep necromancers and other foul grave-plunderers at bay, but were actively sought in times of crisis for their martial aid and timeless wisdom. Today, most Baedhel refuse to take part in the so-called Great War - viewing industrial combat as dishonourable.


	<u>Baedhel</u>
No. Enc.:	1d4 (2D8)
Alignment:	Lawful
Movement:	120' (40')
Armour Class:	5
Hit Dice:	2+1
Attacks:	1
Damage:	1d8 or weapon
Save:	E3
Morale:	12
Hoard Class:	XXI
XP:	35
Notes:	May cast Animate Dead once per day, raising 3 HD of Undead.

Trench Rat

Back in the Dark Age, Dis Pater used rats to spread the Geist Sickness amongst Magos' population. The magic of the Geist Sickness did not kill all the Rats. Some survived and were transmuted into humanoid creatures by the magic. Coming to dwell in the sewers and cavernous underground of Magos, these creatures were the horrors of the slums in the Industrial Age but it is in the Trenches of the Great War they have truly become realized as a terrible threat (thus the name). Herein, the Trench Rats emerge from underground to harry the trenches themselves - often emerging through the labyrinth of tunnels built under No Man's Land which so often accidentally crash into cavernous world below Magos.

The Secret War

Aldric ran, haphazardly, through the vast cavernous tunnels beneath No Man's Land - holding his lantern out before him to light the way. While massed rows of soldiers died up above, Dwarf and Miner had built a vast network of tunnels beneath the Western Front. In these tunnels, a far more brutal war took place. Fearing cave-in or accidental landing a shot on mining explosives, small arms were cast aside. Rather, beneath the front, soldiers fought hand-to-hand like some brutal gladiatorial contest. But it was not the enemy Aldric and his peers had fought today, but something else. They had tunnelled into a ruin and went exploring. This was not unheard of, as the Elves had built many an old establishment, now lost. But as the miners ventured deeper, Aldric saw the Elfish themselves had built their own over something far older. And then, they came. Wheeling as he neared some half-tumbled stairs, Aldric saw the entire band had followed him - upright, five-foot-something rats that wore tattered shreds of clothing and held ancient weapons in articulated hands. The vermin took Aldric's pause as an opportunity and clustered around him. Taking a step towards the stairs, the rat-folks ranks closed quickly in that direction - leaving Aldric with no room to manoeuvre. At least Aldric could be comforted by the fact that they feared his escape. Setting his lantern down slowly, Aldric reached for his trench-knife...





	<u>Trench Rat</u>
No. Enc.:	1d10 (4d10)
Alignment:	Chaotic
Movement:	60' (20')
Armour Class:	7
Hit Dice:	1
Attacks:	1 (weapon)
Damage:	1d6 or weapon, Geist Sickness.
Save:	F1
Morale:	8
Hoard Class:	III (XX)
XP:	6
Notes:	On being wounded by a Trench Rat, a Hero has a 10% chance of contracting a Geist Sickness. A Save versus Disease is permitted. If failed, the Hero gains the ability to use Spells as if they were a Level 1 Magic User (or gains 1 level if already capable of using Spells) but dies 1d4 days later.

War Elementals

War Elementals tend to be perverted variations of traditional Elementals. Some are twisted into creatures of wanton destruction either through deliberate military developments. Others are transformed by the carnage of war from their innate state. At any rate, War Elementals are wholly dangerous. War Elementals tend to be weaker than their traditional counterparts, formed from a specific and often circumstantial mixture of chemicals. Like traditional Elementals, however, War Elementals can be summoned in the typical three manners with those summoned by a staff having an AC of 6 and 2 Hit Dice. War Elementals summoned through other means have an AC 4 and Hit Dice of 4. Those War Elementals that emerge from the ambient mana, pain, torment and carnage of the battlefield itself are the most powerful and dangerous, possessing an AC of 2 and 6 Hit Dice.

	<u>Gas Elemental</u>
No. Enc.:	1 (1)
Alignment:	Chaotic.
Movement (Fly):	360' (120')
Armour Class:	6/4/2
Hit Dice:	2/4/6
Attacks:	Special, see below.
Damage:	Special, see below.
Save:	Fighter 4/8/12
Morale:	10
Hoard Class:	None.
XP:	20/80/320
Notes:	Anyone attacked by a Gas Elemental must make a saves against poison or death. Failure means death for the character.





Filth Elemental


No. Enc.: 1 (1)
Alignment: Chaotic
Movement: 60' (20')
Armour Class: 6/4/2
Hit Dice: 2/4/6
Attacks: 1
Damage: 1D8
Save: Fighter 4/8/12
Morale: 10
Hoard Class: None.
XP: 20/80/320
Notes: Filth Elementals are typically made up of the mud, shrapnel, shell casings, decomposing bodies, bodily waste and other waste of the trenches and No Man's Land. Anyone struck by a Filth Elemental must make a Save vs. Poison or Disease or suffer -2 to a random ability score for 1D6 days.

Petrol Elemental

No. Enc.: 1 (1)
Alignment: Chaotic
Movement: 120' (40')
Armour Class: 6/4/2
Hit Dice: 2/4/6
Attacks: 1
Damage: Special, see below.
Save: Fighter 4/8/12
Morale: 10
Hoard Class: None.
XP: 20/80/320
Notes: Anyone struck by a Petrol Elemental must make a Saving Throw vs. Breath Weapons or suffer 1D6 damage. Any creature successfully struck continues to burn and must make a Saving Throw vs. Death each round for 1D6 rounds or die.

Corpse Elemental

No. Enc.: 1 (1)
Alignment: Chaotic
Movement: 120' (40')
Armour Class: 6/4/2
Hit Dice: 2/4/6
Attacks: 1/2/3
Damage: 1D8/1D8/1D8
Save: Fighter 4/8/12
Morale: 10
Hoard Class: None.
XP: 20/80/320
Notes: Corpse Elementals come from the obvious source: the bodies of soldiers themselves. They appear as a mismatched mass of random body parts and gain a number of attacks based on their size.





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