

## **The Time Of Judgement And The End Of The Campaign Of Blood**

For one year the Campaign of Blood was waged. The land was rife with minions of death doing Myraak's bidding, and everywhere we fought them. Rituals of good and evil were performed unceasingly. And yet when the end came near, the battles of moons before seemed to pale in comparison. The dark general, Myraak's undead champion, gathered his armies into battle, and for Korem's part, Kaylin Sunstone, a noble paladin struck dead once before a thousand years ago at the last campaign, joined at our sides in battle. Each held incredible power, unflinching despite whatever attacks they suffered. For a week we battled the undead army, felling untold numbers of lesser undead — zombies, skeletons, ghouls — and even slaying the wraiths, wights, and other greater forms, along with necromancers, paladins of Myraak, and never-before-seen creations such as exploding zombies.

In the end, Kaylin and Myraak's champion faced off, in honor combat, in the graveyard. The surrounding armies quieted to watch, or perhaps there were no other undead present to be fought. Despite their lack of rest over the week before and having emerged from unceasing battle, they joined in combat with no reservation, throwing mighty blows, each of which could have killed an ordinary man. And yet there seemed no end to their battle, for neither weakened greatly. As they fought, a heavy fog arose around them both, and then Fate himself stood before us and bid the battle end.

In the pale glow of Fate's lantern, we could see neither had triumphed, yet Fate decreed the Campaign was at its end. He called into his realm the two champions, and then one faithful of each diety, to stand witness in Judgement's realm as the outcome was determined. Others, too, were permitted to follow and to watch, though none could intervene or speak. It was our honor only to watch and witness.

We were drawn through an eldrich portal into the realm of Judgement, beyond Fate's realm, where the spirits of the forever lost go to learn their eternal resting place. Few, indeed, have been there and returned. Before us, the court assembled. Fate held us at the door as the very gods took their places before Judgement. For even gods, in such times, are judged. Their splendor was both clear and veiled from us, for though we could sense the nature of each, their faces were hidden, and we could not hear their voices. Judgement's words, instead, were all that reached us.

The court assembled, Fate led the witnesses in, one by one, each to stand behind their god. Drakke Dalleway, of Korem. Hermia Simyaak, of Ameti. I, Daoloth, behind Dalean. Ramse, of Ayleena. Wycktyr, of Kantora. Graven, of Thurgos. Matteo (not a follower, but certainly true in her nature), of Selaene. Costas (again, not of the faithful, though a merchant), of Haalak. Growltiger, of Serah. Kylaar, of Embranna. Garet, of Damryn. Zachery, of Zoedain. Dove, of Myraak. And Laneya, as Fate's witness. The two champions, Kaylin Sunstone and the Dark General, stood at the front of the court.

Judgement did not hesitate to show his displeasure with the affair. The wars of gods, it seems, bring only sorrow to Judgement and Fate. But it falls to him, nevertheless, to judge, and so he did. Each diety in turn was called forth to present what essence they had gathered over the course of the Campaign and place it upon Judgement's scales, according to their own preferences. Myraak and Korem each placed the full weight of what they had gathered on their own sides of the scale. Ameti, too, placed his portion on Korem's side. Zoedain so attempted, but Judgement refused her, citing the Mirror of Good, a ritual of Ameti, and thus some of what she had done fell instead on behalf of Korem. Dalean, again, placed his weight on Korem's plate. But then the other gods took less decisive positions. Ayleena refused to sanction either, laying equal blame for what had befallen the woods during the Campaign. Thurgos, placing equal weight on each, more pleased with the battles past than concerned with their outcome. Kantora, Selaene,

Haalak, Serah, all declined to take a side. Embranna put a third her portion to Myraak but two thirds to Korem, in respect to great magic being used by each but greater respect to the Mirror of Good. Finally, Judgement came to Damryn, who bore no essence at all. The scales weighed in Korem's favor by the smallest margin. But Damryn then, before the gods, took from Korem's side and gave to Myraak, enough that the balance shifted. And so in the end, Judgement was compelled to decide in Myraak's favor.

So, then, Myraak, Zoedain, and Damryn were called forward to name the price of their victory. Myraak, first, directing his attention to Korem, demanded the weakening of Korem's light. And so it shall be that for one year, the light of the sun will do no harm to any undead creature, and they may walk freely. Zoedain, next, asking a price of Ameti. And so, for one year, when Ameti's faithful heal the wounds of others, they themselves shall feel Zoedain's pain, as reminder of their loss. And finally, Damryn demanded Dalean's children — not to replace his own, as he did not wish to lose them, but rather that they be sundered from their parent, and walk as orphans. And as what is broken cannot be rejoined, Damryn's price will last eternal. So decreed Judgement.

But the price was not at end. For Judgement and Fate still were angered that the Campaign had been waged at all, and that none had attempted to stop it. Therefore, it was Fate's decree, that for one year, those who die and return to the living will return as exhausted as they were before their deaths, and not refreshed as the reborn are accustomed to being. Finally, Judgement decreed that another Campaign shall not be waged for at least one century, that the champions shall be returned to their respective realms beyond life, and that should the Dark General once again be raised, that so too would Kaylin Sunstone be returned to the realm of the living to fight him, forever maintaining the balance.

With that, the gods departed Judgement's court, and then Fate led us away. One last time, he returned us to the land of the living, as

uninjured and unfatigued as we had ever been. And so we faced the day after the end, emerging at the midnight hour.

Let all remember the price paid from the Campaign and think well on it. By what a slender margin the war was lost, and by what neutrality that loss maintained. The tiniest bit of essence could have turned the tide, had any of Good's champions acquired it, or had any of the neutral gods cared to choose. Perhaps some will remember the price their followers paid for neutrality when history circles round again.

Set down this Second Day of the Second Frost Moon, in this Two Hundred And Fifty-Fifth Year of the Reign of the Queen, in witness of the events in the early part of the First Frost Moon of the same year, by Daoloth of Thorabon, High Priest of Freehold, forever faithful of Dalean.