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CAMPAIGN SOURCEBOOK



DARK FANTASY CAMPAIGN SETTING GUIDE

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Helkara Campaign Sourcebook

Introduction

In the harsh and unforgiving world of Helkara, there is no respite from the brutal sun or the endless darkness. On this desolate planet, each turn is 176 Earth days long, with 88 days of scalding sunlight followed by 88 days of frozen, neverending darkness. The only refuge from this eternal cycle is the twilight region near the north pole, where life can still flourish.

In this world of constant danger, the gods are not the benevolent protectors of old tales but rather dangerous and alien entities not to be trifled with. They are feared and worshiped by the masses, who live in terror of their power.

Ruling over these masses are sorcerers, necromancers, and priests—tyrants with a grip of iron. They use their mastery of magic and propaganda to keep the masses in line, and their rule is absolute. They have divided the habitable portion of Helkara into five distinct regions and constantly

war for dominance over Helkara and its people.

Magic is a force that is both highly sought after and greatly feared in Helkara. Those who possess the ability to wield magic are often seen as powerful and dangerous, with many viewing their abilities as a threat to the stability of the world. This is because magic tends to have unintended consequences and often leads to disasters, whether through the negligence of the practitioner or through the sheer power of the magic itself. As such, those who use magic are often viewed with suspicion and mistrust, and many nations have strict laws regulating its use and practitioners.

Technology has not advanced much beyond that of the bronze age, with many relying on handmade weapons, armor, and tools. This simplicity of technology leads to a more primitive, dangerous way of life, where survival is always a top priority and battles are fought up close and personal. Despite this, a few scattered pockets of knowledge and skill have





An outlander of the Shadowland Nightstalkers in Deadlands, Keth'keth.

emerged, leading to the creation of powerful magical weapons and other wondrous technologies. Alchemy is especially popular, despite its prohibitive costs.

Monsters in Helkara are not just creatures to be slain for enjoyment or personal gain: they are dangerous and unpredictable forces of destruction. They are rarely seen, and when they do appear, they wreak havoc on the land and its inhabitants. These beasts should be approached with caution, as they are nearly impossible to defeat without a well-coordinated effort by multiple, powerful hunters. The few survivors of monster attacks are often left traumatized, forever changed by the encounter.

Two major humanoid races dominate the land:

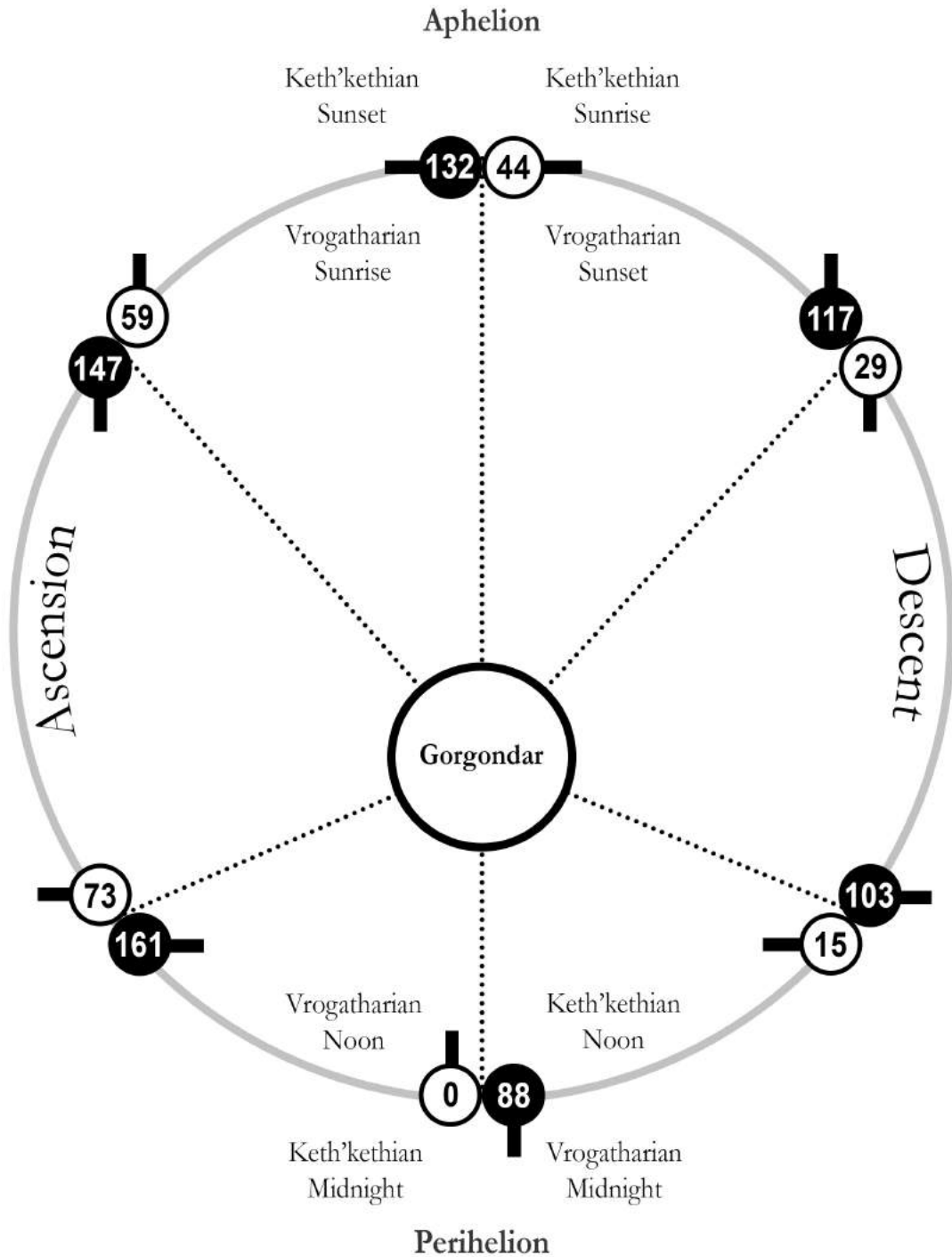
the humans and the goblins. Humans dwell upon the earth above. They have built their cities and societies in the harshest of environments, seeking refuge from the relentless elements. Meanwhile, the goblins reside beneath the earth, in the twisting and labyrinthine tunnels and caverns that honeycomb the world. They are a mysterious people, steeped in ancient knowledge and arcane arts but feared and distrusted by the humans above.

For centuries, these two species have been locked in a struggle for control of the world. The Sorcerer-Kings believe that the goblins hold secrets that threaten their power. They fear that the goblins' knowledge of the old world, of magic and technology long lost to the humans, could be used to overthrow them. And so, they keep the goblins in check with their armies, their alchemical weapons, and their own dark magic.

For their part, the goblins believe that the humans are dangerous and reckless, carelessly tampering with forces that they cannot control. They see the Sorcerer-Kings as tyrants, who use their power to oppress the masses, and they believe that the humans' use of magic only leads to catastrophe and destruction. They seek to keep their knowledge of the old world hidden from the humans, lest they unleash chaos upon the world once again.

Despite the bleak conditions, pockets of resilience and hope can be found among the survivors of the various communities and cultures in the world of Helkara. They believe in a better future and work towards it, despite the constant challenges and obstacles that threaten their existence.

For those brave enough to venture into this world, the path to success will be a perilous one, filled with danger at every turn. But with strength, cunning, and the aid of their companions, anything is possible. Heroes must work together to succeed in this harsh and brutal world and to bring hope to the people of Helkara.



This diagram shows the Helkaran turn. 0 notes the first cycle in the Helkaran Turn, Vrogathar's Noon. Cycle 88 is Vrogathar's Midnight. Although it only takes Helkara 59 days to rotate on its axis, Helkara completes its solar rotation after 176 cycles because of its 3:2 resonance.



Key Features and Characteristics

For those venturing into the world of Helkara, they are in for a truly unique and challenging experience. Helkara is a small world with a circumference of just 9,524 miles, but it is a place of great contrasts and dangers.

This world is relatively close to its sun, called Gorgondar by the humans, with a perihelion distance of 28.5 million miles and an aphelion distance of 43.5 million miles. This solar proximity means that a Helkaran year is relatively fast, lasting 88 Earth days. And the sun's gravitational pull on Helkara makes it elliptically tidally locked with a resonance ratio of 3:2, making the Helkaran day 59 Earth days long. Because of the unusual resonance, however, it takes a total of 176 days for Helkara to make a full solar rotation, noon to noon. This creates 88 Earth days of intense, scorching sunlight

followed by 88 days of dark, frozen nights.

Despite this, Helkaran humans still function like their counterparts on other worlds, requiring six to eight hours of sleep each day lest they begin to suffer from exhaustion. They have adapted to their unique environment by developing a system of telling time by tracking the progress of a comet called the Wanderer that orbits the planet once every eight hours. This progress is referred to as a "passing," and there are three passings in each cycle, or 24 hours, making it the same length as a day on Earth. There are 176 cycles in a turn, which is what Helkarans call a year. They break the turn into four 44-cycle length parts that they refer to as movements, which are similar to months. The four movements are First Descent, First Ascension, Second Descent, and Second Ascension. All Helkaran humans, regardless of their nationality, celebrate the ends of the First and Second ascensions, which are called Midnight and Noon, respectively.

Because of Helkara's extreme nature, most of the planet is uninhabitable for humans. As a result, they are limited to living near the north pole. The pole itself is a region bathed in permanent darkness called Evernight. The majority of humans congregate 300 to 700 miles away from the pole in a region called the Gloaming. Thanks to Helkara's relatively small axial tilt, the Gloaming does not experience the wild swings in temperatures that other parts of the world do. Although it's often cold there, daytime temperatures rarely get above 100 degrees Fahrenheit. However, its cold periods, especially close to Midnight, can drop as low as -30 degrees Fahrenheit.

Although there is always a glow just over the horizon in the Gloaming, nights are extremely dark. There are always billowy clouds in the sky above. Furthermore, Helkara has no moon. Although humans have adjusted somewhat to the dark environment, they are still at the mercy of the elements and the fearsome creatures that roam the

world.

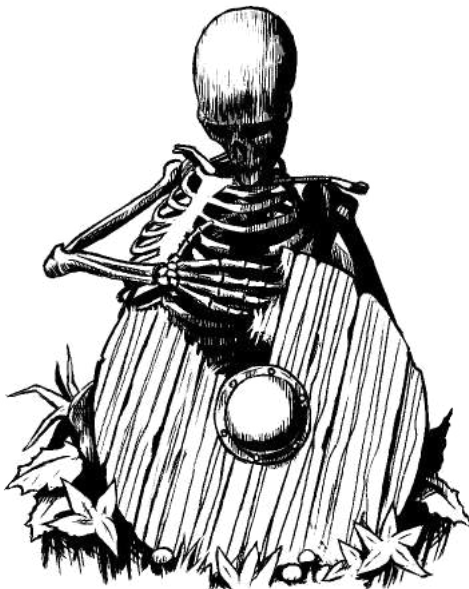
Helkara's gravity is relatively weak, with objects weighing less than half of what they would on Earth. This means creatures can jump much further than they normally would. It also means that creatures native to the planet tend to grow larger, including humans, who average 6 to 7 feet in height and weigh between 220 lbs to 300 lbs, which would be approximately 85 lbs to 115 lbs on Helkara.

Geography

Four regions divide Helkara, each as unique as they are dangerous.

At the northernmost point of Helkara lies the realm of Evernight, a place of darkness and ice, where the sun never shines and the cold is so bitter that nothing can live there save for the most hardy of beasts and the black-hearted Sorcerer-King of Nazgar, who dwells within the black tower of Tryvva with his throngs of Evernight goblins.

South of Evernight lies the Gloaming, a place of perpetual twilight where the sun is only seen in fleeting glimpses and the chill is but a pale reflection of the icy grip of the Evernight. Here, most of



Helkara's life calls home, for though it is cold, it is not as deadly as the lands above or below.

Beyond the Gloaming lies the gray wastes of the Nothing, a vast and lifeless wasteland where the sun shines for 88 cycles and night reigns for another 88. Here, nothing can survive save for those who make their homes deep beneath the earth and fearsome creatures specially adapted to the extreme swings in temperature.

Finally, at the southernmost point of Helkara lies the mystery of the unknown south pole, where the learned men of the Gloaming theorize that life may yet be found. The nomads of the Gloaming have attempted to cross this desolation in search of Helkara's enigmatic south pole, but few have returned to tell their tale; the secrets of the south pole remain shrouded in the mists of time.

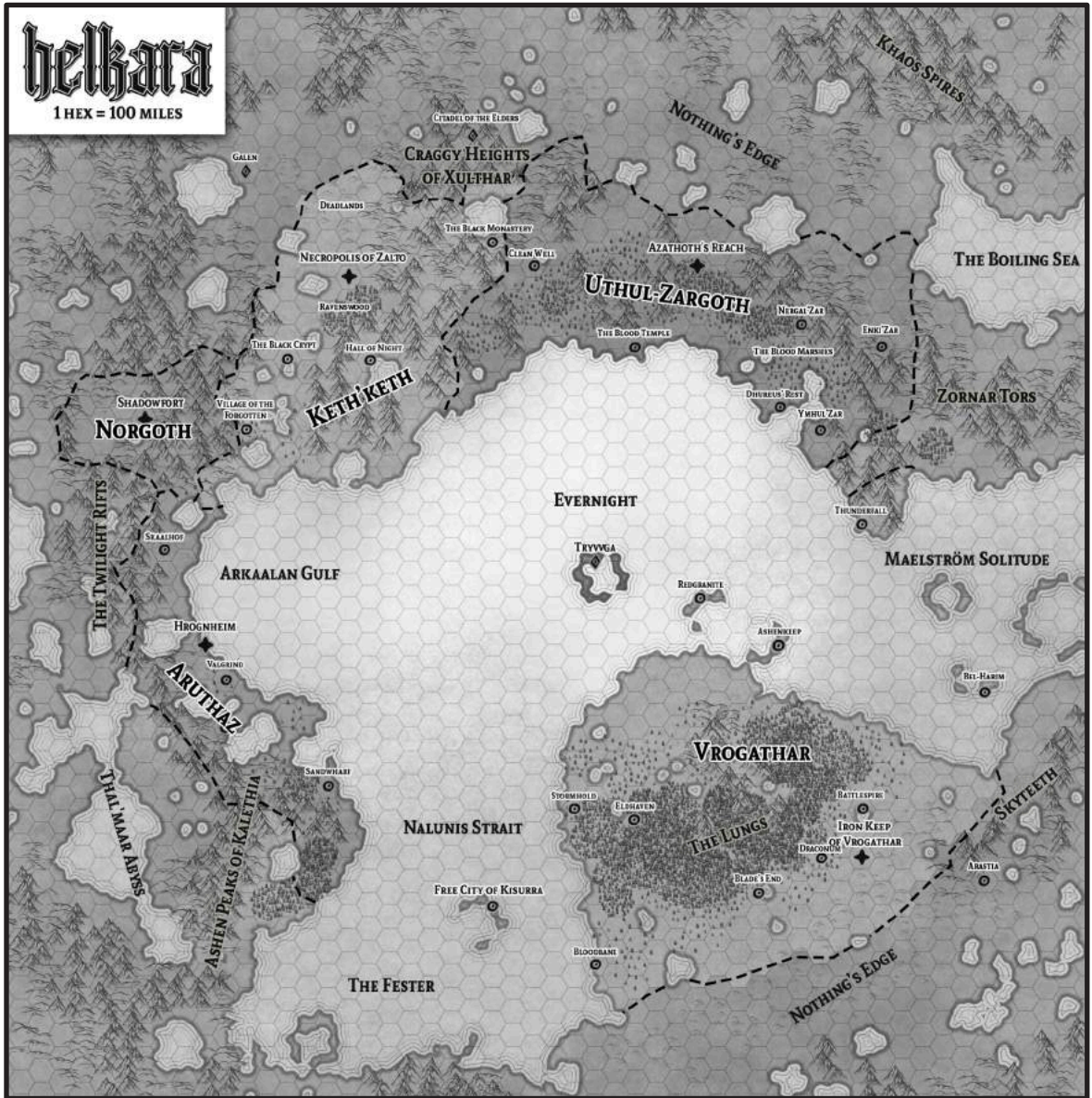
Below the surface of Helkara lies a labyrinth of tunnels and underground cities created by the mysterious Those Before, the ancestors of the humans who now call the Gloaming home. Helkarans refer to this maze as the Lattice. These dark places hold untold secrets of the world before the Cataclysm and are now home to the goblinoids and other denizens of the dark. The depth of the tunnels is a mystery even to the most learned of Helkara's scholars, and the dangers that lurk within are known to very few.

Weather and Climate

The climate of Helkara is a treacherous and unpredictable force shaped by the world's slow rotation and wild swings in temperature.

In the frozen reaches of the north and south poles, blizzards rage with fury, whipping snow and ice into a tempest of destruction. When the warm times come, violent thunderstorms erupt, lashing the frozen landscapes with bolts of lightning.

Yet even these terrors pale in comparison to the storms that brew in the Nothing, the vast gray wasteland that consumes the majority of Helkara's



This map of Helkara shows only the northern hemisphere of Helkara—with its north pole, Evernight, in the center—as it appears in Turn 888 H. The top center of the map represents Helkara’s geographical north, sometimes referred to Keth’kethian north (Keth’keth is derived from the Old Hermian and literally means “beyond north.”

The terrain at the edges of the maps are estimates only, as only scavenger cartographers are willing to travel that far beyond Nothing’s Edge to document locations.

surface. Here, dust storms tear across the landscape, towering clouds of grit and debris blotting out the sky. Tornadoes twist and dance across the barren landscape, spinning in a deadly dance. And when the twilight band creeps across the world, switching the planet from sunlight to darkness, all manner of other hazards appear, from flash floods to hail the size of boulders.

But even these dangers are not without their limits. For despite the ferocity of these storms, the hurricanes that arise on Helkara are often contained by the towering peaks that ring the world. These mountains, ancient and unyielding, rise like sentinels, defending against the deadliest of the planet's storms.

Landscape and Topography

The surface of Helkara is as harsh and unforgiving as its weather. The planet is tectonically active, with a molten core, but unlike other worlds, it doesn't have plates. Instead, it is a single tectonic plate that uniformly contracts. As such, shield volcanoes are abundant in Helkara, regularly belching smoke and fire into the air, but earthquakes are less frequent.

Most of the titanic mountains that dominate the landscape of Helkara were created by meteor impacts long ago in its history. The lack of an atmosphere or liquid for a significant period of Helkara's prehistory meant that these craters were not eroded, as they would have been on other planets. The presence of wind and water has since worked its way into the craters, creating channels and small valleys, but the crater oceans are still extremely deep compared to other worlds.

Deep valleys and steep cliffs are a common sight on Helkara, as are towering mesas and plateaus. The planet's unique geology has created a landscape unlike any other, with towering formations of rock and stone stretching toward the sky. The world's

tallest mountain near Helkara's equator rises over 15,000 feet into the air. The Dustrunner scavenger clan named this mountain Skystair. For the purpose of maps, Helkarans use this mountain as the geographic north.

Rivers and streams snake through the valleys and craters, eventually joining together to form great oceans. While the seas of Helkara are treacherous, with dangerous creatures and unpredictable weather, they are also teeming with life. Leviathan-hunting ships from the Aruthaz brave the stormy waters in search of aquatic megafauna, while fishing colonies in the Evernight ply the icy waters in search of what lives in the dark waters below their feet.

In the Nothing, the landscape is just as inhospitable as the weather. Sand dunes, towering rock formations, and jagged outcroppings are all that can be seen in this desolate land. Despite its barren appearance, the Nothing holds secrets untold.

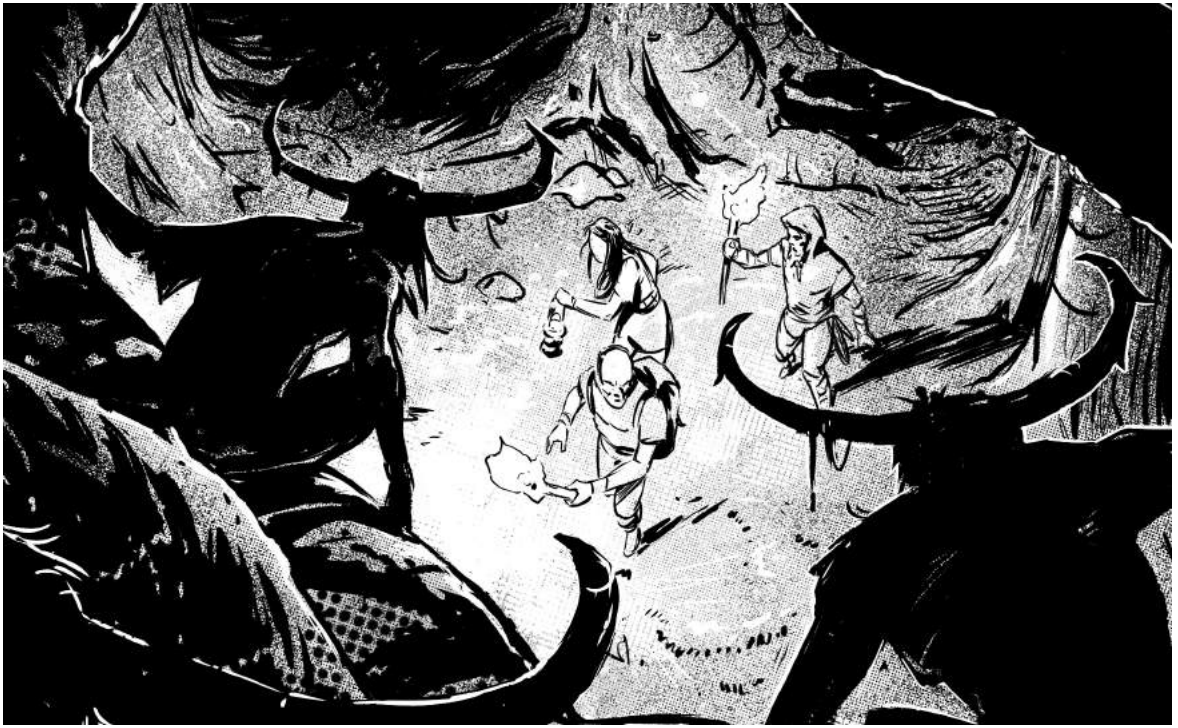
Notable Features

Many of the features below are found near Helkara's north pole and the Gloaming and are known to most learned peoples of Helkara.

Arkalaan Gulf, a vast salty body of water west of the Evernight, is home to a thriving fishing industry, with ports dotted along its coastline. Despite its commercial significance, the gulf is also known for its treacherous storms, which have claimed the lives of many a sailor.

Ashen Peaks of Kalethia, a violent collection of volcanoes and perilous mountains west of the Fester, are home to an array of dangerous creatures and unpredictable natural disasters. The volcanic vents and geysers that dot the landscape make it a place of both beauty and terror.

The Boiling Sea, a large sea of acid northeast of



the Evernight, is a place of constant danger, with steam rising from its scorching waters. The acidic waters make it a deadly place for any who would venture there, and those who do are foolish indeed.

Evernight, the frozen region covering Helkara's north pole is a desolate and unforgiving wasteland. Here, the frigid winds howl endlessly, scouring the ice-covered tundra and encasing all in a frozen embrace.

The Fester, a vast saltwater gulf south of the Evernight, is known for its tumultuous waters and frequent storms. During the warmer cycles, it dries up into a muddy marshland that stretches for hundreds of miles in every direction, hence its name.

The Lungs, a massive coniferous forest in the nation of Vrogathar, covers hundreds of thousands of acres and is known for its towering trees and diverse wildlife. Its vast size and untamed nature

make it a dangerous place to venture, with many dark secrets still waiting to be discovered.

Maelström Solitude, a large body of water to the east of the Evernight, is known for its hellacious storms that have earned it its name. Many a vessel has been lost in its tempests, and those brave enough to brave its waters do so at great risk.

Nalunis Straight, where the Arkalaan Gulf and the Fester meet, is a treacherous stretch of water where the currents are notoriously strong and unpredictable. Many sailors have met their doom in these waters, making it a place to be avoided if possible.

Nothing's Edge, where the Nothing meets the Gloaming, is a place of scorching heat and bitter cold. The land is barren and hostile, and few dare venture there, for it is a place where life cannot long survive.



The Black Tower Tryvvga, home to the Sorcerer-King of Nazgar, in the Evernight.



Skyteeth, a massive mountain range east of Vrogathar, is known for its rich silver mines and towering peaks. The perilous peaks and dangerous tunnels make it a place only the bravest or most foolish venture, but the rewards can be great for those who succeed.

Thaal'maar Abyss, a deep water rift in the heart of the Gloaming, is filled with deadly creatures and unpredictable currents.

The Twilight Rifts, a jagged mountain range, rise up from the heart of the Gloaming. The peaks are shrouded in mists, and their craggy summits are home to fierce beasts and deadly traps.

Natural Resources

The world of Helkara is bountiful in its offerings of natural resources.

Iron is one of the most abundant resources found in Helkara, widely used for crafting weapons,

tools, and machinery. The mountains that ring the Gloaming are rich in iron ore, and many a fortune has been made by those who have dared to venture into the dangerous ranges in search of this valuable resource.

Within the primeval forests of the Gloaming, one can find the resource that the folk of Helkara hold most dear—timber. The towering trees of the Gloaming provide a source of not only fuel for warmth and cooking, but also building material for the dwellings of men. It is here where the lumberjacks of Helkara hone their craft, hacking away at the forest to bring forth the bounty of its trees. The largest forest in the Gloaming is the Lungs, which is a part of the Vrogatharian empire.

In addition to iron and timber, Helkara is home to a wealth of other natural resources, such as gold and silver, found in its many streams and rivers. The underground labyrinths, home to goblinoids and other creatures, are rich in gems and other precious minerals. Even the vast, gray wasteland known as the Nothing holds valuable gems and resources, some

of which are believed to hold arcane properties.

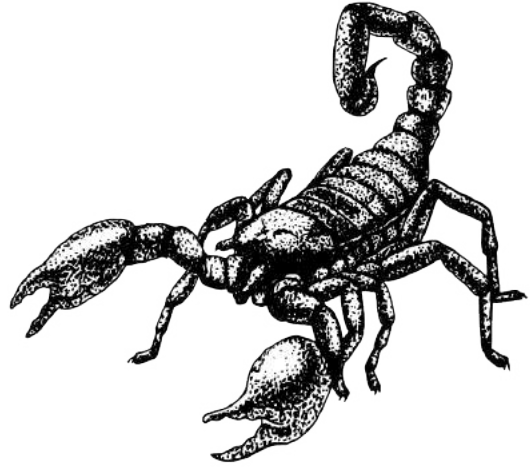
Non-humanoid creatures, great and small, are abundant in number, thriving amidst the rugged terrain and harsh climates. The sturdy horses of Helkara are raised as food and beasts of burden, carrying the weight of their masters across the land. Their strength and endurance is unmatched, allowing them to traverse even the harshest terrain with ease. The shaggy gaur, too, are raised as a source of food, their meat providing sustenance to the people of the land. Other unusual creatures pervade Helkara's forests, swamps, mountains, and even the arctic, providing plenty of hunting opportunities for the human population.

Flora and Fauna

Between its scorching deserts, frozen tundras, bustling cities, and dark underworlds, Helkara is teeming with life both wondrous and deadly.

Deserts

Helkara's deserts are usually arid, inhospitable wastelands. Still, certain forms of life thrive here.



Cacti: Spiky plants that store water in their thick stems to survive in arid environments.

Coyote: A versatile and adaptable canine predator, often surviving in harsh desert conditions at Nothing's Edge and the Deadlands.

Crystal Spider: Arachnids made of living crystal that trap their prey in webs of razor-sharp glass.

Desert Rose: A succulent with colorful, trumpet-shaped flowers that bloom after rains.

Desert Tortoise: A slow-moving turtle adapted to the intense heat of the Helkaran sun. It buries itself in the sand and hibernates during the long, cold nights.

Dune Broom: A shrub with small, yellow flowers that grow in clusters and are adapted to sand dune environments.

Dune Stalker: Swift predators that can blend into the sand dunes and launch surprise attacks.

Enchanted Sand Lily: A plant that only blooms at night and exudes a soft, blue light.

Fire Lizard: Small reptiles that breathe fire to scorch their enemies.

Gila Monster: A venomous lizard built to withstand the heat of the desert.

Roadrunner: A fast-running bird that is able to find food and water in the arid desert environment.

Sand Serpent: Massive snakes that swallow their prey whole and slither across the dunes.

Sand Scorp: Giant arachnids that burrow beneath the sand and ambush their prey.

Shadow Beast: Elusive predators that move quickly through the shadows, striking with deadly speed.

Stormbringer: A creature that can manipulate the weather to its advantage, summoning storms and lightning to attack its enemies.

Wandering Sandvine: A creeper plant that uses its roots to anchor itself in sand dunes and capture passing creatures for sustenance.

Forests

Helkara's forests are verdant, dense ecosystems teeming with wildlife and hidden dangers. Below are some common life forms found here.

Brown Bear: A common and opportunistic predator found in dense forests.

Enchanted Moss: A plant that glows with a soft green light; used by foresters to mark trails.



Elk: Large, majestic deer with antlers that are a symbol of strength and power.

Fern: A leafy plant with fronds that reproduce through spores that grow into new plants.

Giantwood: A tall, needle-covered conifer tree that can grow up to 379 feet tall.

Glow Snake: Giant serpents with a bioluminescent body that can be seen from miles away, luring prey in



The deaded gritclaws of Helkara are known for attacking settlements. They are especially problematic in Aruthaz. Their green furs are worn by Aruthazi warriors as a sign of prestige.



with their light.

Gray Squirrel: A common and energetic tree-dwelling rodent found in many forests of the Gloaming.

Great Horned Owl: A formidable and skilled predator that hunts at night in the forest.

Gritclaw: A large, burly creature with razor-sharp claws and a thick hide. Known for attacking settlements and scavenging for food.

Leaf Weaver: Spiders that can spin webs strong enough to trap even the largest creatures, using them to catch prey and protect them from predators.

Moss Hound: Four-legged creatures with a keen sense of smell that can track their prey for miles.

Night Warrior: Stealthy, nocturnal hunters that use their speed and agility to get the drop on smaller prey.

Oak: A tall, deciduous tree with lobed leaves; produces acorns and provides a habitat for many species.

Raccoon: A clever and opportunistic omnivore that is at home in the forest.

Shadow Cat: Large, black cats with piercing yellow eyes that hunt in packs, taking down even the strongest prey with ease.

Shadowthorn: A leafless tree with bark as black as night and branches that are said to move on their own.

Thorn Beetle: Giant beetles with massive, sharp pincers that are perfect for cutting down trees and building nests.

White-Tailed Deer: A common and graceful herbivore that roams the forests of the Gloaming.

Mountains and Hills

Helkara's mountains are rugged, high-altitude environments featuring steep inclines and breathtaking vistas.

Alpine Forget-Me-Not: A small, blue flowering plant that grows in rocky mountain meadows.

Bloodberry: A low-growing shrub with small, red berries that is common in mountain and tundra environments, particularly those near Uthul-Zargoth.



Bighorn Sheep: A species of wild sheep that are well-suited to the rocky and mountainous landscape.

Blightwing: A giant bat-like creature that spreads disease and pestilence wherever it goes.

Blue Poppy: A tall flowering plant that grows in mountain meadows and is used for medicinal purposes.

Edelweiss: A small, white flower with dense, wooly leaves that grows in the rocky alpine regions of Helkara.

Frostbite: A creature that dwells in the snowy mountains and has the ability to freeze its victims with a single breath.

Griffon: A lion-eagle hybrid that is known as much for its speed and agility as for its intelligence.

Golden Eagle: A powerful and majestic bird of

prey that is commonly found in the mountains.

Harpy: A bird-like creature with the ability to enchant travelers with its singing voice.

Hill Giant: A giant humanoid with immense strength that is known for its love of stealing from travelers.

Lynx: Stealthy predators with distinctive tufted ears, known for their agility and hunting skills.

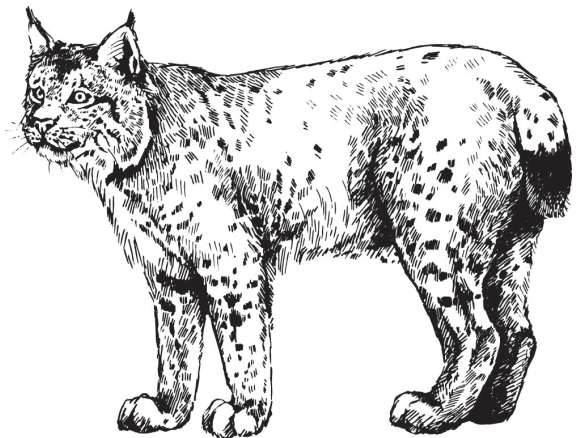
Marmot: A ground-dwelling rodent that lives in the high alpine regions of the mountains.

Mountain Bellflower: A flower with a bell-shaped bloom and a sweet fragrance.

Mountain Lion: A large and powerful predator found in rugged and mountainous terrain.

Mountain Minotaur: A powerful humanoid with the head of a bull that lives in the mountains. It is known for its love of precious gems.

Pika: A small and active herbivore that lives in the





The gargantuan bonecrusher, a popular mount for Vrogatharian warlords.

rocky outcrops of the mountains.

Rock Giant: A massive humanoid made of stone that lives in small conclaves scattered throughout the mountains of Helkara.

Snow Blossom: A plant that only blooms in the harshest winter conditions and is said to bring good luck.

Snow Leopard: A white feline with sharp teeth and claws that is known for its agility and speed.

Thunderbird: A large bird of prey that can produce thunder and lightning with its wings.

Plains and Scrublands

Helkara's plains are often open, grassy expanses dotted with hardy scrub brush and roaming herds of grazers. Here are some of the creatures and

plants that live here.

Black-Tailed Prairie Dog: A burrowing mammal that inhabits the grasslands and plains of Keth'keth.

Bluebell: A small flowering plant that grows in clusters and is a common sight in meadows and fields.

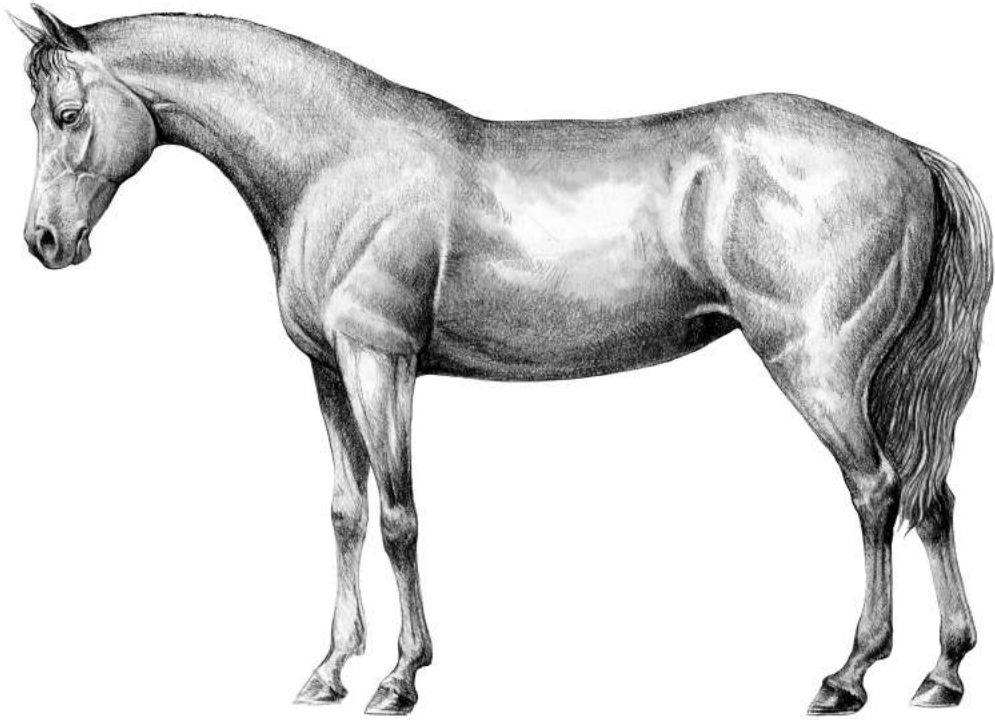
The shadowfangs of the Lungs, often captured and trained to serve as hunting dogs for Vrogatharian inquisitors.

Bonecrusher: A giant creature that uses its massive jaws and teeth to crush the bones of its prey.

Dreambloom: A plant with soft, pink petals that release a sweet fragrance that puts anyone who smells it to sleep.

Gaur: A large, shaggy herbivore that roams the grassy fields and snowy tundras of the Gloaming.





Golden Eagle: A large bird of prey that is found in a variety of habitats, including the grasslands and prairies of the Gloaming.

Goldenrod: A tall, yellow flowering plant that is commonly seen in meadows and fields.

Grassy Serpent: A large, slow-moving snake that blends in with the grass, waiting for prey to wander nearby.

Horse: Graceful and athletic mammals known for their speed and endurance.

Nightshade: A nocturnal predator with venomous fangs and a paralyzing bite.

Plague Rat: A large, aggressive rodent that carries diseases and is known to overrun settlements.

Prickly Pangolin: An armored mammal with sharp spines on its back that can roll up into a ball for protection.

Pronghorn Antelope: A species of antelope that is found on the open plains and grasslands of Vrogathar.

Red-Tailed Hawk: A common bird of prey that is widely distributed across the Gloaming, including grasslands, prairies, and scrublands.

Shadowfang: A pack-hunting predator that is able to blend seamlessly into the shadows, making it nearly impossible to spot.

Stampede Runner: A fleet-footed creature that moves in large herds, causing massive damage to crops and structures.

Stardust Daisy: A plant with bright, yellow petals and a white center that sparkles like the stars.

Stinging Scorpion: A venomous arachnid with a potent sting that can paralyze both predator and prey.

Sunflower: A tall, yellow flowering plant that follows the sun and is grown for its seeds and oil.

Sun Phoenix: A brightly-colored bird that follows the sun, soaking up its warmth and energy.

Thunderbeast: A massive herbivorous creature known for its powerful roar and lightning-fast charges.

Wild Grass: A diverse group of grasses that provide food and habitat for many species on the plains.

Worg: An intelligent wolf-like creature that hunts in packs, surrounding their prey and taking it down as a group.

Wyvern: A serpentine creature that glides through the air using its powerful wings, hunting smaller prey from above.

Seas and Coasts

Vast bodies of saltwater dotted with small islands consume the majority of the Gloaming and Evernight's center.

Arctic Cod: A small fish found in the icy waters of the Evernight.

Crystal Shrimp: A crustacean with a shell made of crystal, found in the frigid waters of the deep crater

seas.

Frost Lobster: A large crustacean with a frosty exoskeleton found in the icy waters of the Evernight.

Great White Shark: A powerful and fearsome predator that inhabits the warmer coastal waters.

Harbor Seal: A common and agile mammal that lives in the coastal waters of Aruthaz and Keth'keth.

Humpback Whale: A large and charismatic mammal that migrates along the coast.

Icefin: A fish with fins made of ice, found in the frozen lakes and rivers of the Evernight.

Kelp: A large, brown seaweed that provides food and habitat for many sea creatures.

Kraken: A legendary sea monster with multiple tentacles and a massive body that can drag ships to the bottom of the ocean.

Mankiller Jelly: A massive creature resembling a jellyfish, but with tentacles long enough to wrap around entire ships.

Pelican: A large and graceful bird that feeds in the rich waters off the coast.

Sea Lion: A social and acrobatic mammal that is often seen lounging on the shoreline.

Seagrass: A type of underwater grass that provides important nursery habitats for young fish and sea turtles.



The deadly and elusive sea serpent of Arkalaan Gulf is responsible for destroying hundreds of Aruthazi sailing ships. Speaker Koll has offered a reward of 700 acres of arable land for proof of its destruction.

Sea Serpent: A massive serpent-like creature that swims through the open waters, hunting down ships and sailors who dare to venture out too far.

Sea Serpent's Tongue: A magical seaweed that is said to be able to control the movements of sea serpents.

Siren: Bird-like creatures that lure sailors to their doom with their haunting and alluring calls.

Snow Crab: A hard-shelled crab found in the cold waters of the Evernight and Arkaalan Gulf.

Starfish Bloom: A magical flower that is said to shine like stars at night and attract sea creatures to it.

Winecup: A magical flower that blooms in the sea and is said to grant immortality to those who drink from its cup.

Swamps and Mires

Helkara's swamps are muddy, low-lying areas filled with festering bogs and disease-carrying pests. Below are some examples of animals and plants found within Helkara's swamps.

Alligator: A large and powerful predator that lives in the swamps and waterways of the warmer parts of the Fester.

Black Fly: Small venomous insects that gather in choking, blinding clouds.

Bloodfiend: A creature that feeds on the blood of its victims, able to drain them dry in a matter of minutes.

Bog Beast: A massive, shaggy creature with a trunk-



like nose and tusks that resembles a cross between an elephant and a boar.

Bog Gorgon: A serpentine monster that can paralyze its prey with a stare.

Bog Horror: A hulking monstrosity covered in muck and filth with razor-sharp claws.

Cypress: A large, conical tree that is commonly found in swamps and is known for its "knees" that grow up from the roots.

Goose: Social birds that migrate long distances and are known for their distinctive honking calls.

Green Mire Turtle: A large and ancient reptile that is often seen in the waters of the mires.

Mangrove: A group of trees that are able to survive in salt water and provide important habitats for many species of animals.

Mire Drake: A wyvern-like creature with wings

made of moss and swamp-weed.

Nutria: A large and semi-aquatic rodent that is common in the swamps and mires.

Shambling Mound: A deadly creature made of rotting vegetation and muck brought to life by lightning strikes.

Sludgouger: A massive, worm-like creature that tunnels through the earth, leaving destruction in its wake.

Sphagnum Moss: A type of moss that helps to form peat bogs and provides important habitats for many swamp creatures.

Swampstalker: A stealthy, amphibious creature that lurks in swamps and marshes, preying on unsuspecting travelers.

Witch's Broom: A magical shrub that is said to have the ability to curse those who enter its territory.

Wood Stork: A large, wading bird that feeds in the shallow waters of the swamps.

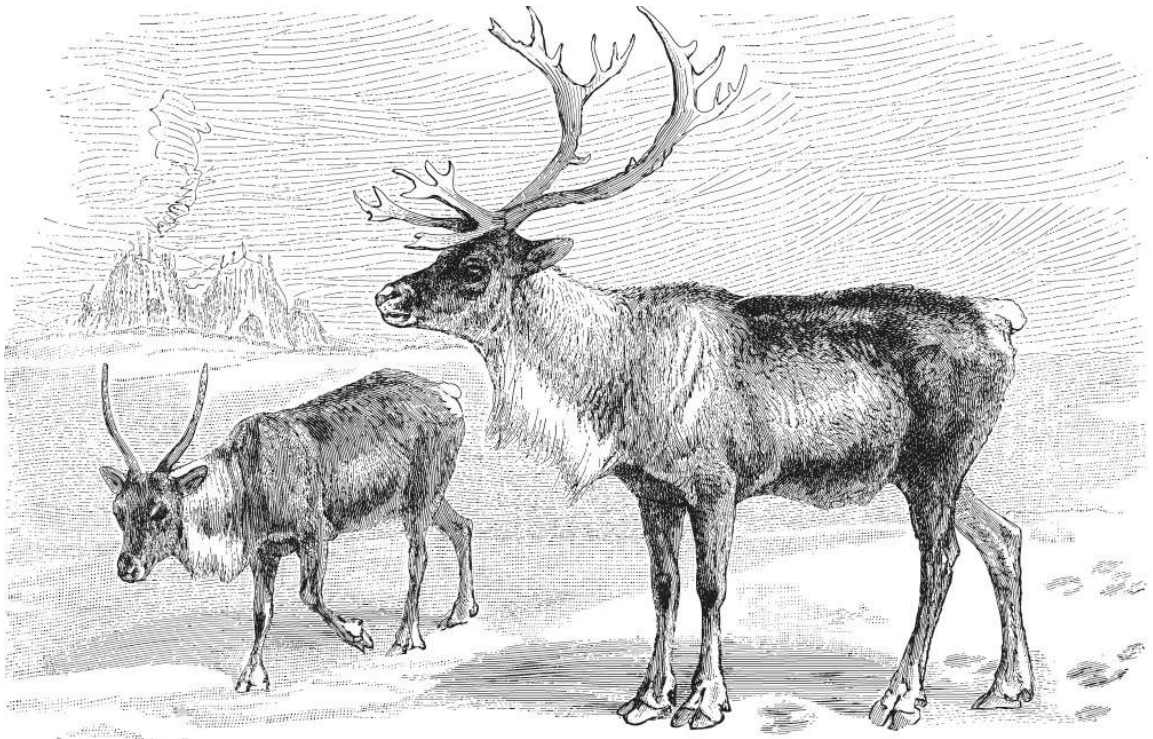
Tundra and Taigas

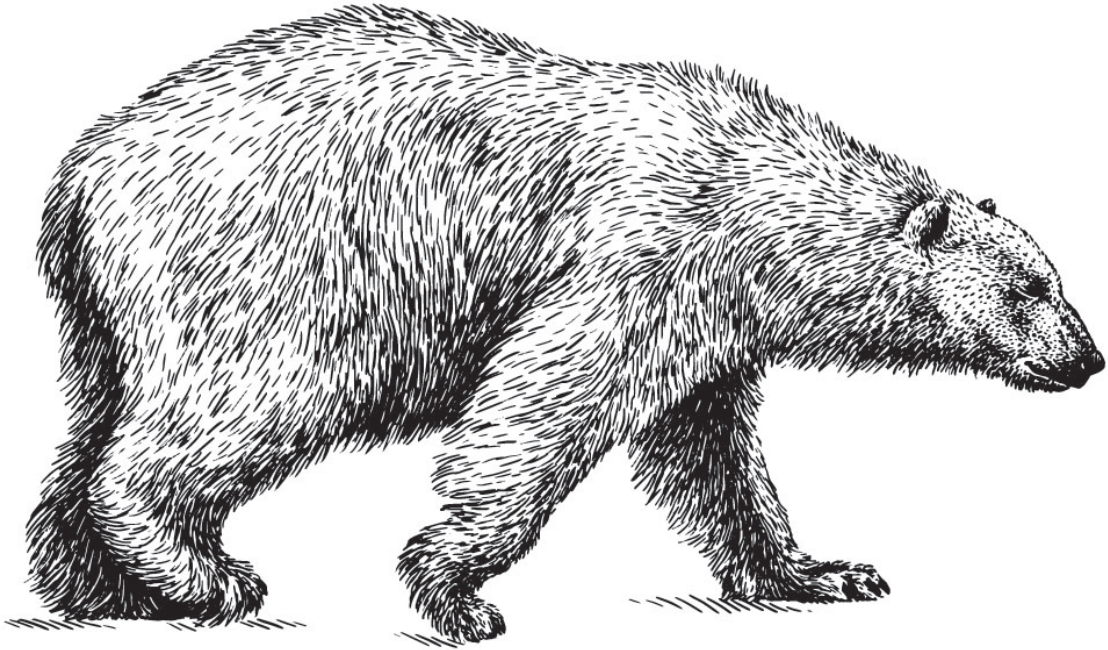
Helkara's frozen wastelands are characterized by permafrost and bitter cold.

Arctic Fox: A small and well-adapted carnivore that is found in the Arctic tundra and taiga regions of the Gloaming and Evernight.

Arctic Poppy: A small, yellow flower that is one of the few plants capable of blooming in the Arctic.

Arctic Willow: A small, shrubby willow tree that is able to survive in the harsh tundra environment.





Caribou: A species of deer that inhabits the tundra and taiga regions of the Gloaming and the Evernight, where they migrate long distances in search of food.

Dreadhaunt: An incorporeal monster that feeds on the fear and despair of its victims.

Ice Lotus: A fantastical, magical flower that is said to have the power to freeze anything it touches.

Ice Spiders: Giant, eight-legged creatures that spin webs of frozen mist.

Frost Giant: Massive humanoids with skin as cold as ice and the ability to create blizzards with a wave of their hand.

Frost Giants' Bloom: A fantastical, magical flower

that is said to be able to communicate with frost giants.

Polar Bear: A large and powerful predator that inhabits the northern forests and tundra of the Gloaming and Evernight.

Reindeer Moss: A type of lichen that is an important food source for reindeer and other Arctic animals.

Snowy Owl: A large bird of prey that is found in the Evernight tundra and taiga regions, where it feeds on lemmings and other small rodents.

Wolf: A large carnivore that is widely distributed throughout the tundra and taiga regions near the Evernight, where it hunts in packs.

Agriculture

The scarcity of arable land has forced Helkara's inhabitants to be cunning and resourceful in their cultivation of crops. In order to survive in this brutal world, they've had to learn to grow food in even the harshest of conditions.

The eastern portions of Vrogathar near the Fester are known for their fields of rice, which are the lifeblood of their society. This staple food is the most common crop in Uthul-Zargoth and Aruthaz, providing sustenance to the people of these regions. The rice is grown in terraced fields and irrigated with the life-giving waters of Helkara's swamps. It's a hardy crop, able to withstand the scorching sun and bitter cold of the long Helkaran day.

Barley, on the other hand, is the primary crop of choice in most of Vrogathar and Keth'keth. This hearty grain is grown in fields dotted across the landscape, providing a staple food for the people of these regions. The barley is often brewed into beer, which is a staple of Helkaran society, providing both sustenance and solace to the people in these harsh lands. And since it is usually safer to drink than water, Helkarans drink it out of necessity.

The Gloaming, with its milder climate, is known for its diverse agriculture. Here, beets, carrots, kale, collards, onions, and potatoes are grown with great success. These hearty vegetables are not only a staple of the Helkaran diet but also provide much-needed nutrients and vitamins to the people of the Gloaming. The fertile soil of the Gloaming provides the perfect conditions for these crops to thrive, and they are an essential part of the Gloaming's economy.

The warm southern regions near Vrogathar's Nothing's Edge and Keth'keth's Deadlands are home to some of the most delicious and flavorful crops in all of Helkara. Here, farmers grow peppers, melons, okra, and corn. These crops thrive in the warm, sunny climate and provide a much-needed respite from the monotony of rice and barley. The



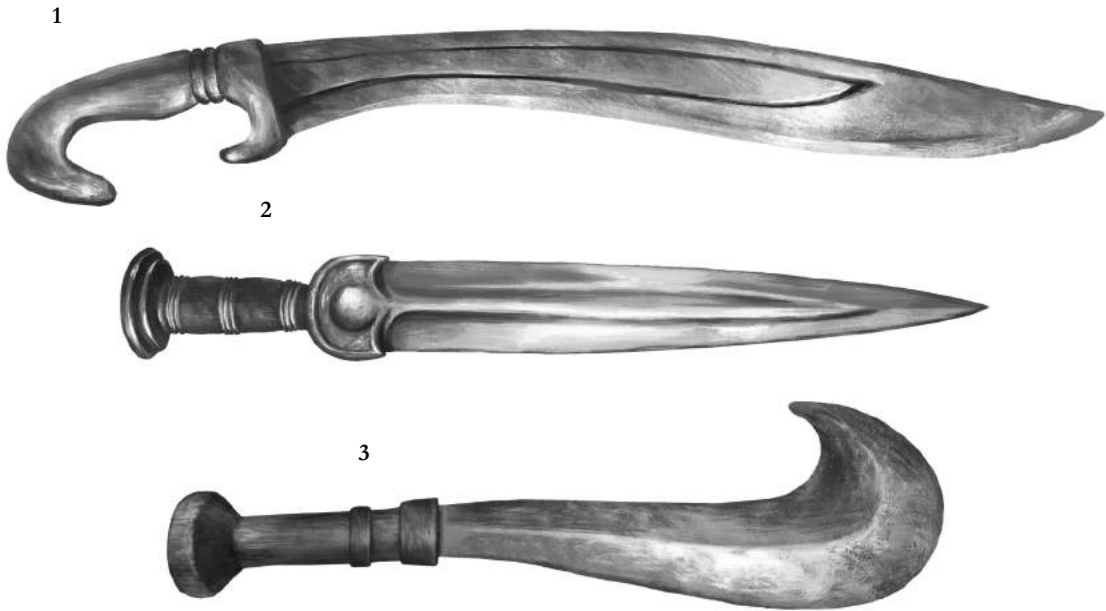
peppers are particularly prized, with their heat and flavor being sought after by all of Helkara's people. The juicy, sweet melons provide a welcome relief from the heat, while the okra is a staple in many of the southern dishes. And the corn, with its sweet, nutty flavor, is a staple of many a Helkaran feast.

Technology

The land of Helkara is a realm of might and magic, where sorcery and strength hold sway over the masses. But amidst the magical prowess of its inhabitants, it is often forgotten that some of the technological achievements of its peoples rival the marvels of magic. Helkara is a land where the knowledge of the ancients still thrives, where the gleam of iron and the sheen of bronze are commonplace.

Here are ten of the most common and notable technological advancements of Helkara:

Chariots: The chariot, with its swift speed and its iron-tipped wheels, is a common sight across the land. Warriors ride these into battle, striking fear into the hearts of their enemies and inspiring awe in their followers.



1. Vrogatharian kopis
2. Uthul-Zargothian war dagger
3. Keth'kethian hook-sword

Iron Weapons: The people of Helkara are skilled at forging iron into deadly weapons. From the sharpened tips of their spears to the cutting edges of their swords, their weapons are renowned for their ability to cut through armor and bone with ease.

Bronze Armor: The warriors of Helkara don bronze armor crafted from the ancient art of smithing. This armor is tough and resilient, able to turn aside sword strokes and arrow shots alike, making the warriors who wear it nearly invulnerable in battle.

Alchemy Stoves: In Helkara, alchemists use alchemy stoves to mix and create powerful elixirs and potions. These stoves, fueled by the magical Essence of Helkara, are carefully crafted to allow the alchemist to achieve the perfect balance of heat and

energy required for their alchemical creations.

Bronze Tools: Bronze tools, from plows to hammers, are commonplace in Helkara, with farmers using them to cultivate their crops and artisans using them to craft everything from jewelry to pottery.

Irrigation Systems: The people of Helkara are masters of irrigation, using complex systems of canals and dams to bring water to their crops and cities. These systems, coupled with the fertile soil of the land, allow the people of Helkara to thrive even in the harshest of climates.

The Water Clock: The water clock, a marvel of ancient engineering, is used across Helkara to keep track of time. This simple yet effective device uses the flow of water to measure the passings, divided

into eight increments each, or hours, allowing the people of Helkara to keep track of time with great accuracy.

Windmills: Windmills, with their massive blades, are a common sight in the open grasslands of Helkara. These machines, driven by the wind, are used to grind grain into flour, providing food for the people of the land.

Siege Engines: Helkara's armies use powerful siege engines, like battering rams and trebuchets, to lay waste to their enemies' fortifications. These machines, driven by the strength of horses and men, are capable of bringing down even the strongest of walls.

Alchemical Lamps: In the dark depths of the Gloaming, alchemical lamps provide the light that guides the way. These lamps, fueled by the magical Essence of the land, burn with a bright and steady

flame, illuminating the path for travelers and providing a warm glow for those who seek refuge from the darkness.

Those Before

Those Before is the term given to the humans who lived long ago in Helkara's past. The very existence of Those Before is shrouded in mystery and myth. Even the most learned sages of Helkara can only speculate on who they were and what they accomplished before the Cataclysm. The Sorcerer-Kings, who now rule over the remnants of their civilization, keep a tight grip on any information or artifacts that might shed light on the past. Those who seek knowledge of Those Before risk the wrath of the Sorcerer-Kings, who view them as dangerous relics of a long-forgotten age. Despite these obstacles, rumors persist of hidden archives, buried ruins, and other sources of information about Those Before. Some say that there are vast





storehouses of knowledge within the underground realms ruled by the goblinoids, far from the prying eyes of the Sorcerer-Kings. Others believe that within the Nothing, the vast gray wasteland that covers much of Helkara, there might be forgotten cities and other signs of Those Before's civilization.

The true origins and nature of Those Before remain a mystery, but their legacy lives on through the many stories and legends that have been passed down through the generations. According to the most widely accepted myths, Those Before were once the dominant power on Helkara, wielding magic and technology that would be beyond the grasp of even the greatest Sorcerer-Kings. However, their unchecked power and ambition led to the Cataclysm, an event that left the world in ruin.

The Sorcerer-Kings view Those Before as a cautionary tale. They believe that their forebears were too careless with their magical power and that this is what led to the Cataclysm. As such, they believe that magic and the Essence, the arcane force that suffuses all things on Helkara, should be kept out of the hands of all but the most trusted and capable individuals. To them, the idea of widespread magic use or technological advancement threatens the stability and order of the new world.

Despite the fear and mistrust that surrounds the memory of Those Before, there are those who continue to seek out the truth about this ancient civilization. Adventurers, archaeologists, and rebels all hope to unlock the secrets of the past and reclaim some of the lost power and knowledge of Those Before. Some believe that the truth about Those Before might hold the key to a brighter future for Helkara, one in which magic and technology can be harnessed for the betterment of all. Others believe that those who pursue such knowledge risk unleashing another Cataclysm and that the secrets of Those Before are best left buried.

Key Historical Events

Below is an abridged history of Helkara. Dates are given in turns (Helkaran year, or 176 Earth days) after the Cataclysm. The word Helkara literally means “post-Cataclysm,” hence its use as a date modifier.

Turn 0 H. The Cataclysm

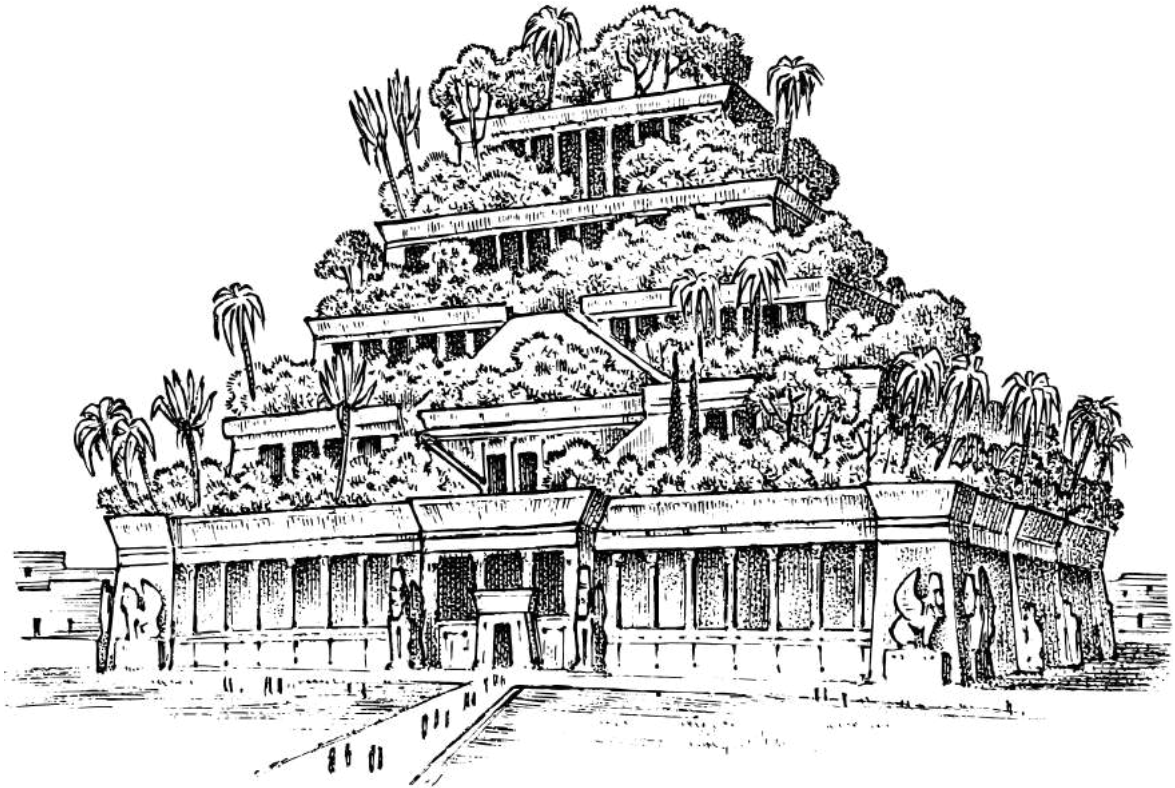
The Cataclysm was a catastrophic event that changed the face of Helkara forever. Those who recall it through stories and songs tell of a massive explosion that shook the very foundations of the world and caused it to spin slower on its axis. The sun scorched the land and made vast swathes of the planet uninhabitable. The Cataclysm also created the lifeless Nothing, a vast and inhospitable gray wasteland that covers much of the world. The survivors of this disaster were forced to cling to the poles, where temperatures were mild enough to allow for life to survive. And so, the humans of Helkara have lived near the poles for generations, eking out a precarious existence in the shadow of a world-shattering event that changed their planet forever.

Turn 1-99 H. The Rise of the Sorcerer-Kings

In the first few turns after the Cataclysm, powerful sorcerers rose to prominence and claimed vast territories for themselves. They became known as the Sorcerer-Kings, and each ruled their own lands with an iron fist, using their magic to maintain control over and shape the world to their will.

Turn 51 H. Fall of Zorath

The kingdom of Zorath launched a massive war of conquest, seeking to expand its borders and gain control over neighboring lands. Despite their powerful army and advanced technology, they



ultimately succumbed to their own dark magic and were defeated by a coalition of nations led by Thrakum.

Turn 87–98 H. Rise and Fall of Thrakum

Thrakum became the dominant maritime power in the Arkaalan Gulf, using its vast navy and skilled sailors to control the seas and establish a monopoly on trade routes. However, their thirst for conquest eventually led to their downfall as they became overextended in their wars with emerging powers Keth'keth and Norgoth. They are ultimately destroyed by a rebellion formed in the city-state of Aruthaz.

Turn 100–150 H. The Twilight Wars

In the absence of Thrakum, the nations of Vrogathar and Aruthaz went to war over the fertile lands near the Twilight Rifts and the Fester. This conflict lasted for nearly 50 turns until the two nations signed a treaty that still exists today.

Turn 198 H. The Great Drought

A prolonged period of hot, dry weather hit the Gloaming, causing crop failures, famine, and widespread migration. Many small settlements and farms were abandoned, and larger cities struggled to feed their populations.

Turn 202 H. The Black Tower of Evernight

In the 202nd turn, the Sorcerer-King of Nazgar built his black tower Tryvva at the frozen north pole of Helkara. From there, he ruled over the land and became known as the most powerful and feared of all the Sorcerer-Kings.

Turn 308 H. Firestorm of 308

A massive fire broke out in the heart of the Gloaming, likely caused by a combination of dry weather and a spark from a forge. The fire quickly spread, destroying entire villages and devastating vast swaths of land.

Turn 333–339 H. The Rebellion of the Blood Cult

In the 333rd turn, the Blood Cult of Azathoth rose

up against the other Sorcerer-Kings, claiming that they alone knew the truth about the nature of the universe. Their rebellion was put down, but the Blood Priestess Nendukuga was not captured and continued to lead her cult in secret, eventually forming the nation of Uthul-Zagoth.

Turn 345 H. The Uthul-Zargothian Revolt

In the early years of Uthul-Zagoth, the nation's people rose up against the Blood Cult in a violent revolt. The rebellion was eventually quashed, but it left the nation forever changed and with a deep-seated distrust of authority.

Turn 402 H. Destruction of Akkad

The once-great civilization of Akkad was mysteriously destroyed by an unknown force, leaving behind only ruins and legends of its former glory.





Turn 415 H. The Order of the Crimson Blade Emerges

In the 415th turn, a band of nomads led by the lovers Marduk and Astra formed the Order of the Crimson Blade. They roamed the lands, offering their services as mercenaries and protectors to those in need. Over time, they became a powerful force in their own right, respected by many and feared by their enemies.

Turn 539 H. The Ivory Plague

A mysterious illness called the Ivory Plague swept across the Gloaming, killing countless people and livestock. The disease spread quickly and was highly contagious, causing widespread panic and leading to border closures and quarantine measures.

Turn 540 H. Numeria Collapses

The powerful kingdom of Numeria started to experience economic turmoil, as their arrogance and greed, coupled with the Ivory Plague, caused them to become too powerful for their own good. The kingdom eventually collapsed from the inside out, causing widespread poverty and unrest. They are absorbed by Vrogathar.

Turn 550 H. The Brotherhood of the Blackened Chain Emerges

In the 550th turn, a shadowy figure known only as Vaanqar formed the Brotherhood of the Blackened Chain. This organization of assassins became known for their deadly efficiency and soon became a powerful force in the shadows of Helkaran politics.

Turn 595–605 H. Darvish Civil War

A power struggle within the mystical nation of Darvish led to a civil war between rival factions of sorcerers and alchemists. The nation was eventually torn apart by the conflict, leaving behind only scattered communities of magic-users. Keth'keth and Norgoth fought over the remains, which were eventually absorbed by Keth'keth.

Turn 650 H. The Quake of 650

During the first movement of 650, a massive earthquake struck the Gloaming, causing widespread damage and panic. Cities were destroyed, and countless lives were lost in the aftermath. The quake also caused massive cracks in the earth that remain to this day, some of which still release dangerous gasses.

Turn 650 H. Zorathian Uprising

During the second descent of 650, a group of rogue Zorathians, who were descendants of the former kingdom's powerful sorcerers, launched an uprising in an attempt to reclaim their former power. However, they were put down quickly by Dark Council of Aruthaz's inquisitors.

Turn 666 H. The Expansion of Keth'keth

In the 666th turn, the necromancers of Keth'keth began to expand their territories, completing their absorption of Darvish. Their use of undeath made them nearly invincible, and soon they became a force to be reckoned with in the Gloaming.

Turn 680–690 H. The Unification War

After years of small-scale conflicts and skirmishes

between the nations of Aruthaz and Keth'keth, the two nations eventually went to war in a full-scale conflict that lasted for several turns. Eventually, Aruthaz emerged as the victor, unifying the two nations into one. This put considerable pressure on Norgoth, trapped between the two nations.

Turn 697 H. The Keth'kethian Uprising

In the aftermath of the Unification War, Keth'kethian nationalist groups led by a Keth'kethian warrior named Zalto rose up against the Aruthazian-dominated government. Keth'keth once again

Zalto the Undying King, High Necromancer of Keth'keth.





became its own nation and named Zalto as the High-Necromancer of Keth'keth.

Turn 699 H. The Long Night

A night that lasted much longer than any in recent memory hit the Gloaming, causing widespread crop failure and famine. Many people perished from the cold and hunger, and the harsh conditions made it difficult for survivors to rebuild.

Turn 700 H. The Fall of Zalto

In the 700th turn, Zalto, the High-Necromancer of Keth'keth, was assassinated. The circumstances surrounding his death are still shrouded in mystery, but it is said that a powerful sorceress was involved. Zalto's necromancers used a dark ritual to revive the fallen king, transforming him into the Undying King that he is today.

Turn 770–780 H. Vrogatharian Expansion

Vrogathar, a nation known for its military prowess, began a period of expansion, conquering several neighboring territories and increasing its power and influence in the Gloaming.

Turn 778 H. The Vrogatharian-Uthul-Zargothian War

As Vrogathar continued its expansion, it came into conflict with the powerful nation of Uthul-Zargoth. The two nations engaged in a brutal battle that lasted for several movements, with neither side gaining a significant advantage.

Turn 798–886 H. The Siege of Tryvvga

A coalition of nations led by Vrogathar launched an

attack on the black tower of Tryvva. The siege lasted for 88 turns, but in the end, the Sorcerer-King of Nazgar was not defeated, and the attackers were forced to retreat.

Turn 810 H. The Great Flood

A massive storm caused widespread flooding throughout the Gloaming, particularly in Aruthaz, eastern Vrogathar, and southern Keth'keth, destroying settlements and farmland. Many people lost their homes, and the aftermath of the flood led to the spread of disease and the displacement of thousands of people.

Turn 825 H. Kisurra, the Free City Emerges

After centuries of struggle and hardships, a new power rose from the depths of the Fester. Kisurra, the Free City, a haven for all those seeking refuge from the cruel and oppressive rule of the Sorcerer-Kings, emerged as a beacon of hope in the gray wastes. Under the leadership of its charismatic and visionary leader, Nefertum, Kisurra became a



melting pot of cultures where all were welcome, regardless of race or nationality. Over time, it grew into a thriving city-state renowned for its thriving trade and its culture of freedom and equality.

Turn 836 H. The Long Noon

A Second Ascent that lasted longer and was much hotter than any in recent memory hit the Gloaming. The heat caused widespread crop failures, leading to famine and unrest. Many people fled the southern regions, seeking refuge in cooler climes.

Turn 855–859 H. The Rise of the Goblinoids

The goblinoids of Helkara, long living in the shadows of the labyrinthine tunnels beneath the earth, rose up in a violent uprising against the aboveground humans. Led by their charismatic and cunning chieftain, Kurgoth the Terrible, the goblinoids launched a series of surprise attacks on human settlements and cities, causing widespread chaos and destruction. The human nations were caught off guard and struggled to repel the goblinoid horde. Despite the valiant efforts of the human warriors, the goblinoids continued to gain ground, and it seemed as though all of Helkara would soon fall under their rule. However, Vrogathar and the Dark Council of Aruthaz temporarily turned away from their conflict at Tryvva to stamp out the goblin resistance, killing Kurgoth in the process.

Turn 858 H. The Nightmare Blight

A strange, dark plant called the Nightmare Blight began to grow throughout the Gloaming, causing widespread panic. The plant was said to be poisonous, and anyone who touched it would fall into a deep, nightmare-filled sleep from which they could never awaken. Four of the eight Sorcerer-Kings of Helkara joined forces to destroy the blight.

Turn 875 H. The Second Great Drought

Another severe drought swept across the Gloaming, causing widespread food shortages and famine. The disaster had far-reaching consequences as nations struggled to provide for their people and maintain stability.

Turn 888 H (Present). The War of the Shadow Council

In the final turns, the Shadow Council of Norgoth found themselves at odds with the other Sorcerer-Kings. The conflict is brutal and still ongoing. The Shadow Council's position in the dark mountains of the Twilight Rifts is all that keeps them safe from the other factions, particularly the throngs of undead sent from neighboring Keth'keth.

Humanoids

Helkara is home to a diverse range of humanoids, with an estimated 20 million humans and three times as many goblinoids. The relationships between these two species are complex and often fraught, with tensions running high between the two groups. The other intelligent species in Helkara, such as glimmerings, limnoids, narghals, shriekers, and zephyrans, also play a role in the social fabric of the world.

Humans and Goblins

Humans and goblins are the two major humanoid species on Helkara, each with their own unique characteristics and ways of life. While humans live on the surface, primarily around the Gloaming, goblins call the labyrinthine network of tunnels left behind by Those Before their home.

Despite living in different environments, these two species are often at odds with each other. This is



Ceremonial goblin skull mask used in Uthul-Zargothian Midnight Rituals.

largely due to the influence of the Sorcerer-Kings, who have spread the myth that goblins are soulless creatures not part of the Eternal Cycle. In reality, the Sorcerer-Kings fear the knowledge that goblins possess about Those Before, as it could make them lose their power if the information were to reach their thralls.

Goblins, on the other hand, hold a grudge against humans for being reckless and having access to magic and the Essence. Padrek the Reliable, a hobgoblin, assumed the role of leader among the goblins after Thegn Holfar of Aruthaz defeated Padrek's predecessor, Kurgoth the Terrible, in battle.

Since the war of turn 855 H, the goblins have been relatively quiet, but there are rumors that they may soon rise again, as goblinoids have been spotted in the forests of Vrogathar and in the Twilight Rifts.

Other Humanoid Species

There are many races beyond humans and goblins that call this realm their home.

Glimmerings are tiny insect-like beings that emit



Padrek the Reliable, Hobgoblin Chieftain and leader of the Goblins of Grommash.

light and live in large colonies. They are found primarily in the caves and caverns of the underworld and are known for their ability to create stunning displays of light and color. The glimmerings are also valuable allies, as their glowing light can provide illumination in the darkest of places.

Limnoids are amphibian humanoids that make their homes in the swamps and marshes of Helkara. They are an elusive people and are known for their ability to move through the water with ease. Despite their somewhat sluggish appearance, the limnoids are formidable hunters, using their camouflage and stealth to take down their prey.

Narghals are a burrowing race of pale, blind, goblin-like creatures with a highly developed sense of smell. They are a reclusive people, preferring the quiet and safety of the underground to the dangers of the surface. Despite their small stature, the narghals are known for their cunning and resourcefulness, making them formidable foes in the tunnels and caves that they call home.

Shriekers are creatures both alluring and dangerous. These bird-like humanoids possess feathers of rust red and brilliant blue for the males and browns and grays for the females. Despite this beauty, the shriekers are feared and shunned by all who cross their path, for they possess the ability to emit a loud, ear-piercing screech that can disorient and incapacitate even the strongest of warriors. They are known to trade with the scavengers and Vrogatharians who call the outskirts of Nothing's Edge their home, and most are able to speak multiple languages.

Zephyrans are a nomadic race of humanoids adapted to life in desert regions. They are fleet of



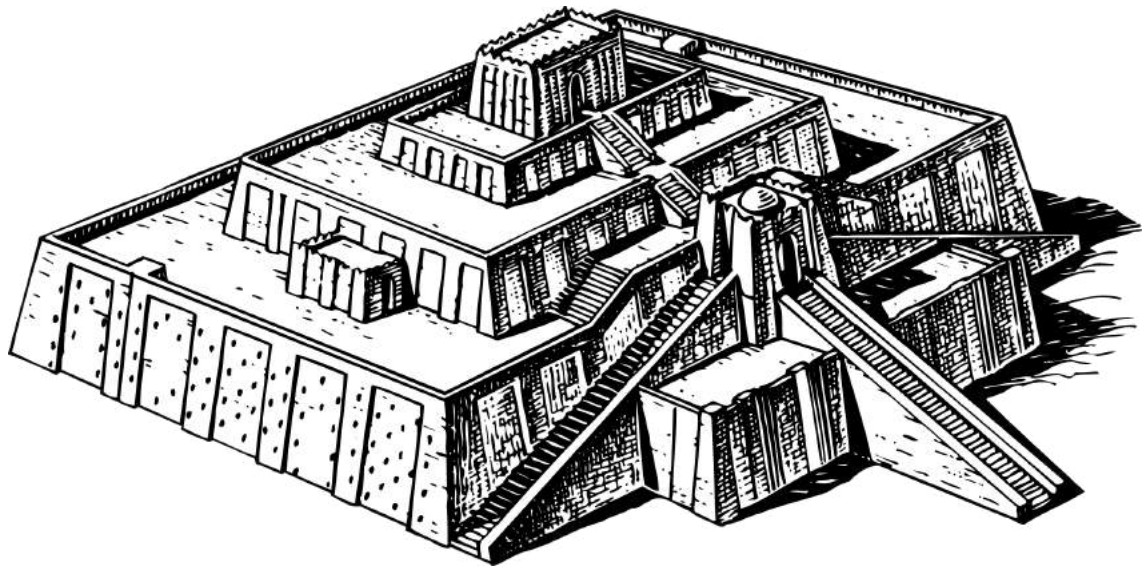
A shrieker of southern Vrogathar.

foot and are known for their ability to run long distances without tiring. Despite their nomadic lifestyle, the zephyrans are also known for their hospitality and their love of dance and music.

Human Social Classes

The Sorcerer-Kings reign supreme, towering above all other social classes. Below them, the humans of Helkara can be divided into five categories: outsider, thrall, freeman, noble, and priesthood.

The outsiders are those who live apart from the controlled settlements of the Sorcerer-Kings. They may be scavengers, hermits, or those who simply choose to be independent. These folk often reject attempts to join their numbers, clinging to their tribal ways. The only exception to this rule are the people of Kisurra, the Free City. However, reaching the city is a challenge in itself.



The thralls, however, have little freedom in the domains of the Sorcerer-Kings. Though they are not owned like slaves, they have few rights and must toil in the cities until they earn the status of freeman. This they may do through hard work and perseverance, but they will always be looked down upon by those above them.

The freemen, while having more rights than thralls, still struggle in comparison to nobles and priests. They eke out a living as traders, merchants, and skilled artisans, but their position remains precarious. Only a lucky few may rise to the ranks of the noble, if they amass sufficient wealth and are welcomed into their exclusive society.

The nobles, the wealthiest humans in Helkara aside from the Sorcerer-Kings and priests, comprise but a mere one percent of the population. In some places, like Uthul-Zargoth, the line between noble and priest is blurred, with these two classes becoming one and the same. The nobles hold the highest positions in the cities and often lead the armies of the Sorcerer-Kings.

And then there is the priesthood, possibly the

only class that rivals the Sorcerer-Kings themselves in power and authority. All Sorcerer-Kings, regardless of their beliefs, have a priesthood to serve them, and the orders of the priests are considered to come directly from the Sorcerer-Kings. This, combined with the priests' role in leading the inquisitors—the specialist warriors who hunt down heretics and traitors—has instilled fear into the hearts of most Helkaran humans.

Human Politics

In this world of magic and mystery, the Sorcerer-Kings are not united, but are instead bound by fear and distrust. Each nation holds their own interests close, and the political landscape of Helkara is ever-changing, with alliances forming and breaking as the winds of war shift.

Norgoth, led by the Shadow Council of three sorceresses, is constantly at war with its neighbors Aruthaz and Keth'keth. The latter has made many attempts to kill the sorceresses, yet Norgoth still stands strong.

The Blood Cult of Azathoth uses assassins from

the Brotherhood of the Blackened Chain to attack their rivals, though they have yet to go to war directly. They have attempted to sway the powerful Order of the Crimson Blade to their side, but to no avail.

The Necromancers of Keth'keth, under the command of Zalto the Undying King, keep their distance from the political arena, only joining the fray when victory is certain.

Vrogathar, the largest and wealthiest nation, leads the charge in testing the strength of their neighboring nations, although their last major conflict, the siege of Tryvvga, was cut short by goblinoid attacks.

Aruthaz, Vrogathar, Keth'keth, and Uthul-Zargoth engage in open trade, yet there are embargoes against the Sorcerer-King of Nazgar and the Shadow Council of Norgoth. The Free City of Kisurra, defying the will of the Sorcerer-Kings, is forbidden to trade with anyone, even other outsiders.

Human Traditions and Social Norms

The land of Helkara is a realm of mystery and magic, ruled by the tyrannical Sorcerer-Kings. Despite their oppressive rule, most Helkarans have come to accept their way of life, swayed by the propaganda that the alternative to living under the control of the Sorcerer-Kings is a dangerous and uncertain existence, one that would find them rejected by other nations and tribes.

For the Helkarans, devotion to their rulers or their gods is a way of life. In Uthul-Zargoth, the people worship Azathoth as the one true deity, while in other nations, devotion is given to the Sorcerer-Kings themselves, who they view as representative of the Bleak Gods in the Sky Above the Sky.

The people of Helkara are hardworking folk, toiling away at their duties for two passings (16 hours) before resting for the cycle's final passing. Holidays are few and far between, usually only taken

on the most important days of the year, such as Noon and Midnight. The rise of the Sorcerer-Kings is also celebrated, though the dates vary from nation to nation.

The clothing of the Helkarans is a reflection of their nation and their lifestyle. The pious people of Uthul-Zargoth wear gray and white robes, adorned with veils to protect them from the biting insects of their swampy homeland. The Azurthuzians are known for their love of greens, teals, and blues, and their hardy warriors and sailors decorate their banners and shields with images of leviathans and warships. The Keth'kethians wear black and dark gray, with black paint covering their faces and jewelry made from bones adorning their bodies. The Norgothians, being mountain folk, are accustomed to the cold, and they enjoy wearing jewelry that catches the light, and decorating their cliffside homes with similar trinkets.

The Vrogatharians are conquerors, incorporating the motifs of many different cultures into their own. Those who live near the Evernight and the sea take on the dress and mannerisms of the Aruthazians, while southern Vrogatharians are more similar to the nomadic tribes that have fallen under their rule.

Human Nations

In the desolate land of Helkara, five nations vie for power and control. Each with its own unique culture and traditions, the nations are as diverse as the landscapes that shape them.

Aruthaz

Nestled along the banks of the Arkalaan Gulf, Aruthaz is a nation of seafarers ruled by the enigmatic Dark Council of Aruthaz. These proud warriors are known for their bravery and hunting prowess. They are a mysterious people, with many tales told of their adventures across the waves and their encounters with creatures from beyond the



Vattendrækten, the crest of Aruthaz.

horizon. Their rule is absolute, and their fleet is unmatched.

Notable settlements in Aruthaz include:

Blackvale: A remote village located in the midst of the Twilight Rifts, Blackvale is home to a community of miners and blacksmiths. The town is known for its sturdy buildings and its unbreakable spirit, which has made it a symbol of Aruthazi resilience.

Chillglen: A fortified city built atop a rocky crag, Chillglen is the heart of the Aruthazi navy and is home to the fiercest warriors in all of Aruthaz. Chillglen's walls are thick and its gates strong, making it a formidable stronghold against any would-be invaders.

Doghorn: A small fishing village located on the craggy cliffs overlooking the sea, Doghorn is a haven for those seeking solitude and peace. The town is known for its quiet beauty, with its crisp sea air and breathtaking views of the gulf.

Hrognheim: A sprawling city located at the mouth of a great river, Hrognheim is the largest city in Aruthaz and is home to the Dark Council of Aruthaz. The city is full of life and energy, with bustling markets and grand halls echoing with the sounds of revelry and song.

Jarnvang: A remote settlement located on a windswept peninsula, Jarnvang is home to a small community of farmers and herders. Despite its isolation, Jarnvang is known for its warm hospitality and its hearty food, which has made it a favorite among travelers.

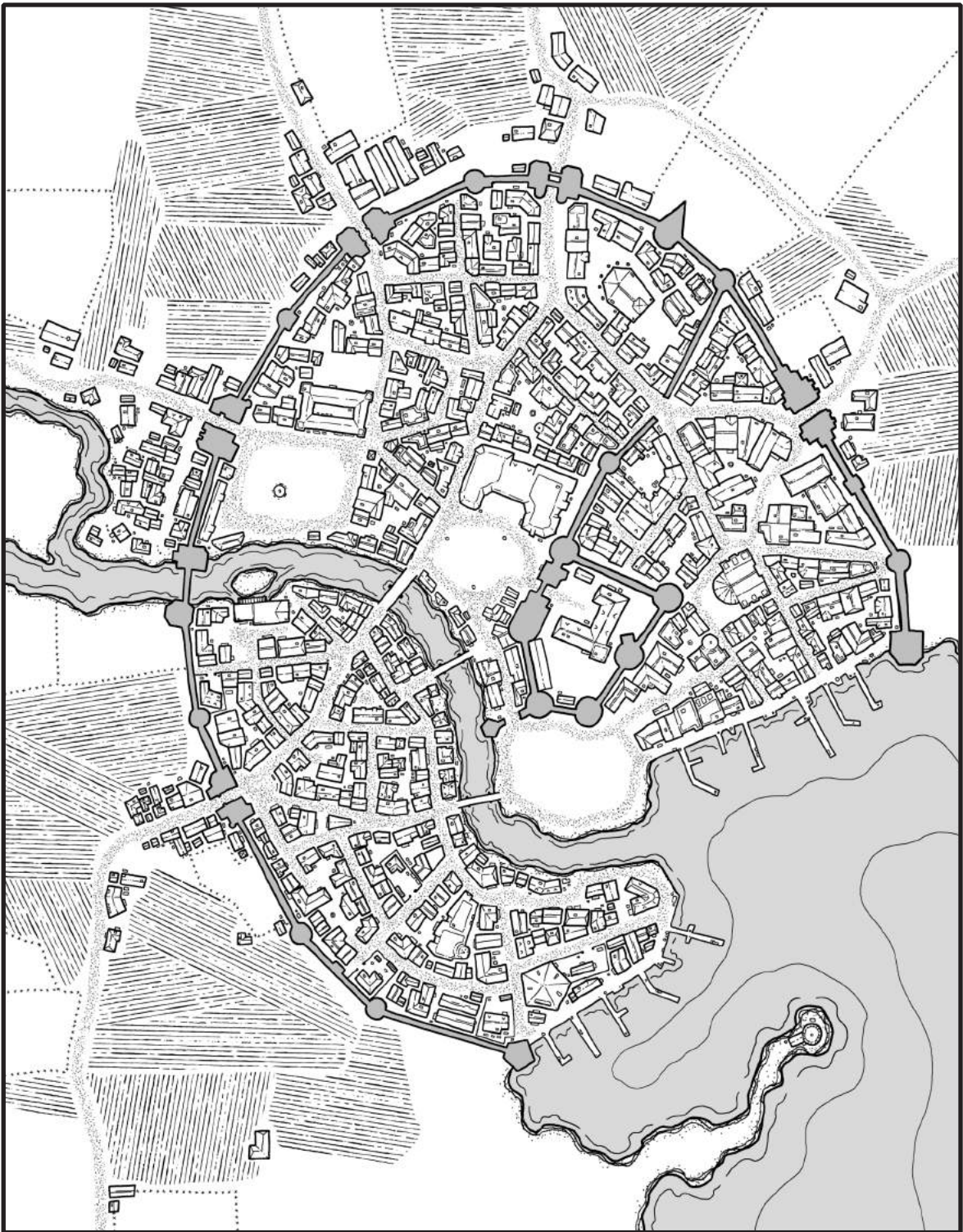
Oakenheim: A small settlement located in the midst of the Aruthazi forest, Oakenheim is home to some of the finest hunters and trappers in all of Aruthaz. The town is known for its towering wooden buildings and its abundant wildlife.

Sandwharf: A bustling port town, Sandwharf is the center of Aruthazi trade and commerce. The town is constantly busy with traders and sailors coming and going, and its streets are always filled with the sounds of haggling and merriment.

Skaalhof: A small hamlet located in the rolling hills of Aruthaz, Skaalhof is known for its rolling meadows and its abundant livestock. The town is home to a tight-knit community of farmers and herders who take pride in their simple way of life.

Valgrind: A remote village located along the rugged coast, Valgrind is home to a close-knit community of fishermen and sailors. The town is renowned for its hearty cuisine and its strong-willed inhabitants, who are as tough as the sea itself.

Windgulch: A small fishing village located at the



Hrognheim, capital of Aruthaz, as it appears in Turn 888 H.

mouth of a fjord, Windgulch is a peaceful haven in the midst of the turbulent sea. The town is renowned for its picturesque beauty, with its narrow streets and its traditional wooden houses perched atop the cliffs overlooking the water.

Keth'keth

The hilly nation of Keth'keth is ruled by the reviled Necromancers of Keth'keth and their grim monarch, Zalto the Undying King. Here, death holds no power, and the Necromancers wield their dark arts with ease. The hills are dotted with tombs, and the air is thick with the smell of decay. Keth'keth is home to many powerful magic-users, who have pledged their loyalty to Zalto in exchange for the promise of eternal life.

Notable locations in Keth'keth include:

The Black Crypt: A massive underground tomb that holds the remains of countless dead. The Necromancers use the power of the spirits trapped within to bolster their own abilities and to raise armies of the undead to do their bidding.

The Black Monastery: This imposing fortress is home to the most powerful of the Necromancers and is said to be the birthplace of the first undead horde. The Black Monastery is a place of dark magic and unspeakable horrors, and those who enter are often never seen again.

The Cairn of the Damned: A massive pile of stones and bones that marks the resting place of the most powerful Necromancers who have lived and died in Keth'keth. The Cairn is said to be guarded by powerful spirits, and those who dare to disturb the dead are doomed to join them.

The Deadlands: A vast, desolate wasteland that stretches beyond the borders of Keth'keth. The



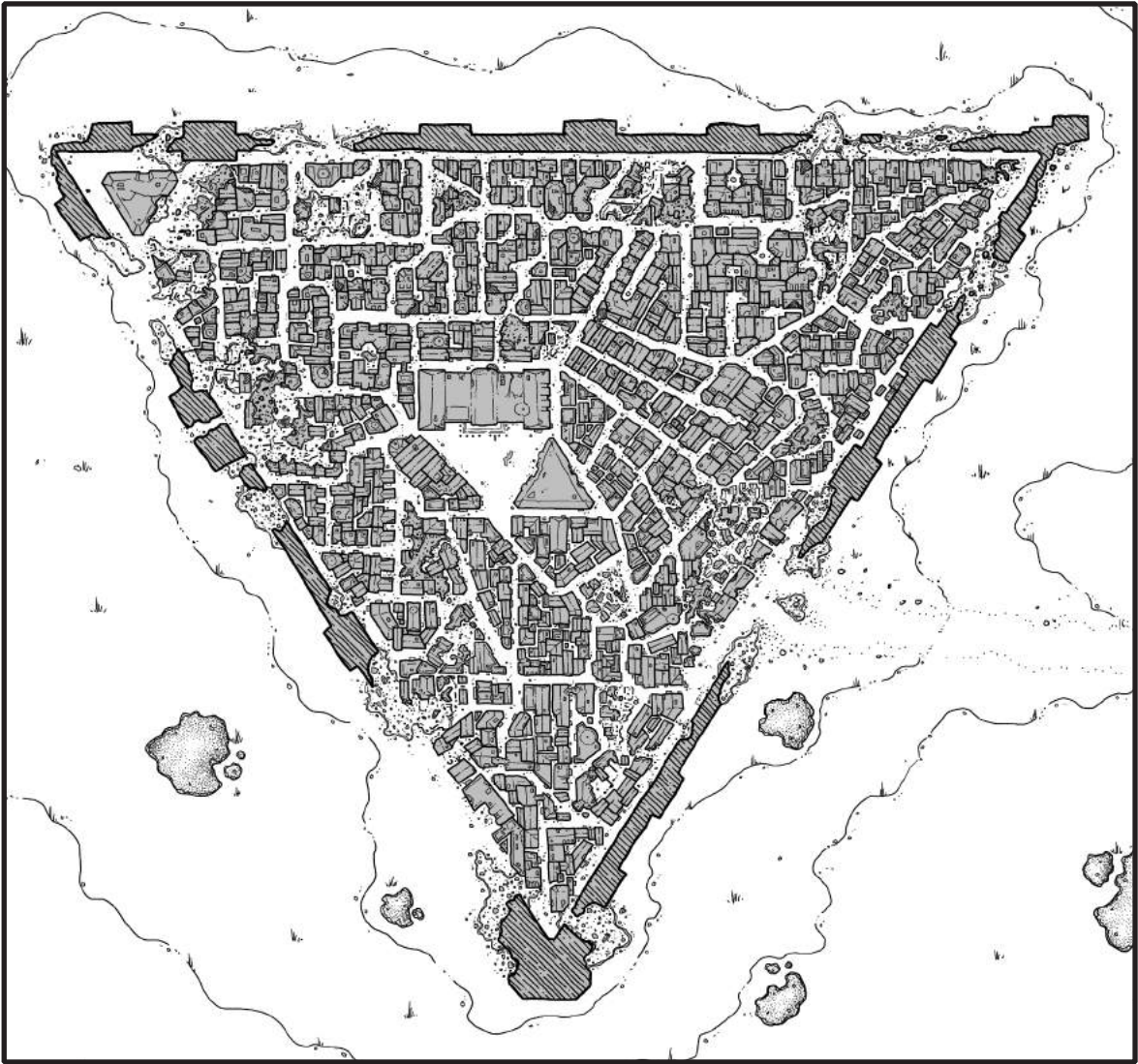
Gaur Sinistro, the crest of Keth'keth.

Necromancers have claimed the Deadlands as their own and have raised legions of undead to defend their territory.

The Hall of Night: A grand temple dedicated to the worship of the Necromancers and the spirits of the dead. The Hall is filled with strange, arcane symbols and is said to be the site of many dark rituals.

The Necropolis of Zalto: This sprawling city is the seat of power for the Necromancers of Keth'keth and the Undying King Zalto himself. Its walls are made of bone, and its towers reach towards the sky like skeletal fingers, making it a truly intimidating sight. The city is home to a dark university where aspiring necromancers learn the arts of death and undeath.

Ravenswood: A twisted, dark forest where the trees are said to whisper secrets to those brave enough to venture within. The Necromancers often send their apprentices to Ravenswood to hone their abilities, and the forest is home to many sinister creatures that



The Necropolis of Zalto, Keth'keth, as it appears in Turn 888 H.

are loyal to the Necromancers.

The Shadowed Glen: This narrow valley is home to a coven of witches and their thralls who worship the Bleak Gods. The witches are known for their powerful spells and potent curses. Zalto and his most trusted advisors frequently consult the witches.

The Village of the Forgotten: This small hamlet is home to a group of outcasts and misfits who have

fled the wrath of the Necromancers. Despite their dark reputation, the villagers are surprisingly warm and hospitable to travelers who seek refuge within their walls.

Norgoth

Tucked away in the Twilight Rifts, Norgoth is ruled by a trio of sorceresses named Elsbeth, Mardella, and Sirena, the infamous Shadow Council of Norgoth. They are renowned for their skill in



The Eye of Loikiel, crest of Norgoth.

defensive magic and their ability to repel any attacker. Despite its small size, Norgoth is a formidable nation, and its sorceresses are respected and feared throughout Helkara.

Notable locations in Norgoth include:

Ravenhold: A small town located near the heart of Norgoth, it is known for its seers, diviners, and soothsayers. People from far and wide come to Ravenhold seeking knowledge of the future and answers to their deepest questions.

Shadowfort: A heavily fortified town that serves as the main military stronghold of Norgoth. It is a place of quiet determination, where the warriors of Norgoth stand guard against any potential threats to the nation. This is also where the Shadow Council of Norgoth resides.

The Shadow Vale: A desolate and seemingly abandoned area that is rumored to be cursed by dark magic. While few dare to venture there, those who do speak of twisted trees and eldritch creatures lurking in the shadows.

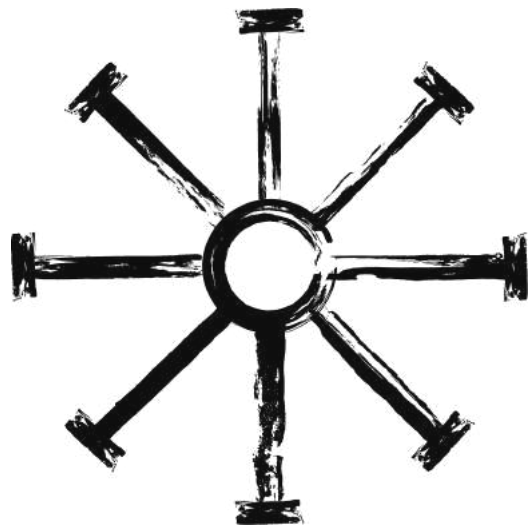
Twilight's Threshold: A bustling port town that serves as the main entry point into Norgoth. Despite its ominous name, it is a hub of trade and commerce, with ships coming and going from all corners of the Gloaming to trade in the unique goods of the small nation.

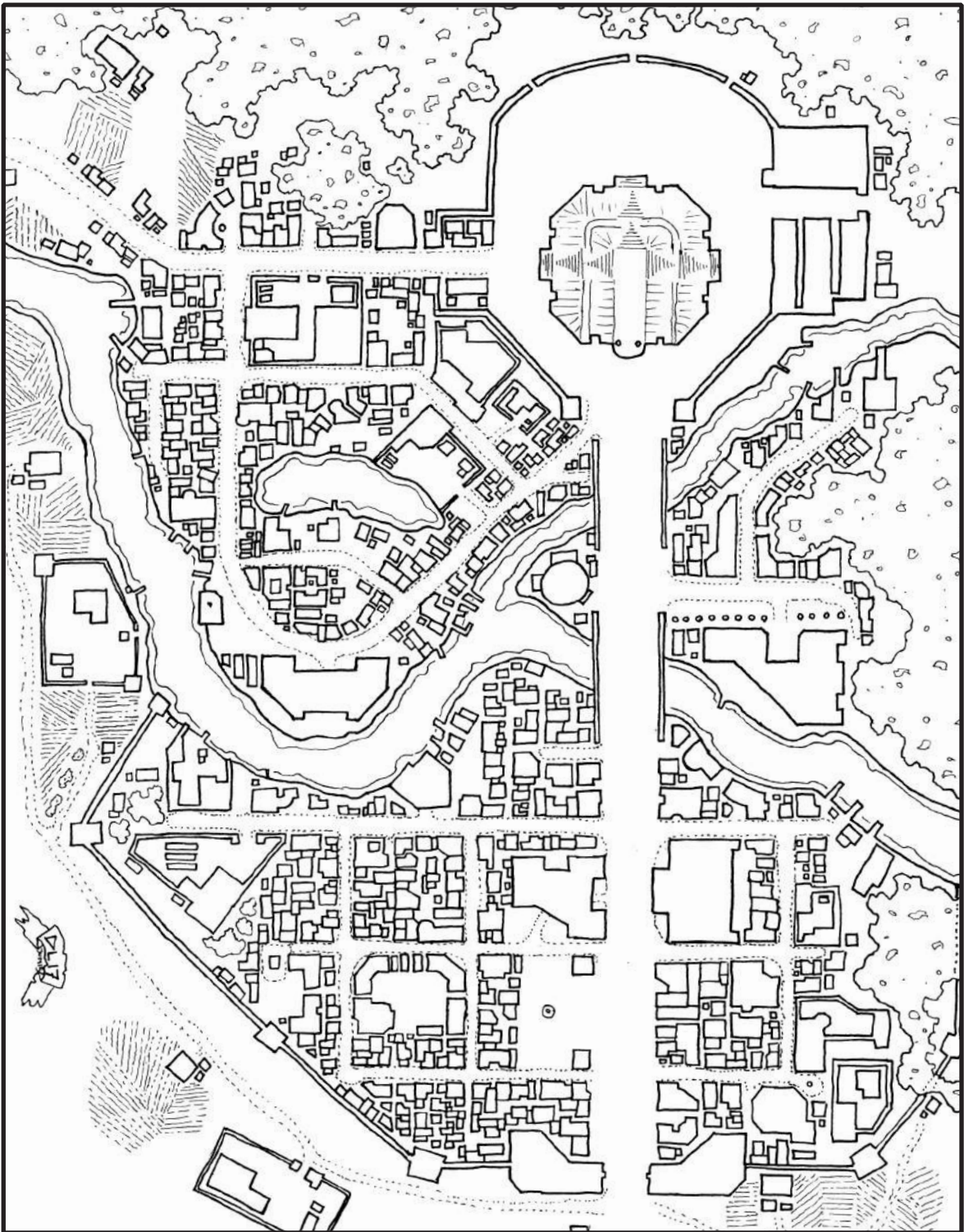
Willow Creek: A sleepy, rural village located in the lush and fertile hills of Norgoth. Despite its seemingly peaceful exterior, Willow Creek is known for its skilled archers and hunters, who often roam the surrounding wilderness in search of game.

Uthul-Zargoth

Uthul-Zargoth is the swampy homeland of the Blood Cult of Azathoth and its Blood Priestess, Nendukuga. These devout people believe that there is only one true god, Azathoth, and they worship him with fervor. The swamps are filled with strange and dangerous creatures, but the Blood Cultists are undaunted. They are a pious people, and their devotion to their god is unmatched by any other nation.

The Bloodied Wheel, crest of Uthul-Zargoth.





The Blood Temple of Azathoth, Uthul-Zargoth, as it appears in Turn 888 H.

Notable locations in Uthul-Zargoth include:

Abzu'Zar: This small fishing village is located on the coast of the Blood Marsh and is known for its catch of exotic fish. The villagers believe that their fishing grounds are blessed by Azathoth, and they offer regular sacrifices to their deity. Abzu'Zar is a peaceful community, and the villagers are always happy to trade with travelers who come to their shores.

Azathoth's Reach: This sprawling city is home to the majority of the Blood Cult's faithful, and is renowned for its impressive architecture and intricate mosaics that depict scenes from Azathoth's mythos.

The Blood Marshes: This vast, swampy region is home to many dangerous creatures, but also provides fertile ground for the growth of crops and herbs used in the Blood Cult's rituals and medicines.

The Blood Temple: A towering ziggurat dedicated to Azathoth, the Blood Temple is the heart of religious worship in Uthul-Zargoth. It is also the seat of the Blood Priestess and her court.

Clean Well: A small oasis surrounded by arid sands, Clean Well is the site of many pilgrimage journeys for the devout followers of Azathoth. It is said that the well never dries up, and is blessed by the deity himself.

Dhureus' Rest: This isolated settlement is located in the heart of the swamps, surrounded by towering reeds and dense vegetation. The villagers are a mysterious lot, and they keep to themselves.

Enki'Zar: This small trading post is located at the crossroads of several trade routes that run through the swamps. The villagers of Enki'Zar are known for their cunning and their willingness to trade goods

with anyone who passes through their settlement. They have a reputation for being fair dealers, and they are respected by travelers and traders alike.

Nergal'Zar: This small fortification is located on the border of the swamps, and it serves as a checkpoint for travelers who wish to enter Uthul-Zargoth. The villagers of Nergal'Zar are skilled warriors, and they are sworn to protect their nation from any threats that may arise from the wilderness. They are also the enforcers of the laws of Azathoth, and they take their duties seriously.

Ymhul'Zar: This small farming village is located on the outskirts of the swamps of Uthul-Zargoth. Its people are devout followers of Azathoth, and their worship is reflected in the simple yet intricate shrines they have built in the center of the village. The villagers are known for their hospitality, and they offer food and shelter to travelers who seek refuge from the harsh wilderness.

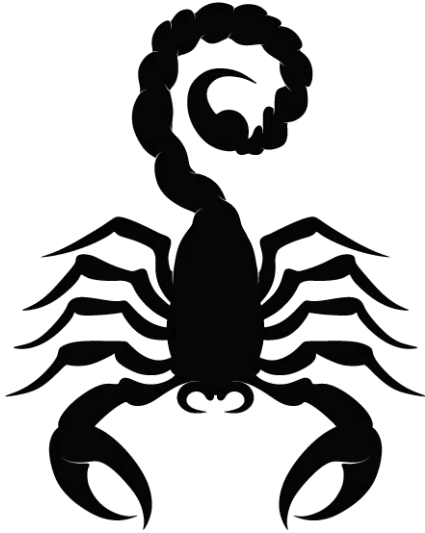
Vrogathar

Finally, there is Vrogathar, the largest of the nations, ruled by Vrogathar of the Iron Keep. This vast land is known for its large army, access to natural resources, and cultural diversity. From the icy peaks of the north to the scorching deserts of the south, Vrogathar is a melting pot of different cultures and traditions. Its people are as varied as the landscapes that shape them, and its ruler, Vrogathar, is respected and feared by all who reside within its borders.

Notable locations in Vrogathar include:

Ashen Keep: An imposing castle located in the heart of Vrogathar's northern territories. It serves as the home of Vrogathar's ruling class and is renowned for its opulence, luxury, and wealth.

Battlespire: A fortified town that serves as the main



The Sand Scorpion, crest of Vrogathar.

hub for the production of weapons and armor for the Vrogatharian army. It is guarded by a well-trained force of warriors, and its steel forges glow bright with the heat of industry.

Blade's End: A remote settlement that is home to a band of hardy hunters who brave the dangerous beasts of the surrounding wilderness. They are renowned for their skill with the bow and their courage in the face of danger.

Bloodbane: A remote and foreboding swamp located in the southeastern reaches of Vrogathar. It is home to a chapter of the Blood Cult of Azathoth who have rejected the Blood Priestess.

Draconum: A massive, sprawling city. It is known for its vibrant culture, diverse communities, and rich history.

Eldhaven: A small forest village that serves as a watchtower for the Vrogatharian army. Its residents are proud warriors who keep a constant vigil, watching for any threats to the nation.

Gornak's Hold: A massive fortress that overlooks the western reaches of Vrogathar, Gornak's Hold serves as a symbol of the might of the Iron Keep. Its walls are hewn from solid stone and guarded by hundreds of warriors, making it impregnable to even the most determined attackers.

The Iron Keep: A massive fortress that serves as the center of power for the Vrogatharian nation, the Iron Keep is home to the ruling lord, Vrogathar, and his court of advisors. It is a symbol of the kingdom's might and the source of its power.

Mountain's Reach: A small town that is nestled in the mountains at the edge of the Vrogatharian realm. Its residents are miners and craftsmen who extract the rich minerals from the mountains.

Redgranite: A grand city that is home to the powerful fire cults of the Vrogatharian people. Its towering pyramids and temples are made of red stone and its streets are lit by the flickering light of the flames.

The Red Wastes: A barren, desolate wasteland that surrounds the Iron Keep, the Red Wastes are home to some of the most dangerous creatures in all of Helkara. Only the bravest warriors dare to venture into its depths.

Stonefort: A large town that serves as a trading hub for the Vrogatharian people. Its bustling marketplaces are filled with exotic goods from far-off lands.

Stormhold: A grand city that is home to the Vrogatharian navy. Its harbors are filled with powerful warships and its residents are proud sailors who brave the storms of the seas.



The Iron Keep of Vrogathar.

Thrakarn: A bustling town located at the heart of Vrogathar's rich farmland. It is a thriving center of agriculture and food production, known for its fertile soil and abundant crops.

Thunderfall: A small village that is home to a powerful clan of Vrogatharian warriors. They are known for their fearless courage and their fierce loyalty to the Iron Keep.

Zul'Nazgar: A mysterious, ancient ruin that lies deep in the heart of Vrogathar. It is rumored to be the birthplace of the Vrogatharian people (including the eponymous Sorcerer-King of Nazgar), and is said to be home to powerful and ancient magic.

Independent City-States

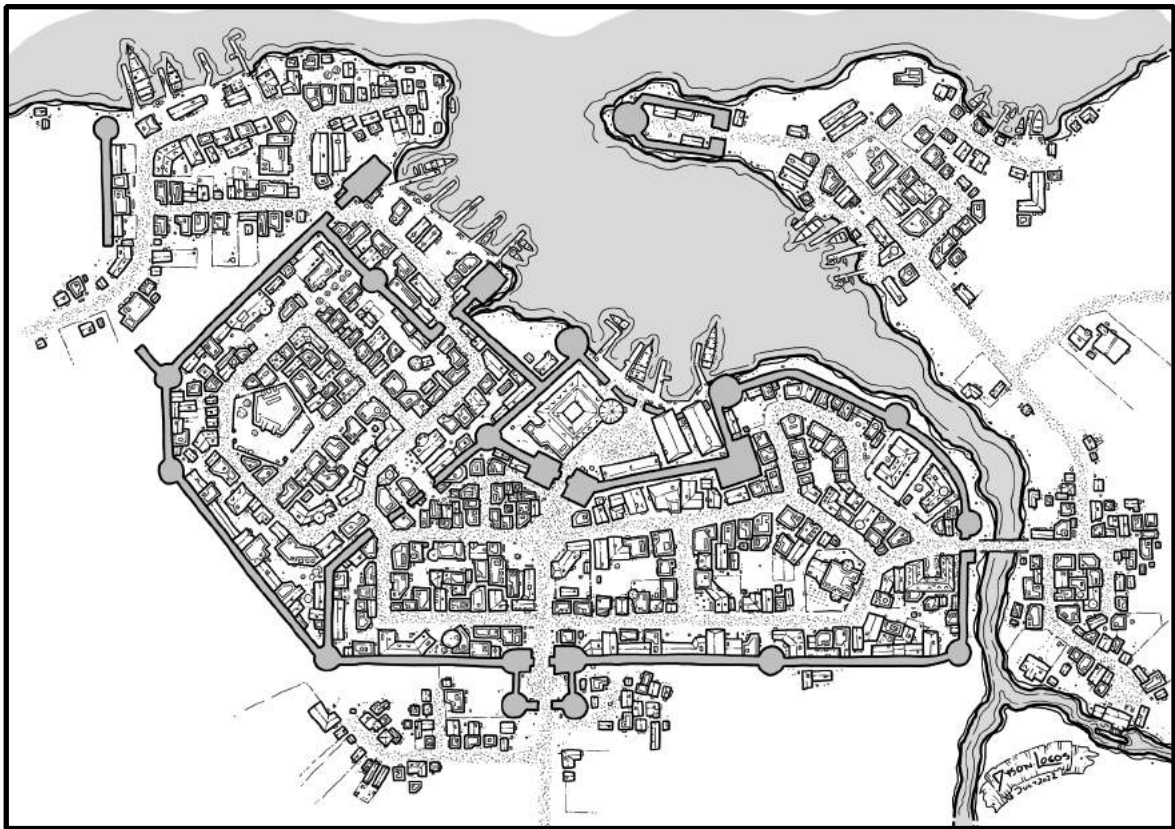
In addition to the five major nations of Helkara, there exist several independent city-states. Some of these city-states are recognized by the five nations

and left to their own devices while others are expressly ignored.

Arastia: A bustling trading hub owned by the scavengers located on the border of Nothing's Edge in Vrogathar, known for its vibrant markets and diverse cultures. The Order of the Crimson Blade frequently gathers their forces here.

Bel-Harim: A city of excess and indulgence, where the wealthy and powerful from all over come to enjoy the finest luxuries that the world has to offer. It is located in Maelström Solitude.

The Black Market of Galen: A seedy, underground bazaar that operates in secret beneath the streets of a ruined city beyond Nothing's Edge, where the criminal underworld converges to trade in illegal goods and services. The Brotherhood of the Blackened Chain frequently operates from here.



Kisurra, the Free City, as it appears in Turn 888 H.

The Citadel of Elders: A fortified city that sits atop a towering cliff in the Craggy Heights of Xulthar between Keth'keth and Uthul-Zargoth. It is home to a council of wise and powerful magic-users who offer their services to the highest bidder.

Kisurra, the Free City: Located in the Fester, Kisurra is a bastion of endurance amidst the everyday struggle of life. Cut off from the trade of the greater nations, her people have learned to persevere despite the hardships that beset them; despite their fraught position, they endure, for Kisurra is a city of proud and stubborn souls who will not be broken by the trials of their isolation.

Tryvvga: A single towering fortress nestled in the

frozen wasteland of the Evernight. Its walls rise high into the sky, offering protection from the relentless cold that grips the region. Within its walls, the Sorcerer-King of Nazgar holds court over the majority of the Evernight's goblin inhabitants. These mischievous creatures roam the halls and chambers of the tower, attending to their master's every whim. Despite the dangers of the Evernight and the isolation of their home, the goblins of Tryvvga remain fiercely loyal to their Sorcerer-King and will stop at nothing to protect their home and their master.

Important People

While over 20 million humans and nearly three times as many goblinoids call Helkara home, the following people are considered the most infamous. Know

their names.

The Sorcerer-King of Nazgar is a fearsome figure who reigns over the dark tower of Tryvvga in the Evernight. He is known to possess immense magical power and is feared by many throughout Helkara. The Sorcerer-King is rumored to be in league with the dark forces of the world, and it is said that the shadows themselves tremble at his command.

Zalto the Undying King is the ruler of Keth'keth, a dark and foreboding city known for its necromancers. Under his rule, the Necromancers of Keth'keth have gained immense power, using the undead to enforce their will and do their bidding. Some say that Zalto has not only mastered the art of resurrection, but has actually achieved immortality, and now walks the world as an undying king.

Nendukuga is the leader of the Blood Cult of Azathoth, a sect of fanatical worshipers who seek to summon the Bleak God Azathoth from the Sky Above the Sky. As the Blood Priestess, Nendukuga presides over grisly rituals and human sacrifices, and is said to have the power to call forth Azathoth's wrath upon those who defy her. Her followers are feared and reviled throughout Helkara, and her name is whispered in hushed tones among the wise.

Marduk and Astra are the leaders of the Order of the Crimson Blade, a powerful organization of nomadic mercenaries who linger near Nothing's Edge. The two are known for their fierce fighting skills and unwavering devotion to one another. It is said that their love is as unbreakable as their blades and that together they are an unstoppable force on the battlefield.

Elder Brother Vaanqar is the leader of the Brotherhood of the Blackened Chain, a secretive



Elder Brother Vaanqar, leader of the Brotherhood of the Blackend Chain.

order of assassins and criminals found in nearly every corner of the Gloaming. Not much is known about Vaanqar, although many believe that he is no longer human, transformed by the arcane might he wields. Regardless, Vaanqar is rumored to have connections with powerful figures throughout Helkara, and many believe that he has his fingers in many of the dark dealings of the world.

Speaker Koll is a mysterious figure who is said to represent the interests of the Dark Council of Aruthaz. Many see him as the leader of Aruthaz and suspect that the Dark Council isn't even real. Despite this, Koll is widely respected and feared, and his word carries weight among those who know of him. Some say that Koll has access to powerful magic and that he is not to be trifled with.

Elsbeth, Mardella, and Sirena are the Shadow Council of Norgoth, a trio of powerful sorcerers who rule over the dark mountains of Norgoth. The



three are known for their cunning and their mastery of the arcane arts, and are feared throughout Helkara. Despite their fearsome reputation, they are also rumored to be wise and just rulers and to have the best interests of Norgoth at heart. However, those who cross them soon find themselves locked within the labyrinth of dungeons that riddle their mountainous domain.

Vrogathar of the Iron Keep, the warlord of Vrogathar, holds sway over the land with an iron grip. His rule is absolute, and he is feared by all who call Vrogathar home. The very mention of his name is enough to strike terror into the hearts of his enemies and keep his subjects in line.

Nefertum, the governor of Kisurra, is a visionary who has crafted a city that values freedom above all else. His people are fiercely independent and hold their leader in high regard for his wisdom and unwavering commitment to their liberties. Nefertum is a charismatic leader who inspires his followers to

defend their city with their lives.

Padrek the Reliable, the chieftain of the goblinoid hordes, is a formidable presence in the underground world. With his horde at his back, Padrek wages war on all who would stand in his way. He is cunning, brutal, and feared by his enemies, including humans, who tremble at the sound of his name. Padrek is a ruthless leader who will do whatever it takes to secure his place in the world and maintain the power of his horde.

Magic and the Essence

The land of Helkara is bathed in the glow of the Essence, where the sorcerers hold court and magic reigns supreme. The sound of incantations echo through the towering cities of stone, and the air is heavy with the scent of arcane power. From the frozen north to the scorching sands of the south, the people of Helkara live in awe of the magic that shapes their world, both revered and feared by all

who dwell there.

The Essence

The workings of magic are shrouded in mystery, known only to a select few who have dedicated their lives to its study. The masses believe that magic is a force that pervades all of Helkara, an invisible substance called the Essence that can be harnessed by those with the knowledge and skill to do so.

The sorcerers of Helkara practice their craft through the use of scrolls, arcane texts that hold the secrets of spellcasting. These scrolls range from ancient tomes filled with mystical symbols to simple parchment rolls inscribed with powerful incantations.

For some spells, the sorcerers must use specific items to aid in their casting, known as material components. These components are believed to hold concentrated Essence and are carefully chosen and utilized to increase the potency of the spell.

The Erratic Art

But with great power comes great risk. The wise ones say that magic was irreparably damaged by



Those Before, humankind's progenitors. They reached too far, delving into forbidden knowledge, and brought about the Cataclysm—the great chaos that birthed the world as it is today.

And so, magic remains unpredictable, a fickle force that can turn against the wielder at any moment. There is always a chance that a spell may go awry, resulting in a catastrophic arcane disaster. Injuries, disfigurement, and death are all too common consequences of dabbling in the arcane arts. Some even fear that a disaster large enough could mean the end of Helkara itself.

Thus, magic remains shrouded in mystery, a tool of fear and a reminder of the dangers that lurk in the shadows of the arcane arts. The Sorcerer-Kings may hold the power of magic, but at what cost? Only time will tell.

Essence Corruption

The damaged Essence often results in Essence Corruption, transforming creatures, objects, and places. This corruption takes hold of the Essence of its victims, mutating and transforming them into monstrous aberrations, undead fiends, and other horrors beyond comprehension.

The eight holy creatures—bears, eagles, elk, gaur, geese, horses, lynxes, and humans—are immune to the touch of Essence Corruption. These creatures are considered sacred and holy, protected from the corrupting influence of the Essence. They stand as a symbol of hope in a world plagued by corruption, a reminder that not all is lost to the darkness.

Types of Magic

Magic is a force that weaves its way through the fabric of existence, allowing the wielders of its power to shape the world to their will. There are many types of magic, each with its own strengths and weaknesses, and each with its own practitioners.

Abjuration magic is the art of protection and defense, a power used by warriors to deflect incoming attacks, and by sorcerers to keep their enemies at bay. With this magic, a caster can create powerful wards, banish creatures back to their own realms, and even turn back the advance of powerful armies.

Alteration, sometimes referred to as transmutation, is a power that allows its wielders to change the very nature of things. With this power, sorcerers can reshape stone, transmute metal, and even alter the bodies of living creatures. Some of the most powerful alteration magicians are able to alter reality itself, creating illusions that seem all too real.

Divination magic extends the senses of the caster beyond the limits of the physical world, allowing them to glimpse into other realms, and, occasionally, even the future. Diviners are often sought after by Sorcerer-Kings for their insights into the workings of fate and destiny. But it is a deadly art, one prone to arcane catastrophes more than any other.

Elemental magic, also known as chaos magic or evocation, allows the caster to shape and alter the very building blocks of the universe. With this power, sorcerers can call forth lightning from the sky, summon winds from the void, and even shape fire and water to their will.

Enchantment magic is a power that bends the minds of the weak-willed, luring them into a false sense of reality. This magic is often used by the Order of the Crimson Blade, who are well-known for their mindinfluencing magic and siren songs.

Illusion magic is a power that reshapes the fabric of reality, allowing the caster to create convincing phantasms and illusions. The Brotherhood of the

Blackened Chain is known for their mastery of this power, creating illusions that are so real they are sometimes mistaken for reality itself.

Necromancy, the dark art, is a power used to reanimate the corpses of the dead. The best-known practitioners of this magic are the Keth'kethians, sorcerers obsessed with the mysteries of death and resurrection.

Summoning magic, sometimes called conjuration, is a power that calls down the gods and their servitors from the Sky Beyond the Sky. The Blood

Desecretia, Seventh Guardian of Zol-Tant Pass.





Cult of Azathoth is known for their mastery of this power, calling forth powerful creatures from beyond the veil to do their bidding. But nearly all Sorcerer-Kings use this magic to enhance their arcane abilities, summoning forth their own loyal servants.

Types of Sorcerers

Not all spellcasters cast magic the same way. Some choose to draw their power from the gods, while others plumb the depths of the Essence to fuel their spells. These two paths of magic—derivative and direct sorcery—differ greatly in the risks they pose and the rewards they offer.

Derivative sorcery is the path of the warlock, the spellcaster who borrows power directly from the gods. This magic is often more predictable than that drawn from the Essence, with fewer arcane disasters to fear. But the price of this stability is steep, for the warlock is beholden to their patron deity, limiting them in what they can do with their magic and how many times they can use it. Nevertheless, this form of magic is widely used by the Blood Cult of Azathoth and the Sorcerer-King of Nazgar, both of whom have built their power and influence on the backs of the gods.

Direct sorcery, on the other hand, is the path of the wizard, the spellcaster who dares to pull magic directly from the Essence. This form of magic is more unpredictable, with a greater risk of arcane catastrophe. But it offers greater control over the most powerful spells, and the wizard is free from the restrictions imposed by their patron deity. This form of magic is favored by the Sorcerer-Kings, who use it to expand their power and control over the realm of Helkara.

Other Forms of Magic

Magic takes many forms and is not limited to the practices of sorcerers.

There exist aberrant beings, known as Anomalies, who are born with inherent magical powers. Unlike sorcerers, they do not need to rely on scrolls or magical components to wield their magic. This often earns them the suspicion and hatred of the Sorcerer-Kings, who view these creatures as a threat to their control over the Essence. Some of the most well-known Anomalies are the Shifters, who possess the power to transform into various animals. Some believe that Anomalies exist because of Essence Corruption. However, the Sorcerer-Kings refuse to admit this, believing it'll unravel the commoners' faith in humans being holy creatures.

There also exist magical items, referred to as Artifacts, that are suffused with the Essence and possess powerful magical properties of their own. The Sorcerer-Kings often seek these items to enhance their own power, but Artifacts can be highly unpredictable, tainted by Essence Corruption, and their power may wane with time, even causing harm to their users.

There are also places of power known as Nexuses. These locations are suffused with magic, making them ideal spots for sorcerers to amplify their own power. The majority of the Sorcerer-Kings build their strongholds on top of Nexuses, as evidenced by the Sorcerer-King of Nazgar, who

constructed his towering palace, Tryvva, over one of the most powerful Nexuses in Helkara at the north pole.

Magic and Politics

Magic is not just a force to be reckoned with, it is a means of domination and control. The Sorcerer-Kings, with their mastery of the arcane and the backing of their trusted priests, hold sway over the masses, who tremble at the thought of crossing them. These mighty rulers of men have a stranglehold on the art of magic, and the common folk know that even to attempt to wield the Essence is to court death and destruction.

The Sorcerer-Kings maintain their grip on power through fear and control and the strict enforcement of laws that keep magic in the hands of the few. Literacy, for example, is forbidden to anyone below the rank of noble, lest they learn to read and thereby unlock the magical potential within them. The Sorcerer-Kings know that knowledge is power, and they will not allow their subjects to gain an advantage over them, even in the smallest of ways.

This monopoly on magic is maintained by an army of specially trained warriors known as inquisitors. These brutal soldiers seek out anyone who would dare to use magic without the express permission of the Sorcerer-Kings, hunting down heretics and rogue spellcasters and executing them without mercy. Ironically, the inquisitors themselves are often Anomalies, blessed with powerful abjuration powers that protect them from magical attacks. In addition to hunting down those who would seek to use magic, the inquisitors also search for Artifacts, Nexuses, and anything that would reveal the world prior to the Cataclysm. The Sorcerer-Kings fear the power of these relics, knowing that they could be used against them, and they will stop at nothing to find them and bring them under their control.

Gods and Religion

Religion and the worship of gods is a central aspect of daily life for many Helkarans. The powerful Sorcerer-Kings claim to represent the will of the enigmatic Bleak Gods, and their rule is sustained by fear and the promise of protection from the chaotic and voracious deities. However, there are those who dare to question the legitimacy of the Bleak Gods, viewing them as mere creations of the Sorcerer-Kings meant to manipulate the masses.

The Eternal Cycle

In the land of Helkara, the belief of The Eternal Cycle holds great power over the lives of its inhabitants. The Helkarans believe that when a holy creature dies, their soul is reborn elsewhere in the land, taking on a new form. This idea of eternal life through rebirth brings both fear and comfort to the people. On one hand, they are fearless in the face of death, knowing that they will live on in another form. On the other hand, they fear the idea of living a life of torment, and will do all they can to avoid the wrath of the Sorcerer-Kings who hold sway over the land. There are eight identified holy creatures: bears, eagles, elk, gaurs, geese, horses, lynxes, and humans.

The Necromancers of Keth'keth, however, are reviled for their practices, which often destroy the souls of the creatures they experiment on, leaving them trapped in their current form. To the Helkarans, this is a fate worse than death, for it means the end of their chance at eternal life. This is why the Necromancers of Keth'keth are feared and hated, for they threaten the very foundations of the Helkaran belief in The Eternal Cycle.

The Bleak Gods

The Gods of Helkara are shrouded in mystery, fear, and reverence. These beings are known by many names, but are most commonly referred to as the Bleak Gods. They are believed to reside in a realm





Nendukuga, the Blood Priestess of Azathoth.

known as the Sky Above the Sky, a place beyond the reach of mortal men. Despite their mysterious nature, the Bleak Gods hold a great deal of power over the people of Helkara, inspiring both fear and reverence in equal measure.

To most Helkarans, the Bleak Gods are beings of absolute chaos and apathy. They are seen as unpredictable, cruel beings that care nothing for the fate of mortals. Despite this, the Sorcerer-Kings and their trusted priests believe that the Bleak Gods are the ultimate source of power in Helkara, responsible for maintaining the Essence that flows through all things. The Sorcerer-Kings use powerful summoning rituals to draw the Bleak Gods from their realm and ask for their power and favor.

However, the results of these summoning rituals are often disastrous. In some instances, a summoned Bleak God has destroyed entire towns or cities, wreaking havoc and destruction upon the land.

Despite the dangers, the Bleak Gods continue to be invoked by the Sorcerer-Kings and their followers. They believe that the power of the Bleak Gods is worth the risk, and that their influence is necessary to maintain order in Helkara. But to those who fear the Bleak Gods, they remain a reminder of the inherent danger of playing with powers beyond the understanding of mortals. In the end, only time will tell whether the Bleak Gods are truly the source of ultimate power, or a force that will bring about the downfall of Helkara.

Although there is believed to be hundreds of Bleak Gods, here are the six most well-known:

Arcanus: Also known as the Unblinking Eye. Recognized as the God of Secrets and Shadows, Arcanus is often summoned by the Sorcerer-Kings for knowledge and guidance. However, Arcanus is known to twist the truth and manipulate those who summon it.

Azathoth: Also known as the Blind God or the Writhing Chaos. Azathoth is a mysterious and inscrutable deity who resides in the heart of the universe. He is considered one of the most powerful and dangerous of all the Bleak Gods, and is feared and worshiped in equal measure. The people of Uthul-Zargoth and their blood cult believe that Azathoth is the one true god, and all others are merely his servitors.

Nefareo: Also known as the Bleak God of Despair. Nefareo is often summoned by the Sorcerer-Kings to spread fear and hopelessness throughout their lands. In art, Nefareo is depicted as a dark and faceless figure, with a voice like a chorus of screams.



An avatar of Azathoth, as described by the only survivor of the Uhrye Massacre of Turn 601 H.

Vapul: Also known as the Demonic God of Ice and Darkness, Vapul is said to have a hand in the creation of the Evernight. The people of Helkara fear Vapul, as the myths say that the powers he grants have been known to freeze entire armies solid.

Xylara: Also known as the Bleak God of Fire and Destruction. The Sorcerer-Kings believe that Xylara is the patron of chaos magic. Xylara is usually depicted as a giant, burning entity with a voice like a dragon's roar.

Zormoth: Also known as the Insatiable One. Zorgoth is often summoned to destroy entire villages or cities. He is the one responsible for destroying Uhrye. Zormoth is depicted as a massive beast with multiple eyes and razor-sharp claws.

Worship of the Sorcerer-Kings

To the people of Helkara, the Sorcerer-Kings are more than mere rulers. They are seen as representatives of the Bleak Gods themselves, tasked with protecting their subjects from the wrath of the chaotic beings.

Worship of the Sorcerer-Kings is not a choice, but a necessity. The Helkarans believe that the Bleak Gods are insatiable beings, with a hunger for the souls of all holy creatures. If the gods were to destroy the Eternal Cycle and consume the souls of their people, there would be no hope for the future. The Sorcerer-Kings, however, stand as the final line of defense against the chaos of the gods. They are the only ones capable of keeping the people safe. The Helkaran believe that the Sorcerer-Kings aren't summoning the Bleak Gods, but instead, fighting their reentry into the world—lies and propoganda to hide their dark ambitions.

As such, the Sorcerer-Kings are worshiped with fear and reverence. Their policies are put in place to ensure the protection of their subjects. Whether it be restrictions on travel, mandatory religious ceremonies, or even sacrifices to the gods, the people of Helkara believe that their rulers act only in their best interests. In a land where death and destruction are never far away, the Sorcerer-Kings are seen as the only source of stability and security.

It is a harsh world, but the worship of the Sorcerer-Kings is what gives the people of Helkara a measure of hope. They know that their rulers stand between them and the Bleak Gods, and that they will stop at nothing to keep their subjects safe. Though the price of worship may be steep, the people believe that it is a small price to pay for their survival. And so, the cults of the Sorcerer-Kings grow stronger with each passing day, as the people pray for their continued protection against the chaos of the Bleak Gods.

Agnosticism and Atheism

There are those who dare to question the power of the Bleak Gods. They believe that these so-called gods are naught but alien creatures, suffused with the Essence and wielded like weapons by the Sorcerer-Kings. These non-believers are not just few in number, but are found in some of the most notable settlements in Helkara.

In Kisurra, the free-city, the people have long since given up on the worship of the Bleak Gods. Cut off from the rest of the nations, they have learned to rely on their own strength and cunning to survive. The people of Kisurra are practical in nature and see no need to give their worship to beings that may or may not exist.

The same can be said of the scavengers of Nothing's Edge, who roam the wastelands seeking scraps and treasure. These hardy souls have faced

countless dangers and have come to the conclusion that the Bleak Gods are nothing more than legends used to control the masses.

The goblinoids of Helkara see the worship of the Bleak Gods as nothing more than a means of oppression. As such, most goblinoids are agnostic, relying only on what their senses tell them. They see no reason to give their worship to beings that have never helped them in their struggles.

However, such beliefs are not tolerated in the eyes of the Sorcerer-Kings. Those who dare to question their power are labeled as heretics and often become targets of the inquisitors. The Sorcerer-Kings see themselves as the protectors of the people, the guardians against the Bleak Gods' wrath. And so, they will stop at nothing to maintain their power, even if it means punishing and eliminating those who would dare to question their authority.

Helkara (hel·kar·a)

1. Indicates turns following the Cataclysm.
2. A common expression of grief and sorrow.
3. A post-apocalyptic period.
4. The known world.

Origin: Scrapgabble, from Old Hermian, meaning “all is rot and woe.”

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