

## Nasakeeria's Ring of Fire

On the very doorstep of Duinnor is the mysterious and foreboding land of Nasakeeria, the border of which cannot be crossed by any living person lest he be consumed by the sudden appearance of the Ring of Fire. Indeed, it takes only one wayward step too close to the forbidden land to release searing hot flames which issue suddenly from the ground and burst upward into the sky all around the border of Nasakeeria, thus ringing that land in its entirety. Such is the power and intensity of the uprush of flame and heat that the hapless interloper has his flesh completely burned away in an instant. All that will remain will be the victim's brittle bones which are sent flying outward several yards from the border to land with those others that dared go before.

Our countrymen should know the Ring of Fire and the danger of Nasakeeria well enough, for it was into that place that a mighty army of Duinnor went in the year 322 of this Age, foolishly intent on speeding to the east to face the Dragonkind invaders of that year and taking no care to mind their path. As many as seven thousand soldiers who crossed over were killed, along with all the horses they rode, and their bones were cast out by the powerful blast to fall in piles just outside Nasakeeria's border. To this day,

no one understands how the army was destroyed, since it would seem likely that as those in the lead of the army were consumed those behind would see and halt their advance into death. The lone messenger who returned to report the advance carried dispatches that indicated the army proceeded in five columns, each racing against the other, goaded by a substantial reward offered to those who first reached the beleaguered city of Fisenwold. But even this explanation fails to explain the catastrophe, and our people and our leaders were, according to story, shocked and baffled.

As is well known, the Fifth Unknown King took immediate action, dispatching another army to the east, a risky move that left Duinnor depleted of its defensive forces. Shortly after the crisis was over and the Dragonkind were defeated in the east, our former King began a massive project of erecting markers around Nasakeeria to warn away the hapless and the foolhardy.

The land of Nasakeeria, even its name, is a mystery. It is clearly occupied by some creatures, perhaps like those that make Shatum their abode, for there are many reliable reports of activities, heard or sighted from a safe distance, that can only be the result of its sinister inhabitants. Here and there, some distance across the borders into that land, are towers that stand just over the treetops, or on lonely hills. Surely the creatures of Nasakeeria keep watch from those places and others. For many years, too, there have been heard the sound of drums coming from within that land. These sounds have been carefully studied by our Kingsmen, who regularly

patrol the vicinity of Nasakeeria. It seems likely that the cadences heard are methods of communication, carrying news from one place to another. Certainly it seems reasonable that the Ring of Fire might be made to appear by the dark efforts of Nasakeeria's occupants, for that land has no natural barriers and, if it were not for the Ring of Fire, it could be easily entered and explored. Surely its inhabitants guard terrible secrets. Whatever those secrets are, let us hope that we are as protected from them, and from the inhabitants of Nasakeeria, as they are from us by the Ring of Fire.

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