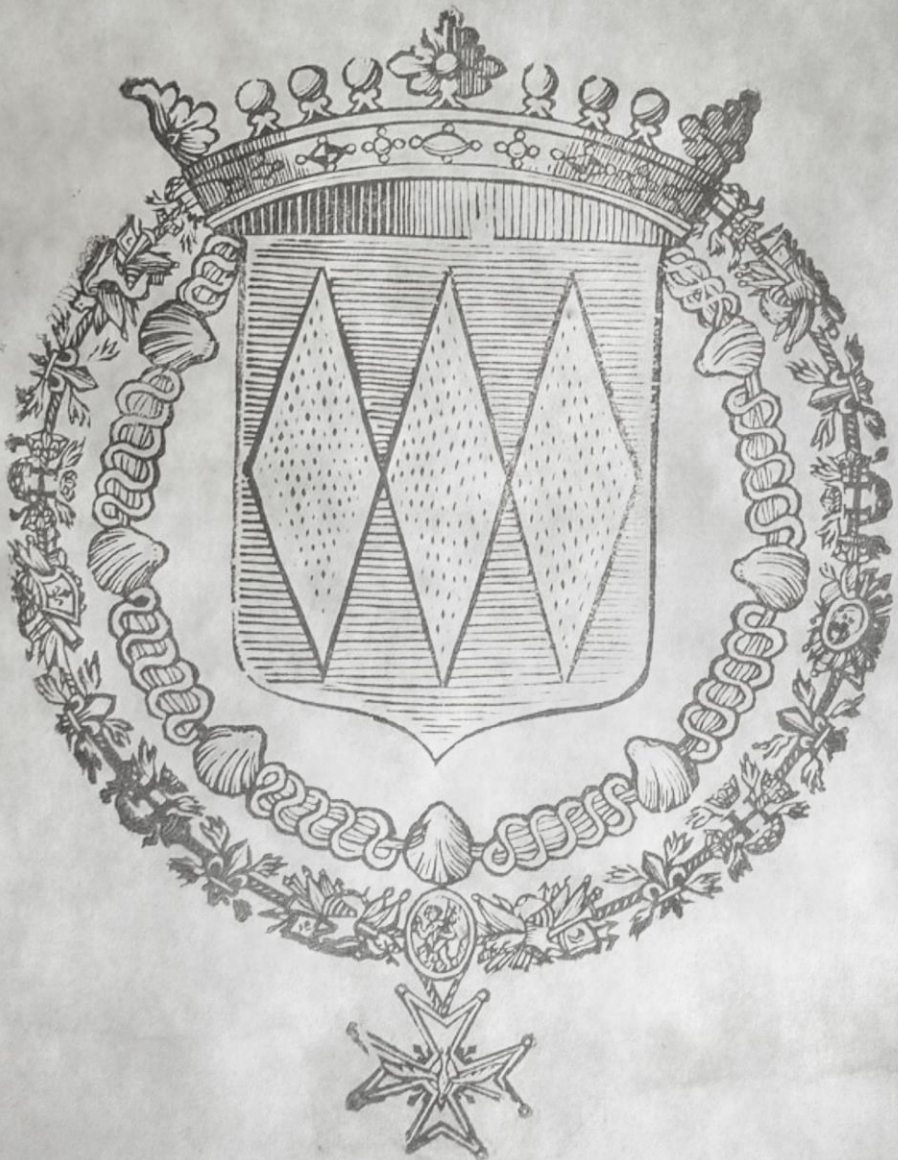

5

Heroes of Valiant

During the First Unification War, the warriors of many worlds dominated by the Human Race came together to form the Valiant Alliance. The Valiant and the Inextinctus Elves grappled for dominance of the worlds ripe with resources. Formed from far-flung pillager tribes, in many cases the only thing the Valiant had in common was that they were targeted by the Inextinctus for the extermination in response to the tribes' endless raids against the Elven home world of Loft Orbis. Beaten and finally forced to surrender, the Valiant were taken under the rule of the Inextinctus who had seen the potential of the Valiant as they grew and adapted through the decades of war. The Elves formed the Iustium Imperium to organize and manage the growth and prosperity of the Valiant as a way to make sure that they could flourish while never again posing a threat to the elves.

While the majority of Valiant are human, dwarves and halflings are common on the core worlds and are valued members of the society. In fact, the Valiant accept all peoples as long as they are registered citizens of the Empire and follow proper relocation procedure. Ever forward thinking, the Valiant are at the vanguard of colonization and discovery. Their Imperial Resettlement Operations Network has spread Valiant and Imperial influence throughout the worlds. Initially, IRON was formed out of a need to move a burgeoning population, as people needed jobs and space, and had become restless on their home worlds. It has made the Valiant Alliance a major contender for power amongst the factions in the Imperium.

The war provided several opportunities for members of Valiant to leave their marks on history. The most famous of which was the man who earned the nickname "Old Man Military." Archibald Segile was just a teenager when he joined the Scribes. He learned to inscribe texts by hand and refused to conform to any new technologies. His work allowed the Valiant military to send thousands of messages across their units, saving countless lives and giving the Valiant hope that

they might prevail against the Elves. When the inevitable end of the war came to pass, Segile stayed on in what was left of the military. Though he never quite warmed up to his new Elvish commanding officers, he believed in the Valiant so much that he maintained his position in the guild until he was so old that he was forced to retire. Texts in the hand of "Old Man Military" are still highly sought after by those who prefer quality over machine generated pages.

Before the First Unification War, Valiant spent their time expanding through the universe looking for resources. It was this overexpansion that caught the attention of the Elves. The war very nearly wiped out every reserve the humans, dwarves, and halflings had. If not for Remus "The Ferret" O'Malley, they might have lost every piece of Rubidium available to the Valiant. Ferret made a reputation for himself in the Prospectors Guild for his uncanny ability to find new resources to mine. On more than one occasion, he walked straight into a mine that the other prospectors had given up for dry and discover a completely new strain of materials. Thus O'Malley earned the name Ferret, as if he was born to dig through dirt for gold.

Wars cannot be won without fighters, but the Valiant didn't have a huge standing military. Most of the citizens of the Alliance made their livings as tradesmen. Pioneers visit strange and dangerous worlds and have knowledge of how to defend against threats. Yet they are not trained the way soldiers are. In order to flesh out their fighting force against the Elves, the Valiant conscripted a whole score of mercenaries whose experience outweighed their lack of formal training. One such mercenary was only ever known by the name Sugar. He would come on to the field calm, cool, and calculated. His soft spoken demeanor instantly managed to put anyone he met on edge. He remained polite and friendly at all times when dealing with those signing his paycheck. However, he lived by the credo that many mercenaries like him do: "We are out to get you, dead or alive. If you're the one, better run." Rumors abound about Sugar's feats during the war, including a story wherein he shot and killed a bandit at over 800 yards. After the war, he disappeared. Many believe he's still out there taking jobs for anyone with the money to hire him.

Humans aren't the only heroes to come out of the war. Johnny Noble was a dwarf famous

among miners, and his legacy is infamous the universe over. Noble worked in the mines, but his hobby included inventing things useful to the miners. He was the dwarf responsible for the invention of dynamite sticks. Not only did the invention cause untold strife between the miners and the prospectors with the explosive nature of the dynamite, but the Valiant soldiers also used Noble's invention as projectiles against the Elves in the war. He handed the Valiant one of the deadliest weapons of the war, and because of that, he will live forever as both a Hero and a Villain of the First Unification war.

During the war and after, the Valiant Alliance set up their systems to include the Core and three Hub Worlds. Their military headquarters was set up on the Elysium Isle, capitol of the hub world Resolute. It continues to be a large concentration of human life, with a population of more than 12 million even after the Imperial Diaspora. Despite outspoken support for the original Valiant Alliance, most Islers have come to enjoy the Empire and their place in it. Hadria is by far the largest city on the planet Dauntless, even though it is not the capitol. This is due to the longstanding presence of the Empire's Valiant Embassy. When the war was over,

the Iustium set up the Embassy as a way of watching over Valiant. As a result, some jeer that this has made them the Empire's "little helpers." However they still retain their individuality despite taking up Elvish tendencies and fashion. During the war, the Ferret discovered vast quantities of Rubedo on the planet Intrepid. Afterwards, many residents sold their homes to mining companies due to the property value tripling and even quadrupling in some areas of the planet.

In the next chapter, we'll discuss how the effects of the First Unification War led to the formation of the Empire and the events leading up to the Second Unification War.