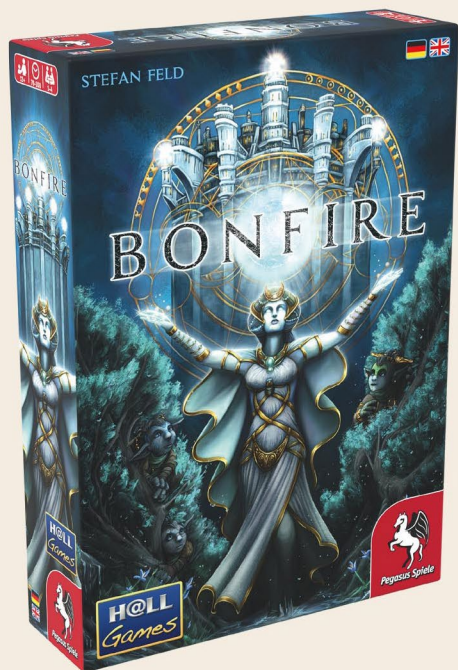




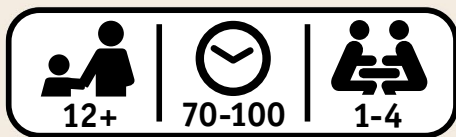
THE WORLD OF
BONFIRE

This text is the background story of a world which illustrator Dennis Lohausen and editor Ralph Bruhn have imagined to fill the abstract mechanisms of the Bonfire board game with life and tie them together in a way that feels plausible.



This story is also the basis for the illustrations of the characters and boards. The idea for the title of the board game also came from Dennis, who was looking for a name for the "energy orbs" while writing the draft for the game.

BONFIRE is a eurogame by bestselling designer STEFAN FELD. It has been published by HALL GAMES in September 2020 and is distributed by PEGASUS SPIELE.



"Ignite the Bonfires, cast out the twilight!"



THE FIRST SPARK IN THE DARKNESS

In the farthest orbit of a small sun, the planet Asperia moved through the black depths of space. On its surface, a gloomy twilight held constant sway over cold, rocky plains. There, only primitive lichens and eyeless microorganisms eked out their meager existence.



But one day, something happened that would alter the face of Asperia for eons to come. The "Guardians of Light," as the Gnomes would later call them, chose Asperia as their home. Where they came from, how they arrived there, and why they settled on the planet in the first place—all that remains a mystery.

Once upon a time, the powerful and ruthless High Gods greedily claimed all the richer worlds in the universe for themselves and left only the barren Asperia to their little sisters. Never would the High Gods have guessed what a wonderful garden the Guardians would create from this dreary desert.

Chronicles of the Shadow Folk, Legends, Chapter One

The Guardians had the gift to create a magical light and permanently seal it in glowing orbs called Bonfires. They placed these orbs on high pillars to spread their light far across the land. On the ground, crystal prisms caught the light and spread its life-giving power in the area around them.

Thanks to the Bonfires, shining oases blossomed in the desolate wastelands of Asperia, and little by little a plethora of life sprang forth: from grasses to the highest trees, from the lowly beetle to the grandest bird, lifeforms of all shapes and sizes now flourished and thrived on Asperia.

The creative force of the Bonfires was especially strong in those places where the Guardians dwelled, and nature bloomed there in an abundance hitherto undreamed of.



The minds of the Guardians are constantly connected with each Bonfire. The closer they are to each other, the stronger this connection becomes, and the light obeys the Guardians' wishes for growth and biological diversity.

Chronicles of the Shadow Folk, Legends, Chapter Two

THE CREATIVE FORCE OF LIGHT AND SHADOW

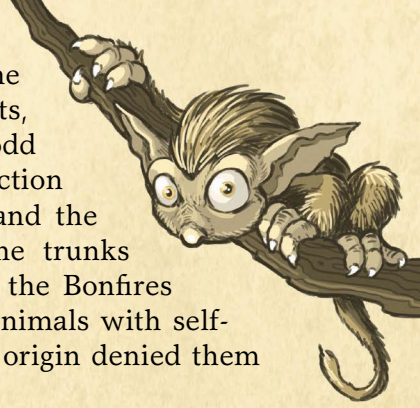
Having long delighted in the thriving new world they created on Asperia, the Guardians realized that something else had changed. Though they hadn't foreseen or planned it, they were no longer the only intelligent lifeform on their planet!

Living in the shadows of the tallest trees, strange gnomish creatures bustled about, dressed in leaves, feathers, or pieces of bark, and adorned with imaginative hair styles and body paints. Their homes were handcrafted skillfully in caves below the roots and in the trunks of the trees, and they behaved so inconspicuously that the Guardians were uncertain how long these creatures had been dwelling alongside them unnoticed.

They called themselves the Shadow Folk, as they avoided the direct brightness of the Bonfires and kept their distance from the Guardians for fear of their sublime beauty.



The Guardians knew that they had not created the little Gnomes with their own deliberate thoughts, so they concluded that the existence of these odd creatures was the result of an unforeseen interaction between the life-giving force of the Bonfires and the frequent play of light and shadow among the trunks and branches of the oldest trees. The force of the Bonfires appeared to have imbued these tree-dwelling animals with self-awareness and intelligence, but their primitive origin denied them the magical powers of the Guardians.



The Shadow Folk themselves ascribe their origin to the biggest and oldest trees.

The immortal trees longed for youthful and agile children who would take care of them and protect them from harm, so they sprouted the Shadow Folk from their roots like buds from a flower.

Chronicles of the Shadow Folk, Legends, Chapter Three

THE RISE OF THE ANCIENTS

Eventually, discontent took hold in the minds of the Guardians. Though they had created a flourishing world, the Gnomes had developed by accident, independent of the Guardians' will. And so the Guardians set themselves to the ambitious task of designing a being that would surpass the Gnomes in every way, the crowning glory of their creation.

Thus, the Guardians achieved their greatest triumph, but in so doing also sowed the seeds of their failure: the "Ancients."

The Ancients looked very similar to the Guardians—they were tall and graceful, and they even showed a certain understanding for the magical powers of the Bonfires. Their lifespan was significantly longer than that of the Gnomes, they were excellent craftsmen and had ambitious minds. They called themselves the Ancients, as they thought of themselves as the first civilized beings on Asperia after the Guardians.

They paid no attention to the Gnomes, and the Gnomes didn't mind that at all since they feared the Ancients as much as the Guardians. For a long time, the Guardians too forgot about the small people living beneath the trees.



The Guardians combined a small part of themselves with all the elements on Asperia in the brightest Bonfire of the world and forged the Ancients from it.

Chronicles of the Shadow Folk, Legends, Chapter Six

At first, the relationship between the Guardians and the Ancients was exactly as the Guardians had intended. The Ancients treated the Guardians with reverence and respectful worship, while the Guardians protected the young species from the dangers of the wilderness and taught them everything necessary to build a proper civilization.

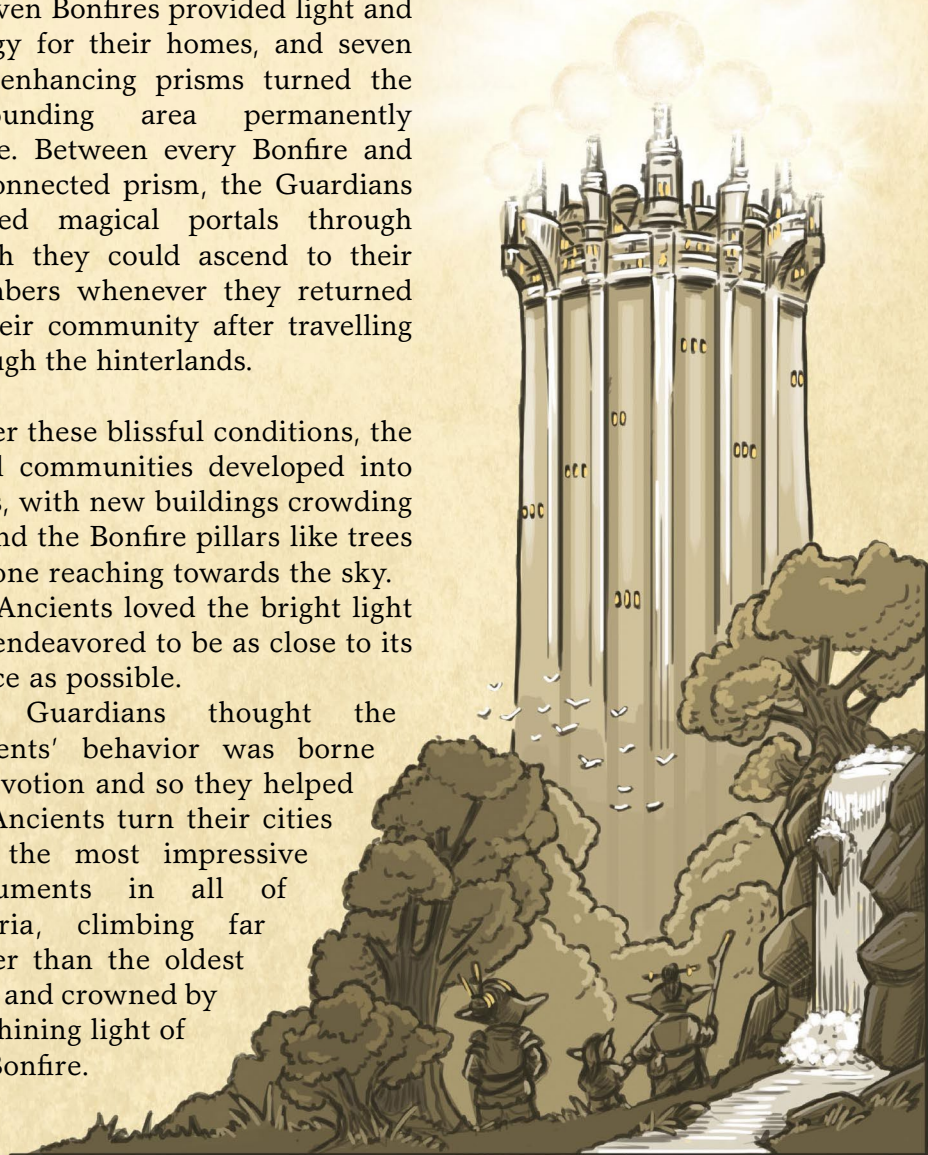
The Guardians' most important lesson was to accept and interpret the Patterns of Fate. Although not everything in the universe is pre-determined, every individual part moves along certain paths and according to certain patterns, and together those form the harmony of all creation.

On the Fields of Fate, a most sacred site, the priests of the Ancients laid out complicated mosaics from which they interpreted the course of all things and scried what challenges their community would have to face in the future. And so they became part of the universal pattern and they were devoted to the Guardians.

Every community of Ancients was led by seven Guardians. A semicircle of seven Bonfires provided light and energy for their homes, and seven light-enhancing prisms turned the surrounding area permanently fertile. Between every Bonfire and its connected prism, the Guardians created magical portals through which they could ascend to their chambers whenever they returned to their community after travelling through the hinterlands.

Under these blissful conditions, the small communities developed into cities, with new buildings crowding around the Bonfire pillars like trees of stone reaching towards the sky. The Ancients loved the bright light and endeavored to be as close to its source as possible.

The Guardians thought the Ancients' behavior was borne of devotion and so they helped the Ancients turn their cities into the most impressive monuments in all of Asperia, climbing far higher than the oldest trees and crowned by the shining light of the Bonfire.



Even the Gnomes were fascinated by these structures. And although they feared the Ancients, they often looked up in awe towards the lights of the cities from their homes in the trees.

However, amidst all this beauty, ugliness and corruption began to fester among the Ancients...

THE DARK DESIRE

The High Gods considered their sisters' creation of the Ancients as usurpation and vowed to spoil the beautiful work of the Guardians. They secretly planted a seed of darkness deep within the hearts of the Ancients which would grow and grow with every new generation, until it ultimately brought ruin to all of Asperia.

The Ancients felt the chill of this darkness, and so they sought to be closer and closer to the Bonfires.

The Stories of the Shadow Folk, "Of the Folk of the Ancients"

Unbeknownst to the Guardians, this legend of the Shadow Folk would prove prophetic: The Ancients developed an addiction—their compulsive desire for the magical light of the Bonfires became insatiable and they wished for nothing more than to rule over the light in the same way as the Guardians, bending it to their own will.

But this was a wish the Guardians could not and would not fulfill, as the power of the light was reserved for the Gods. And thus, the Ancients' reverence turned to envy, and mistrust eroded their faith.

The Ancients felt patronized by the Guardians. Little by little, they began to question everything they had been taught.

The priests ceased their service on the Fields of Fate as they became convinced that they could rule over the light if they followed their own will instead of obeying the Patterns of Fate. This arrogance greatly disturbed the balance of the hidden forces on Asperia and, in the end, the deep rift between the Guardians and the Ancients became unbridgeable.



At first, the Guardians retreated to their chambers at the Bonfire pillars, hoping to somehow find a way to return harmony to their creation. But as more time passed, they could no longer overlook the signs of decline and ruin. The land surrounding the cities lay fallow as the Ancients forgot everything they needed to survive as mortal beings, driven by their all-consuming hunger for the secrets of the Bonfires. The fall of the Ancients weighed heavily on the Guardians, and as a final warning they slowly allowed the brightness of the Bonfires to dwindle, but this only further accelerated the Ancients' decline.

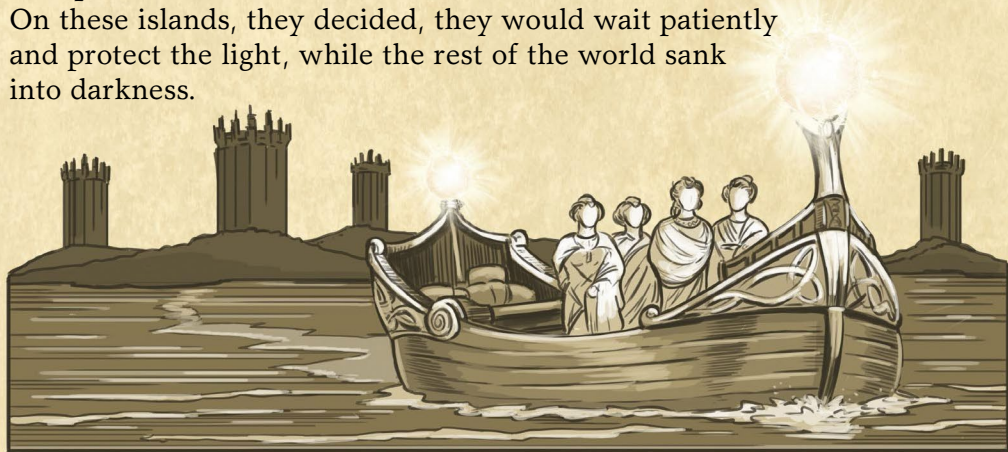
With the dimming of the light, the harvests declined further, threatening the livelihood of the Ancients. But instead of coming to their senses, the Ancients became more and more angry with their creators. When the light became weaker, the Ancients did not see it as the result of their own wrongdoing, but as an unjust punishment meted out by the Guardians. At last, the Ancients' feelings of hostility and aggression reached such a fever pitch that the Guardians no longer wished to remain in the cities.

The Guardians left the cities, sealed their portals, and withdrew to long-forgotten islands located far off the mainland.

Here, the Guardians were out of the Ancients' reach—while the cities and the Bonfires had provided everything the Ancients needed to live, they had never needed to learn the craft of sailing and navigation.

The islands had been home to the Guardians once before, immediately after their arrival on Asperia. It was there they had created the very first Bonfires; the ruins of the first pillars still stood around the islands and even the Guardians' old dwellings remained, although they had fallen into disrepair.

On these islands, they decided, they would wait patiently and protect the light, while the rest of the world sank into darkness.



And so it came to pass, when the last of the Guardians' ships docked at the islands, all the Bonfires in the cities of Asperia went out at once. The only light that remained was the nearly imperceptible flicker of the planet's weak, distant sun.

The Guardians were overcome with sorrow, believing that the Ancients had no future, and that their era was over.

A GLIMMER OF HOPE IN THE DARKNESS

While the Guardians were far away, the Gnomes experienced the decline firsthand. With the light growing weaker, animals and plants soon began to die. The Gnomes retreated into hidden caves at the deepest roots of the oldest trees and fell into despair. Since their first memories, they had kept their distance from both the light of the Bonfires, as well as the Guardians and the Ancients.

Now, they realized that everything in the world was interconnected. Without the Bonfires, only darkness remained, a darkness in which no living thing could hope to survive for long. This meant that the end of the Bonfires would also be the end of the Shadow Folk, for without light and shadow, how could there be a Shadow Folk? They could not stand idly by and await their demise.

As the Gnomes began to suspect the true reason for the devastating situation in the cities of the Ancients, their Council of the Elders resolved to send out envoys. They would overcome their natural shyness, make contact, and ask for the return of the light necessary for their existence.

And so, the Gnomes' envoys gathered their courage and departed for the cities.



At the same time, the Guardians in their exile began to miss the world beyond their islands, and they could hardly bear to think of all the beautiful things that were now doomed to end. They thought wistfully of the little shadow-dwelling creatures they had ignored for so long. For as long as the Guardians could remember, the Gnomes had never acted in a manner that damaged their environment. It was horrible that they were being made to pay for the mistakes of the Ancients.

Like every living thing in the universe, the divine Guardians had grown and evolved. When they had arrived on Asperia, they had been as children, only wanting to turn the barren wastelands into something beautiful. They had created the Ancients because they had wished to prove themselves. And so, the Ancients' failure was also part of the Guardians' evolution, as it made them realize that all had been well before. In the end, the Ancients were not a disruption of the Patterns of Fate, but a necessary divergence within its obscure pathways.

Philosophy of the Shadow Folk, "About the Guardians of Light"

The Guardians had to admit that the current catastrophe was partly their own fault. From the beginning, they had never accepted nor protected or taught the little Gnomes as their children in the way that they should have. Was it not vanity to create the Ancients merely because the Gnomes did not appear to live up to their expectations?

At this thought, the Guardians felt remorse and wished to make right their error. The Gnomes should have been given a chance to prove their worth. The Guardians would give them the opportunity to reignite the Bonfires and save Asperia. And even though they would assist the Gnomes, the little folk would have to do their part for the restoration of the world. They would have to grow with each new challenge and prove that they deserved the favor and support of the Guardians. And so, a few chosen Guardians made the long journey back to the mainland to seek out the Gnomes and prepare them for the task of bringing the light back to Asperia.



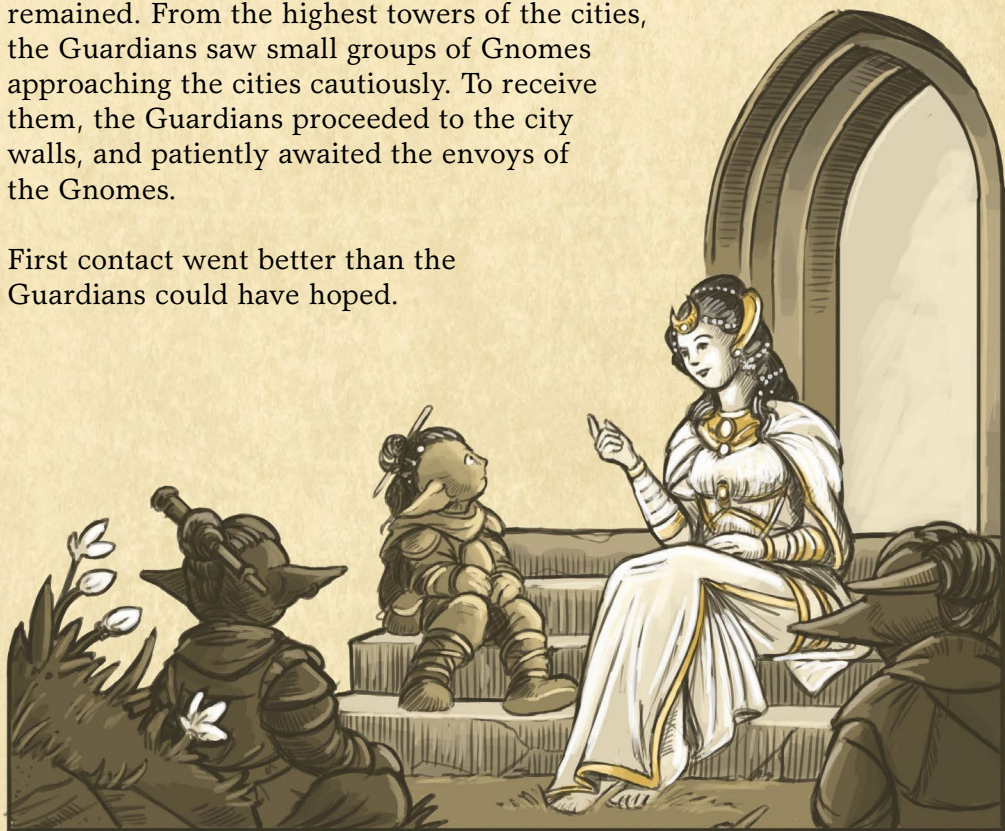
The other Guardians remained on their islands, waiting to be invited to return by the Gnomes. They would enter the cities in a ceremonial procession and bring new fertility to the lands they passed along the way. They also devised tasks for the Gnomes that would test and refine their skills and abilities.

And finally, the Guardians combined their energy to ignite one last magnificent Bonfire on the mainland which would supply the Gnomes with light for a while, so that they might have a starting point from which to illuminate the world again. The Guardians also left magical formulas at the base of the Bonfire, which would reopen the portals in the city when the time came.

THE NEXT STEPS – THE RISE OF THE GNOMES

The first Guardians arrived on the mainland and each travelled to one of the cities. But as expected, they did not encounter any living beings therein. Even though the buildings remained intact, no other sign of the ancients remained. From the highest towers of the cities, the Guardians saw small groups of Gnomes approaching the cities cautiously. To receive them, the Guardians proceeded to the city walls, and patiently awaited the envoys of the Gnomes.

First contact went better than the Guardians could have hoped.



The Gnomes were extremely shy in approaching the Guardians, but still, at least they did not fear them, and the two sides were able to reach a good basis for their future relationship.

In a respectful manner, the Gnomes presented their request to reignite the Bonfires so that their people might survive. This humble request for a source of life, free of any lust for power or any hint of arrogance, fully convinced the Guardians to enter into what would prove a lasting and fruitful relationship with the Gnomes.

Concerning the fate of the Ancients, the Gnomes learned only that they had not been content with their place in the Patterns of Fate, and that the Ancients' actions had led to their annihilation and brought darkness upon Asperia. The Ancients' responsibility for the Bonfires would now pass to the Gnomes, if they agreed to it. As expected, the Gnomes were honored that the Guardians were willing to place their trust in them, and humbly accepted the offer.

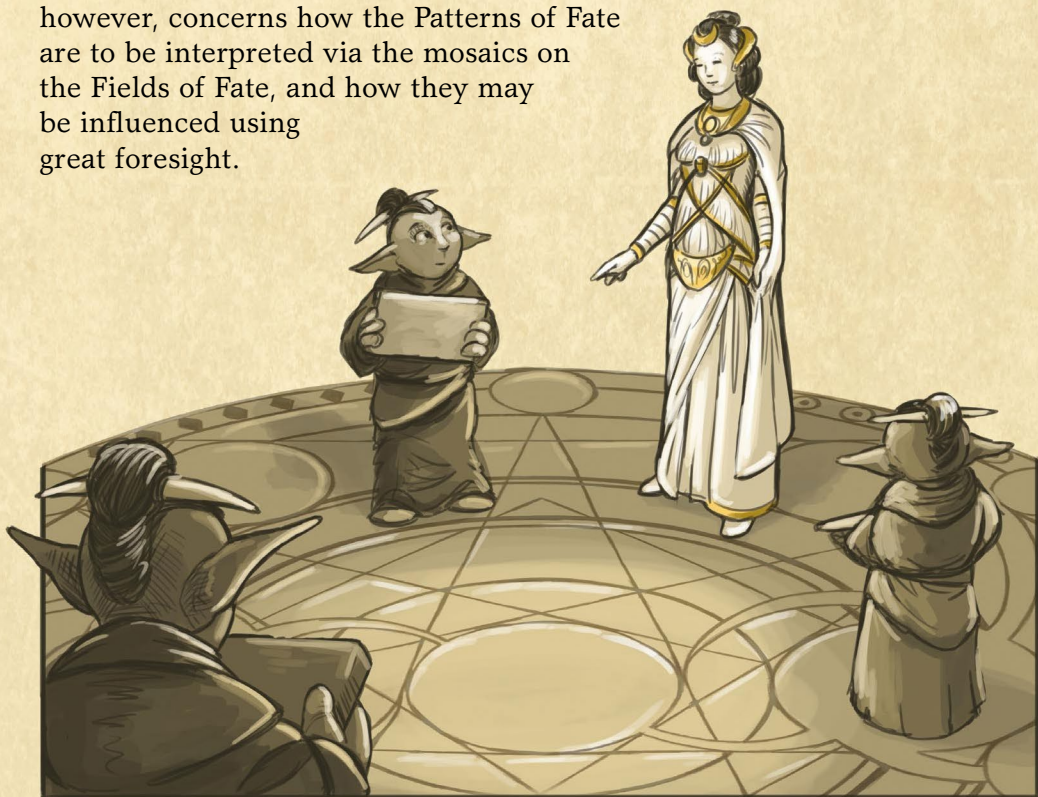
And so, the Guardians and the envoys of the Gnomes gathered around the last shining Bonfire. There, the Guardians introduced them to the tasks the Gnomes must carry out, as well as the everlasting Laws of Fate. From that hour onward, the last Bonfire also became the meeting place of the Gnomes, and it has been called the "High Council" ever since.



In the first lesson, the Guardians explained to the Gnomes what is required to rekindle the Bonfires. Many tasks—some easy, some very difficult—must be accomplished by the Gnomes in order to prove their willpower and their skill. Additionally, the Guardians still on the islands expect offerings from the Gnomes. By such gifts, the Gnomes will demonstrate that they will continue to treat their environment with respect and care. Thus, the offerings will be signs of a healed and fertile world.

From now on, novices will travel to the cities to be trained in the mysteries and preservation of the Bonfires. The novices will watch over the cities until the Guardians return from the islands and retake their ancestral seats. The High Council will be composed of those novices who return the Bonfires back to their original glory. Members of that council will gain the deepest insights into the nature of the Bonfires and the Patterns of Fate through their training. The High Council is also tasked with connecting the cities with one another, as well as the wider world, ensuring the Gnomes' budding civilization remains unified.

The most important lesson for the Gnomes, however, concerns how the Patterns of Fate are to be interpreted via the mosaics on the Fields of Fate, and how they may be influenced using great foresight.



With this, the teachings of the Guardians come to an end. The future of Asperia now rests with those who used to call themselves the Shadow Folk, and who hid themselves in the twilight for so long. What will become of them in the future? It is certain that they will do everything in their power to rekindle the Bonfires, but will the Gnomes grow to seek out the bright Bonfires and move to the cities of the Ancients permanently? Or will they be content with lighting the Bonfires and then retreating to their tree hollows, living the life they have always known and leaving the cities entirely to the Guardians?

Who can tell? And in the end, of what consequence is it to life on Asperia? So long as the balance between the Guardians and their creation is maintained and every being takes its rightful place in the Patterns of Fate, all will be well and good.

Already, the first ships of the Gnomes are setting sail to reach the islands of the Guardians. After a brief and terrible period of gloom, it now seems as though Asperia will reawaken to a new dawn, and a bright future...

What became of the Ancients? Even though no living creature witnessed their final hours, there are whispers among the sages of the Gnomes that the bodies of the Ancients were completely consumed by the darkness, as nothing remained of them at all.

It is probably just a tale told by grandmothers to frighten naughty Gnome children, but some say that in the hour of deepest darkness, a thunderous rumble could be heard across Asperia—the spiteful laughter of the High Gods, who believed they had corrupted the creation of the Guardians forevermore.

Stories of the Shadow Folk, "Of the Folk of the Ancients"

We would like to thank Martin, Rebekka, Tim, Ronja and Johanna for proofreading and for many helpful tips to the story details.

Authors:

**Dennis Lohausen,
Ralph Bruhn**

Illustration and Layout:
Dennis Lohausen

Translation:

Ronja Lauterbach (Pegasus Spiele)



Pegasus Spiele GmbH
Am Straßbach 3
61169 Friedberg
www.pegasus.de
under licence by



© 2020 Hall Games
Ralph Bruhn
Herderstr. 36
D-53332 Bornheim
www.hallgames.de

Reprinting or publication is only permitted with prior approval.

