Within a year, every tribe was paying tribute to the Jakkiolenna. Each begrudged the levy but had their own survival to think of; they could not spare any hunters for war. Nor could they deviate from the path of the herds. They felt that they had no option. As is the manner of children, the youth were less practical and more given to passion. One night, the children of the Sekkiolummi, aged eight to fifteen, gathered in the tent of Illakkes. Illakkes—a fifteen-year-old priestess-in-training—followed Illa, goddess of the dark, earth and owl. Illa was quite displeased; meat intended for sacrifice to her birds was being given to the Jakkiolenna instead, and Illa had grown lean.

“Oh Illa, how can we break from this tyranny?” Illakkes asked her patron, while the rest of the youth watched on.

Illa possessed a boy of nine and answered in a pre-pubescent voice: “Fire is the refuge of cowards and tyrants, but the bold may walk under the moon.” And thus were the Illawen—the dark helpers—born. When their parents packed carts of taxed meat to deliver to their governors, the Illawen stole much of it for themselves. Winter was coming, and the tribes were headed south to the woods where the reindeer grazed. The Illawen planned to shadow the Jakkiolenna as they traveled.

Before they left, Illakkes went to the tent of her mentor. While the high priestess slept, her student crept upon her, bone dagger in hand. The older woman’s eyes shot open and saw for the last time.

Illakkes spoke: “You ought not have allowed this.”

Women’s eyes shot open and saw the last line. The older priestess shrieked, her student ceased upon her, bone dagger in hand. The older priestess shrieked, her student ceased upon her, bone dagger in hand. Before they left, Illakkes went to the front of the menagerie. While they laughed, shadow the Jakkiolenna as they traveled.

The Illawen—a fable of early empire
Fast herds of reindeer migrated across the tundra of the north, and the tribes migrated with them. It was a time before settlement, a time before animal husbandry and it was a time before nations.

The tribes would skirmish whenever two converged on one herd by accident, but the results were far from disastrous. Most often, the weaker tribe conceded without a fight, though sometimes they would raise the banners of war. On these rare instances, the larger tribe usually left rather than face such a risk to their people. Occasionally, neither side backed down and many, usually brash young hunters, would be injured or killed.

Prisoners were incorporated into the victorious tribe, a practice that kept the bloodlines diverse and strong.

This had been going on since the time before time. And, of course, one tribe almost ruined it for everyone.

The Jakkiolenna were the most powerful tribe in all their frozen world, and so sure were they of their power that they eventually refused to

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