



Background Content



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World of Terris

Discovering the overall details of Terris is of little importance compared to the more important understanding of the comparatively small area of the Heartlands and regions of surrounding Wildlands. In fact, in current times there is very little knowledge regarding Terris outside of this area.

Divinations support the belief that the entire world outside of the Heartlands is similar in both appearance and state to the Wildlands close by and that this has been the case since the War of Loss which changed the world into what it is today.

Because of this, the steady governments which hold power in the world have shown very little interest in affairs beyond the Heartlands apart from watching for the actions of dangerous beasts, orcs or other creatures of the Wildlands.

Worlds Creation

Untold millennia ago Terris was formed by vast amounts of wild uncontrolled magical energy coalescing at a single point. Scholars believe this energy to be alive to some degree and that it only sought a place of rest where it could remain forever.

This energy caused the core of the world to form and then created earth, stone and water to cover its surface. This was to form an eternal, ever renewing dwelling which would soak up the magical energy and stop it flowing free across the multiverse.

The Birth of Life

Life, the gods agree, was never an intended part of the world, not even they know how it came to be or what caused its creation. Life began small, first appearing as plants within the sea and then on land. In time creatures such as insects appeared and spread rapidly across the world, then came more complex animals and beasts. Eventually after many years humanoid life came into existence, unlike the plants and animals this life seemed ready to learn and followed the hidden guidance of the gods.

New Gods

The existence of life, whilst unprecedented, was soon followed by a far more extraordinary occurrence. As life advanced it seemed that its actions, beliefs and wild complexities gave rise to divine power, creating new gods and in time advancing the power of existing gods which shared views and principles with that life. From its earliest point of existence, it became obvious that life and the gods would be closely linked for all eternity.

Deities of Terris

When the world was young, the vast natural magic that caused its creation sought to protect it, thus creating natural elements of thought and imbued them with insurmountable magical powers of their own. These became the first gods, more were to follow as life appeared and spread across the surface of the world.

The Primal Dark

Two deities were first created by the magic which formed the creation of the world, one good and the other evil. Presumably to be a balancing force the help shape the world after its initial creation, together they did so for unknown time.

The unexpected birth of life changed things. Palante, the deity of good, found himself overwhelmed by such an occurrence, especially when it became apparent that the existence of life helped form more gods. The Primal Dark however, viewed life with hatred, believing that as unintended it should not exist.

Despite its vast power, the Primal Dark, as all gods, was unable to directly manifest in the world. Unlike Palante and the new gods which had arisen, the Primal Dark saw through the miracle of life and realised how it occurred, deciding to use life as a weapon against itself. The Primal Dark focused upon a number of the new creatures, offering their simple minds power and corrupting many of them. These together with far more worrisome creations of his own, the Primal Dark began to spread its power and influence further throughout the world without the other deities realising.

Uprising

Eventually Palante and the other deities realised what was going on and called upon the Primal Dark, in the hopes it would explain itself. The Primal Dark manifested in the heavens and listened to the request of the assembled gods, yet its response was only to laugh and peer down at the world itself.

On the surface of the world, alerted by their master, the creations of the Primal Dark struck out at the other living creatures, savagely slaying them, not for food but to leave them to rot and cause further death.

In the heavens a number of the gods fell, the energy brought into existence by life and the actions of living beings lost the moment that life was extinguished. Palante cried out in dismay as all the other gods fled, fearing the Primal Dark and wishing to stop its creations from destroying more life.

A number of the more evil inclined gods then revealed themselves loyal to the Primal Dark and opposed those who tried to stop the destruction. Worse than this was that a number of the Primal Dark's personal creations, working together, seemed capable of actually standing against the lesser gods themselves.

Opposition

Palante was the only deity to stand against the Primal Dark itself, his power strengthened by his desire to stop that which he had just witness. The two gods battled well for more than a day, yet despite his emboldened strength Palante found himself weaker than the Primal Dark which seemed to have grown strong by the existence of his monstrous creations of life.

After a day, another joined the fray, Veritas goddess of honour and truth. She stood by Palante without fear. Upon seeing this, few deities remaining daring to show their face at witnesses to such fearless dedication. The two pure deities fought valiantly and those that watched dared not approach the battle.

Eventually one other did step forward and draw his blade, Telmor, a vicious young deity who had long opposed Palante and shown that his power is linked with evil and acts of domination. Telmor called out his request to join the battle, which both the Primal Dark and Palante refused, yet still the warrior god marched forward.

Battle of the Gods

While not as strong as the other two deities, Telmor's lack of purity gave him some resistance to many of the Primal Dark's attacks as he joined the pure deities assault. Against their preferences the three deities were forced to work together, the Primal Dark was still strong and in the mortal realm his creations continued to cause chaos and devastation amongst the other living beings.

It is said it took almost a decade for the three gods to get the upper hand allowing them to finally land a killing blow, slaying the Primal Dark and causing energy to feed back and weaken his creations letting the other deities gain victory themselves.

It was at this point that Palante turned to face Telmor, declaring that no other deity of evil should be permitted to exist in case such chaos occurred again, yet it was Veritas who held Palante back whispering "Despite being evil, Telmor maintains truth and helped save us", to which Palante lowered his mace slowly.

Aftermath

With their creator gone, many of the Primal Dark's creations fled or were captured. Some such as a small number of the dragons were redeemed of their corruption by a number of the gods, others escaped and could not be hunted down.

The worse of its creations, those that would become known as demons were still far too powerful within the world and were thus banished to other planes of existence. The gods that remained came together again, it was agreed that life was vital to the world and to the deities themselves. No war would be fought between the gods, it would be up to life itself to decide which gods grow strong.

Current Day Faiths

In current times there are seven deities maintaining high power and influence amongst the people and creatures of Terris.

Keepers of Perfection

Peace, Perfection, Truth.. Is there anything more Beautiful?

Veritas

Goddess of Truth and Honour, noted as the most beautiful of all the goddesses and also one of the most elusive, she is said to listen to all yet be seen by few.

Veritas wishes the world to be perfect and thus true, yet she refuses to use force and instead wishes to guide others to this end by teaching mortals to care for the world, shaping it carefully while removing the dark parts of it.

Clergy

The Guardians of Veritas often act as judges, maintaining peace within cities.

Beyond the borders, they are crusaders and champions striving to remove all traces of chaos and evil from the world.

Icons

A golden mirror or a perfectly polished blade.

History

Veritas arose when the first life appeared in the world, alongside Palante she cared for these plants and animals yet soon the two came to a disagreement. Palante wished to leave life as it was and safeguard it while Veritas insisted on nurturing and shaping life, declaring that it could become greater and in time perfection would cover the world. The two have always been close allies, despite their constant disagreements. Veritas has always opposed Insidium and been opposed in turn, although rarely do they manage to locate each other enough to act.

Veritas is known to be the first to join Palante in his fight against the Primal Dark.

Followers

City Watch members, Seekers of Knowledge, Crusaders.

Rites & Practices

Rituals performed by the Keepers of Perfection are carefully planned and meticulously performed, often including displays of music or light.

Prayers

Prayers to Veritas are often in the form of song, they are always well designed and regularly sung in chorus. Silent prayers are sometimes performed in the manner of drawing pictures or other small forms of art.

Temples

She has numerous temples, many of which double as town halls in smaller villages. Many guard posts and town watch buildings include a shrine dedicated to her. Such temples or shrines are always decorated with artwork or statues depicting perfection or beauty.

Guardians of the Light

No miracle is greater than life, yet that miracle still continues and will do so as long as Palante watches over us.

Palante

Oldest of the Pure gods, regularly known by the name the Shield of Life. He teaches his Guardians to assist nobles, knights and lords but not to be beholden to them. As such the military arm of his faith, the Protectors, enforce his temples independence from politics or regional command.

Clergy

First to call themselves Guardians, the priests of Palante are true defenders of life and belief. Wherever life can be found, you can expect Guardians of Palante to travel, hoping to aid and protect it.

Icons

A shield depicting an old pleasant faced man.

History

Palante appeared as the world began, in his youth he saw the worlds potential and kept watch over it. In time he witnessed the birth of life and became entranced further. Palante's life is dedicated to safeguarding life and opposing those who would seek to destroy it. He saw the other gods and allowed them to arise and live. The Primal Dark, the one deity as old as Palante, the deity that gave birth to destruction and chaos was different. It was Palante with the unlikely assistance of Veritas and Telmor who slew the Primal Dark. Now he opposes Atrax in all his deeds.

Followers

Knights, Defenders, Healers, Commoners.

Rites

Rites to Palante are ceremonial in nature with each follower having fair and equal place in the proceeding. Live plants are often used as symbols in such rites.

Prayers

Prayers to Palante are often ancient creeds, well spoken requests for aid, defence and guidance often originally phrased by powerful Guardians of old.

Temples

Only the largest cities house temples to Palante, it is here where the churches military arm trains itself for when defensive measures are needed. More often his Guardians will travel between other settlements regularly offering their aid to the people.

*"Far from us drive the foe we dread, and grant us Thy peace instead;
so shall we not, with Thee for guide, turn from the path of life aside."*

"Palante, defend us in battle; be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of Atrax. May you rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do Thou, by the power of Palante, cast into Hell, Atrax and his daemons, seeking the ruin of souls."

The Arrow at Noonday

Freedom! No other word contains such vast possibilities...

Shroud

Once the warden of all nature, now the greatest of all hunters, Shroud has been envisioned in both human and elven forms. He opposes great cities and organised government, especially those that push forward their borders and/or strongly enforce laws upon others. He teaches that the mortal soul is stronger than the laws of government or the traditions of men.

Clergy

The Guardians of Shroud are often moderately skilled archers, utilising their powers to protect and assist those who share their desire to hunt those that Shroud opposes.

Icons

An arrow bisecting the Sun.

History

Shroud was once a peaceful and wise god of nature. He was close friends with Palante and the two worked to protect the people of the world, while he taught man to work with the plants and animals of the world. One day long after the demise of the Primal Dark, Telmor still a lesser deity guided his people to conquer a number of villages Shroud had watched over and taught. Angered that Palante refused to slay Telmor for his actions Shroud gave up his former life and crafted a bow, swearing change.

Followers

Elves, Hunters, Explorers and those who rebel against organised government.

Rites & Practices

Rites to Shroud often take the form of hunting contests to outsiders, in essence this allows his worshippers to prove their individuality and strength while often obtaining a worthy sacrifice to Shroud.

Prayers

Prayers to Shroud are usually brief requests or pleas, always made on the spot and rarely repeated. Many prayers to Shroud are whispered.

Temples

Those who represent the Arrow at Noonday, while organised have few traditional temples and instead gather in forest clearings or hidden hunting lodges, always away from the sight of those who enforce law and order.

"May this arrow fly true against the foes of me and my god."

The Blade of Decree

Being feared is not wrong, for the feared must forever strive to remain strong in order to maintain their power.

Telmor

The winged black knight, conqueror of the soul. Telmor teaches that tradition is the foundation of faith and power, but also that power is vital to existence.

He also claims that everything can be owned by those with the power to maintain ownership, including the life of others. Telmor is evil, yet teaches that organised, disciplined evil is safer for the world than wild, undisciplined good intentions.

Clergy

The priests of Telmor tend to use their powers to enforce traditions and laws, often through intimidation and threats. Their undead servants are treated and viewed in a similar respect to living slaves.

Icons

A sword, from which has grown a bats wing.

History

Telmor arose when life first took power over other life, at first he lacked power but every time predators enforced their position over others he grew stronger. When the humanoid races arose his power began to flourish slowly.

Tradition and mortal domination fed him and in exchange his priests gained more power, over time Telmor became greater and is now equal to the high gods. Few outside the clergy of Veritas or Telmor are certain of his actions against the Primal Dark, legend says he did but what is legend without truth?

Followers

Warriors, Dominant Leaders, Craftsmen of weapons & armour.

Rites & Practices

Rites to Telmor are well ordered, impressively ritual affairs which distinctly highlight the differences between either master & slave, leader & follower or in the grander rituals deity & man.

Prayers

Prayers to Telmor often double as short commandments or laws.

Temples

Temples to Telmor are often fortresses or military training academies and always include a forge from which they craft weapons and armour for his people.

"By his word, the slave shall not contradict the master."

"By this sword, his will be done."

That Which Is

One should not become involved, unless they would benefit from involvement, yet one should never care, not matter why.

Insidium

The faceless deity, s/he without emotion. Cold hearted and uncaring logic forms the basis of all his plans, making Insidium seem strangely alien to the majority of people. Insidium teaches that emotions are life's biggest flaw and that one should remain true to their inner desires without heeding greed, comparison or sense of duty.

Clergy

The Necromancers of Insidium are usually seekers of dark power and knowledge. They are uncaring individuals, who take no pleasure in sacrificing others yet do so without hesitation in order to please their god and gain greater favour.

Icons

Concentric black and red circles.

History

Said to have arisen in the same moment as Veritas, the two are often said to be opposite sides of the same coin and certainly both are highly elusive with Insidium far more so. Insidium's history beyond that moment has thus been hard to determine, despite the constant vying for position and power between Insidium and Veritas. One thing that is know is that Insidium bore witness to the Primal Dark's demise and was the one who informed Atrax.

Followers

Seekers of forbidden knowledge, True Assassins.

Rites & Practices

Rites to Insidium only occur when requesting power or aide and are never performed simply to show favour to him. Sacrifices are commonly used.

Prayers

Prayers are rare outside of rituals or spellcasting, such prayers take the form of bargaining and pleas for power or guidance.

Temples

Insidium's temples are situated away from the hustle of humanoid settlements and trade routes. They are undecorated places of cold bare stone, often mistaken for strange libraries or large unnamed tombs.

"Now is the time, I know you listen as you hear all. Grant me your secrets and in return I shall lay my life down in your name"

The Red Eye of Destruction

That which does not seek destruction, will be victim to it!

Atrox

Savage, bestial and vampiric. Atrox is the most obviously evil of the high gods. He and his followers are primarily motivated with the destruction of other life and the order which lives needs to exist, in order to advance their own powers. Atrox teaches that if you want something, you should take it just as if you want to kill someone, you should. Yet through this he is careful not to meet the fate of his master.

Clergy

Atrox's Necromancers are extremely dangerous, often gathering cults of mortals, beasts and undead together to serve either them or a champion warrior who leads others to murder in the name of Atrox.

Icons

A vivid red bestial eye.

History

In millennia past Atrox was the chief servant of the Primal Dark, it was this long dead deity which gave birth to chaos in the world and created the earlier destructive beasts of the world, many of which now serve Atrox. Since the Primal Dark was slain Atrox worked to continue his former masters plans, despite lacking his masters great power. Over time these plans have shifted to furthering his own plans and advancing his power by destroying others, rather than the utter destruction of all.

Followers

Anyone who enjoys carnage, slaughter and devastation are welcomed by those who follow the Red Eye of Destruction. Undead and more bestial monsters are also regularly found amongst this faith.

Rites & Practices

Ritualised murder is one of the more common practises, often this is unplanned and on the spot. Challenges of power are usually done through intimidation, although they regularly break down to savage blade fights.

Prayers

Prayers to Atrox typically form rhyming chants that can be sung to terrify their foes, such as "From skin to bone, you'll be sure to moan" or "We intend to play, for this we slay", these are sung in unison if possible or yelled if not.

Temples

Few long term temples exist, more regularly large altars are constructed by his followers in remote locations or within sight of a region they plan to destroy.

"Flee to the glade, you'll still feel my blade!"

"Die!"

Followers of Galdrin

Gods exist to help man, Man does not exist to serve the gods.

Galdrin

A young spirited deity, utterly unique amongst the high gods in his outlook on followers and teachings. He teaches that mortals should rely on their own skills to learn and adapt, rather than relying on the favour of the gods.

Clergy

Galdrin has few actual priests of any sort.

Icons

A hammer or anvil inscribed with the runic letter G.

History

Galdrin is believed to have been born a mortal. He lived a peaceful life until his village was attacked by orcs. The others fled and he alone opposed them, standing at the entrance to his forge. When the villagers returned they found numerous orc corpses and the smith dead in the entrance to his untouched home. As was tradition his body was placed in the church for others to pay tribute, the following night it had vanished and so had the contents of his forge.

Followers

Craftsman, Smiths, Sages.

Rites & Practices

Galdrin does not ask for rites or rituals to praise him, instead any careful work of craftsmanship or advancement of a skill of almost any kind are thought of as signs of respect to Galdrin, by those who follow him.

Prayers

With the exception of "Thank you Galdrin for giving me the courage to act for myself", there are few prayers created or spoken in his name.

Temples

Galdrin has no temples, but numerous smiths and craftsman hang his Icon in their workshops or at the very least above their forge or workbench.

The Ancient Magics

None know for certain what happened between the birth of the humanoid races and the period known as the Age of Darkness as even the Deities refuse almost all divinations into what happened long ago, the legend which is believed by most and taught to children all across the Heartlands is detailed as follows.

Early History

After the creation of Palante and the Primal Dark, magic itself settled into the very earth and rock of the planet giving the land itself power. It was this power which inadvertently caused the creation of life, plants grew and animals began to wander the surface of the world much to the interest of the deities which came upon them. As life appeared the deities looked on in amazement, many then set forth to guide life into something greater. As life took upon more complex forms and humanoid creatures arose the gods observed and guided them into gaining intelligence and just as this observation changed humanoid life, so did it change the observing deities. In time many of whom developed more humanoid forms and feelings, especially when humanoids discovered and began to worship them.

The First Ones

The magic within the world still remained, flowing eternally through the earth and stone of the world and through the water upon it and the air around it. In time one of the humanoid races, that which had come to call itself the First Ones discovered this energy and learnt to use it performing vast miracles such as floating cities, glorious patterns of light which filled the sky and even portals to other planes of existence where they discovered new sciences and powers. Some of these planes were dangerous, many populated by demons and worse, yet the unimaginable magic of the First Ones proved far stronger.

Magic and Men

In time the elves also discovered how the First Ones miracles were done and taught the secret to the other races, giving all men with of intelligence and confidence the power to change the world and perform small miracles. Around the same time the Deities offered use of their powers to mortals who believed strongly in their ideals, giving birth to different powers and perhaps more wondrous miracles. Each race sought to use these new powers in new ways, the elves continued to seek knowledge so they could delve further into the secrets of magic in order to rise above the First Ones, the dwarven folk placed their magic within powerful relics and artefacts so that their power would not be lost upon their death while the orcs sought to prove themselves strong through magic, fortunately few could master such powers at that time and those who could also had the wisdom not to wage war. The youngest race at the time still had no name, so when the elves taught them the secret of magic and they put the power to use aiding their races growth by building cities and providing food, the elves decided to name them humans or wise men.

The Ancient Empire

As the First Ones had long since left the worlds surface to explore other planes of existence or to live effortless lives in floating cities comprised of pure magical energy in the sky, their ancient cities collapsed fall into ruin. The elves and other races remained on the surface of the world, yet to possess the level of magical knowledge of the First Ones and still feeling the draw and pull of the magic within the world itself.

Founding

Sharing the common bond of magic, these races came together and formed an almighty empire in order to allow each race to further its desire for magic without concern for the others of their kind. While the name of this empire is unknown today, it is believed that each race worked together as one.

The elves set forth to teach those of all races, the dwarves providing homes and shelter, the orcs protection from the wild beasts and the humans, by now the most diverse of races filled in and assisted in all tasks whenever they were needed.

It was decreed that the empire would be ruled by a mortal king from each of the dwarven, orc and human race, all watched over and advised by an elven lord as it was the elves who taught others magic.

Time and Advancement

The first few centuries proved especially fruitful with society issues dealing with themselves and the common people of each race content and safe, those most gifted in magical talent of each race were able to focus their efforts on magic itself.

The elves were still the most practised of spellcasters, their long lives and head start in magical discovery together with their desire to be superior pushing them to discover spells previously known only to the First Ones.

The dwarves skill with artefacts continued to grow strong, although many of its most skilled magic users changed to delving deeper into the earth itself seeking more natural magical energy to harness and advance their spells.

The orcs strength in battle also grew, as did their spiritual belief. Their greatest shamans and seers could slay whole herds of beasts in moments or divine momentarily glimpses of the future.

As for the human magicians, they continued to keep an eye of those of their race without magical talent. Helping strengthen the empires foundation while advancing their breadth of magical skill, giving them wider knowledge of spells if not power.

After several centuries the spellcasters of each race had become exceptionally powerful in their different ways and the empire as a whole was thought to be as strong as that of the First Ones.

Disruptions and Strife

While time brought greater advancement in magic, it also brought the differences between the races to light more and more, disruptions and small arguments became almost commonplace and when the great spellcasters also began to act upon these differences the empire itself began to shake.

The orcs and elves developed the worse opposition, with the other racial differences often being on more of a personal scale or at least not as far spread. It was the King of the orcs who first rallied his people and declared that the elves should no longer preside over the other races, stating that the elves had received too many years of power in exchange for their gift of knowledge.

After centuries of near utopian peace, it seemed the empire would fall into civil war in only a few months. The orcs began to adjust spells for stronger use against humanoid folk while the elves slowly put aside their research and prepare themselves. The other races fell into dispute within themselves, yet before the first blow could strike the dwarven King declared the others foolish for allowing things to come to that.

This blunt yet honest statement made the others stop, battle was halted while this thought was considered. The other two kings, together with the elven Lords soon decided that while aggression between the races could not be avoided and that war would indeed be the outcome no matter their action, it was not the fault of either the elves, orcs, dwarves or humans that things were this way.

The War of Loss

The rulers of the ancient nation concluded that it was living in the knowledge they were still beneath the First Ones which led to the races of the empire turning against each other. There had been no contact with the First Ones in hundreds of years and it was common knowledge that the elves had always been distraught by the knowledge the First Ones thought themselves above the other races so.

The orcs were eager for war and the numerous human magicians each sought power themselves, so it did not take long for virtually the whole empire to start viewing the floating cities of magic with hatred and disgust.

First Steps

The initial assault by the empire upon the floating cities was devastating, the First Ones were entirely unprepared and their cities weak against magical attack due to their nature. The orc spellcasters especially proved devastating, capturing one of the great cities and then taking over its magic with elven help.

The First Ones who survived the initial attacks swiftly turned their spells against the attackers but it was obvious they had not fought a real foe in ages, their power still all but stopped the empires invasion reducing their assault to a snails pace as they fought to survive with seemingly no chance of counter attack.

Reinforcements

Just as victory seemed guaranteed and the empire forces moved in on the last remnants of the defenders, hundreds of portals appeared in the sky as First Ones from other planes of existence returned home to save their kin and unlike the beleaguered defenders of the floating cities, these First Ones had been battling all manner of otherworldly creatures during their travels.

The tide seemed to have turned, while still outnumbered the First Ones magical abilities were beyond even the elves predictions. Soon the floating cities became too dangerous to occupy and the fighting spread across the surface of the world.

Vile Acts

Unbeknownst to all, a small number of orc and human spellcasters had envisioned this outcome and taken hidden steps. Knowing that the First Ones would be hated by demonic creatures by now they used great rituals, sacrificing the non-spellcasters in their command and succeeded in summoning a great many demonic entities which they unleashed upon the First Ones.

The First Ones reaction was strange, they turned all their attention upon the demons abandoning captured territory, key positions and ignoring chances to cripple the empires forces. The demons fought well, empowered by the high degree of magic in this world they were strong enough to resist the First Ones initial attacks, yet as more of their spellcasters gathered the First Ones began to overpower their foes.

Two becomes Three

Several of the empires generals took advantage of the situation to join the dark spellcasters, who summoned the demons, in attacking the First Ones anew. Others in the Empire, including the dwarves and human King looked upon the dark spellcasters actions with disgust and turned upon the demonic forces themselves, freely launching blasts of energies into conflicts affecting demons, First Ones and their former allies all at once. The two sided war now had three sides. Elf fought elf, orc fought orc, human fought human and all fought the First Ones.

Great Sacrifice

Despite the war escalating and death tolls and destruction rising ever upwards, the portal created by the dark spellcasters rituals had not fully closed. Indeed the nearby deaths and worldly devastation gave it power, opening it again and bringing more demons to the fight, greatly worrying the two forces opposing them. It was the dwarfs who led their forces through the ranks of demons and supporters of the dark spellcasters, unsupported by allies and surrounded on all side a vast number of them gave their lives to allow their King to reach the portal itself. Dwarven artefacts proved greater than expected as the King used his weapon to cut through and seal the portal, yet his victory was short lived as within moments the dark spellcasters were upon him and his surviving forces, devastating them.

Magic Incarnate

The portal was closed, yet many powerful demons remained and the dark spellcasters themselves still turned their powers against both the First Ones and the remaining forces of the empire which in turn mustered it greatest spells to oppose them. The First Ones instead withdrew many of their forces, turning upon the sight of the dwarven sacrifice and the fiery devastation that was spreading across the world leaving a small force to give their lives to hold the demons back. This left the two former forces of the empire to battle fiercely. The retreat of the First Ones was a ruse to distract from a ritual their leaders were performing, first its effect seemed unnoticed but as it grew spells began to flicker and spellcasters began to weaken. Magic itself was being drawn out from its resting place within the very earth, sucked from the rivers and torn from the sky. The last of the floating cities faded to nothingness as the entirety of the worlds magical energy coalesced into humanoid form, standing within the centre of the First Ones ritual.

Age of Darkness

Death of Magic

Within moments the puzzled humanoid form of magic incarnate peered around, evidently unsure of what it was and why it had been summoned into existence. Before it could utter a word the rituals leader stepped forward, tears in her eyes and thrust a silver bladed knife into the incarnate beings chest, killing her. In that instant the world itself was changed forever, even when the First Ones subsequently cremated the body and spread the ashes far across the world which again imbued the land with magical energy. This magic was weaker, less powerful.

End of the War

Weakened by the great loss of magic the last demonic creatures fled, shortly followed by the dark spellcasters who summoned them. The warriors who supported them slipping back amongst the ranks of the empires forces in the confusion. The First Ones themselves then took much of the remaining magical lore with them as they used relics of their own to reopen portals and disappear for good. Leaderless and without the magic they had depended on, the people of the empire fell back to blaming each other. Traitors were announced and friendships broken, if sadness and loss was not already heavily laden upon the hearts of the people war could have continued anew. Instead the races fell apart both from each other and from members of their own kind, searching the wreckage of the world for new lives.

A Scorched World

The magical battles in the war had ruined the world, searing its surface. Previously fertile forests and farmland were now bare rock and the animals herded in vast numbers were now loose, wild and savage. The various people which survived the war were now forced to find ways of surviving in the ruins left behind, groups larger than tribes became impossible to feed and nomadic travelling became commonplace. The orcs took well to this new life, eager to battle anyone of another tribe for even the smallest morsel.

The Heartlands

One region seemed to be unscathed by the destruction, it was the humans and elves which found their way here. Still distrustful of each other and even of many of their own people they formed several countries and nations, each different from the other. It is unknown how many such countries came to exist during the Age of Darkness or how many small wars occurred as some were taken by others. As for the dwarfs? None know how many, if any, survived the war. If any did it is assumed must have dug back into the caverns of the earth, unwilling to deal the races on the surface after the events of the War of Loss.

The New Age

It is unknown how long the Age of Darkness lasted, the world was still torn by the actions during the war. Dislike between tribes and nations were the norm for people everywhere for unknown generations, even within the Heartlands where food was far more plentiful and there were little to no competition for survival.

Eventually things changed within the Heartlands, wars became less common as countries grew in size. Of the countries which make up the Heartlands, the largest are known as the Blessed Kingdom, the Iron Nation, Myr and the Union of Ethos.

It is believed that many of these nations engaged or were forced into minor wars with smaller countries, causing them to slowly expand in size as they were victorious.

Of these great and powerful nations, it is known that larger wars were fought between the Blessed Kingdom and the Iron Nation.

Heartland Changes

The Union of Ethos, the least war inclined of the larger nations and the only one to include a large multiracial population succeeded almost eighty years ago in setting the first stones in the path towards peace across the Heartlands after decades of trying and failing. Much of this was due to their new leader, Overseer Qwen.

This elven woman first managed to arrange peace talks with the newly formed country of Háven, a nation founded by a family who had fled another country and then united several lesser nations to follow his ideals.

After a couple of years the country of Myr joined the talks, eager to put aside war in order to focus on other activities. This quickly led both the Elven forests and the Blessed Kingdom getting involved in things, yet the Iron Nation was more reluctant. Eventually, little more than seventy years ago, leaders and representatives of the Heartland nations came together and signed the peace pact, the document was quite detailed and complex but the essence of it was the agreement was that war should not exist between the nations and that the result of declaring war without due cause would be the unification of all the other nations against the aggressor.

Revised Calendar

During the Age of Darkness, not all peoples had the patience or ability to record their histories and those that did each used their own starting points, meaning that years would be different even across neighbouring borders.

When the Peace Pact was drafted, it was obvious that each nation would at last need to be fully aware of the understanding of the calendar of the others. As such a united revised calendar was decided upon and taken into use throughout the Heartlands.

The year system at first began counting founding years (beginning with 1FY), until after five such years the last of the Heartlands Nations signed the Peace Pact and the new post pact (PP) calendar began.

The Peace Pact

The initial draft of the Peace Pact was designed to ensure peace between each of the Heartland Nations, in time as each nation joined it was carefully amended to be agreeable to the governments and people of each nation. Overseer Qwen helped maintain a balance during the discussions leading to such amendments and has continued to work hard to maintain further amendments resulting from political changes over the years, such as new leadership.

It was in one of the original amendments that the Peace Pact not limit any aspect of any nation with the exception of population growth beyond the agreed borders, this was to allow each nation to continue previous ways of life without the other nations enforcing their ways regarding education, agriculture or magical/military training.

Heartland Crime

The decrees of the pact confirm that each nations own laws have precedence in regard to activities and crimes within their own nation, yet crimes that affect each nation must be judged by a representative from each country in the Heartlands, this automatically includes accused criminals arrested by a government other than the own to which they are citizens, although a clause exists that any who have claimed asylum within the Union of Ethos later discovered committing a crime can be judged by the Union without the involvement of their previous country.

One of the most noteworthy exceptions to the pacts decree regarding crime was the agreement that each nation would recognise the rulings of other countries and that each country in the Peace Pact would make use of Magecraft items known as Exile Brands on those sentenced to banishment, easily allowing each country to recognise those who have greatly wronged another nation.

Some people believe that decrees of the Peace Pact are flawed, using the fact that different nations use banishment as a sentence for differing degrees of crime as evidence of this fact. However even the majority of these people agree that it would be nearly impossible to get all the governments to agree to another way.

The Wildlands

Outside of the Heartlands the rest of the world was far less fertile, yet life continued to find ways of existing and furthering itself. The races here spread far in search of food and space from the more dangerous tribes and wild beasts.

New humanoid races arose, which had either been forgotten before the war, had evolved since or had simply been elsewhere during the time of the ancient empire. Of these the goblin and beastkin became the most common, especially around the region where the Heartlands was hidden.

Even as the Age of Darkness came to a close for the Heartlands nations as the pact was introduced, things out in the Wildlands did not change at all. Life was still a matter of survival and civilisation still consisted of innumerable tribes.

In truth those races in the Wildlands would likely not understand concepts such as the Age of Darkness or the New Age, seeing both as part of a seemingly endless continuation of life and the ways of the Wildlands.

The Blessed Kingdom

"Home of history, trade and the true inheritor of the world"

Regional Location

Northernmost of the Heartland Nations, resting on the edge of a series of chalk cliffs. Primarily bordering the Iron Nation and Myr. Vast grasslands and a number of mountain ranges cover the Blessed Kingdom.

Notable Settlements

Each of the kingdoms borders is watched over by ancient well constructed castles, originally constructed for defence so that lords of royal blood could maintain peace along the borders, since the peace pact they now tend to double as trading cities to the bordering nations.

The kingdoms largest settlements are the castle city Valwyn where the royal family resides and the less famous city of Eastlyn which lies on the border with Myr and the high elven forests. Other important settlements include Æthelred, the Kingdoms only fishing port & naval base and Warminster, a military settlement dedicated to the training and education of the Kingdoms troops.

Many smaller villages and towns are spread across the kingdom, ranging from small farmsteads to towns governed by those of noble blood who together with the towns churches govern trade and internal troubles.

Nations Ruler

Marcus Breanious is the current King, may he and Queen Sonya live long. The Breanious family have always claimed to be descendants of the human king who jointly commanded the ancient empire. Until recently the royal family has only wed women of noble blood, Queen Sonya however, was of common birth.

Nations History

The Breanious royal family have led the Kingdom for many centuries, no reliable record exists of any other family ruling the land. It is claimed that after the War of Loss, the Breanious family held a kingdom together which spanned much of what is currently named the Heartlands, but that some lords swayed by the words of dangerous Necromancers and Mentalists rose up and took their own territory from the Kings, assisted by allies who formed armies to swell their ranks and manipulated others into aiding the uprising. Other nations dismiss these claims and no proof exists. The peace pact has led to several breaks in tradition for the Blessed Kingdom, first there was the surprising marriage between their King and a commoner from a rival nation. Then King Marcus' sister Veronica made the controversial decision to grant title and mayorship to a female, with her brothers consent.

Roles in Society

As a feudal country, the society of the Blessed Kingdom is split heavily between the noble and common classes. Until recently the nobility were further defined by gender with tradition stating that only males could hold high position or gain titles.

Almost 90% of the male population are expected to serve in the Kingdoms armies for a number of years, many of whom return to their old lives once finished although a few stay on as generals, instructors or become town guard, all know that they may be called up for military service at any time to defend the Blessed Kingdom. Such military training consists of both standard arms fighting as well as scouts, known for their ranged abilities and survival skills.

Magical training is far less common, really only open to nobles or those sponsored by individual spellcasters. Necromancers are not trained within the Kingdom and very few Mentalists are, as they are highly frowned upon by the people for historical reasons although some are under the Kings registration and are accepted.

A number of guilds and organisations within the kingdom exist to help further and benefit the country in various ways, all offering training to those interested.

Key Faiths

The Blessed Kingdom have no law governing the worship of any god but in schools only Palante and Veritas are regularly taught but others are still recognised.

King Marcus Breanious himself is a worshipper of Palante as have a great many of his family and ancestors traditionally.

Law, Order and Temperament of the Nation

Despite enforcing military service, the Blessed Kingdom has shifted its focus heavily towards trade since the signing of the peace pact. Its people are generally considered honest and friendly, if a little self righteous. Crime does exist but regular military presence and trained town guard allows the Kingdom to ensure such troubles are few and fairly punished.

Relations with other Nations

While strongly believing their racial and historical superiority over the other nations, the Blessed Kingdom has eased over the years and is now one of the leading trading countries within the Heartlands. Old rivalries still exist with the Iron Nation, yet most of the kingdom are more than happy to accept and trade with its people.

Myr

"Where the enlightened find peace."

Regional Location

Easternmost of the Heartland nations, Myr boasts vast plains and farmlands, as well as numerous rivers and lakes. Its largest borders within the Heartlands lies with the Blessed Kingdom and the forest of the high elves.

Notable Settlements

The borders of the land are watched over by Towers 400 foot tall, topped with beacons which can be seen from Pentagonal. Originally these stood alone but small settlements have appeared around them, eager for early trade and the added protection of the magi inside.

Pantagnol, the seat of power in the country, lies in the very centre of the land. Very few peasants live there, as it is a centre for learning and the seat of leadership for all Myr. The five towers on the outside are each home to a High Lord, a spellcaster seated on the Council. Deep within the cities walls stands a great college, where all forms of magic are practised.

Another town of note is Grash, home to a school of alchemy and other non magical education, from here great leaps of understanding are formed.

Dotted all round the land are small villages and farming hamlets, these are considered unimportant by most Magi.

Nations Ruler

Myr is governed by a group collectively know as the The Council which is made up of the greatest spell caster from each school of magic. They are called by the titles: High Mage, High Healer, High Necromancer, High Priest and High Mindbender.

Nations History

After the War of Loss a large group of spellcasters split from their former armies, seeking a peaceful, simple life without war, they travelled to a land with only a few villages in it and decided to stay and teach. It wasn't long before the local citizens started looking to them for leadership and a council was set up in the school building, as the council members were all teachers.

These humble beginnings formed the foundation that over several decades led to them declaring their independence as the nation of Myr, cementing its peoples ideals for peace. As the Age of Darkness came to a close, it was the Council who welcomed and assisted the leader of the Union of Ethos in arranging the peace pact.

Recent history includes a civil war between the Necromancers and the Guardians, over a free hospital scheme, which was averted by a duel which was fought between the high lords where the High Necromancer won.

Roles in Society

Societal roles in Myr are directly linked with spellcasting knowledge and skill, many positions and jobs can only be held by those with a certain amount of spellcasting proficiency. Even within the military, rank is restricted to spellcasters although military record has allowed some exceptions in the past.

While a number of schools exist, they commonly either teach general spellcraft or deal in the specific training of certain spellcasting spheres. Other education is far less common and typically only affordable by nobility meaning that the countries economy is somewhat limited outside of considerations of magic.

Key Faiths

Many and varied, most Guardians and Necromancers are sponsored by various churches for education, and while rivalries persist, all are accepted. In current times Palante is worshipped slightly more than the others as the current High Priest was formerly the leader of the Guardians of Light in Myr.

Law, Order and Temperament of the Nation

Minor laws are created and change regularly, due to each Council member being able to make them, any crime of murder, treason or book burning is punishable by death. Mentalist squads working with the countries military can enter minds and gather evidence and can assist in getting to the truth.

Relations with other Nations

Many of the other nations have always been cautious regarding the people of Myr, mainly due to prejudice over one spellcasting form or another. Despite this the High Priest and High Necromancer have always held peace between Myr and the Union of Ethos, which has no prejudice against any of the magical arts.

The people of Myr have mixed opinions of the other nations, although the peace pact has created a lot more trust between them. Diplomatic ties with other nations still tend to be tense, due to their suspicion of Myr sending mentalists to alter the minds of their negotiators. This has never been proven and in a related act of goodwill the Council of Myr introduced a new rule forbidding spellcasters from peace talks.

Ferrum Populus

Known as the Iron Nation in common speech.

"Purity is second to living a safe, acceptable and well meaning life."

Position in the Heartlands

On the western edge of the Heartlands. Its northern edge aligns with the River Vein, which marks the border between the Iron Nation and the Blessed Kingdom. With the exception of its volcanic mountain, the Iron Nation is flat lush farmland from one side to the other.

Notable Settlements

Cheron, the nations capitol and only city is a vast, archaic, winding settlement, the largest in the Heartlands, which surrounds the towering Iron Palace, where the nations ruler lives. While its inner city is heavily walled, its large populations expansion over the years has led buildings to have been constructed outwards even as far as several miles beyond the cities walls in the current day.

The numerous villages and farmsteads that comprise the rest of the nation exist to feed and supply Cheron, enslaved workers are commonplace in these regions.

Nations Ruler

The country is ruled by Kathleen Orchid, a self-proclaimed Dictator. Like all previous leaders of the Iron Nation, she runs a totalitarian government which regulates the people with the sole goal of improving life within the nation at all costs.

Despite possessing little physical or magical ability, her keen intellect and personality has led her to be highly favoured by the people, despite the name of her position, who are well accustomed to the practical realities of the system. Outside of the Iron Nation she is less likely and has innumerable agents watching different aspects and regions within the Heartlands and even the Wildlands around her nations border.

Previous national leaders, including Kathleen's father were great warriors who led from the front line in many of the nations wars.

Nations History

The Iron Nation is one of the oldest nations and one of the few which has not ignored or completely disregarded the Blessed Kingdoms royal claim of being related to the ancient human king of legend, in fact they have claimed it possible. However, there has always been rivalry and often war between the two lands.

Despite being slightly smaller than the other four countries in the peace pact, the Iron Nation has a vast wealth of mineral resources which it was named after. This together with its tradition of maintaining a highly militaristic force even in times of peace, means that while its lands have no true defences few risk counter-attack by its troops. Many believe the Iron Nation was originally against signing the peace pact, something none of its leaders has thought worthy of amendment.

Before Myr implemented new rules into the peace pact, preventing spellcasters being involved in diplomatic meetings, the Iron Nation's negotiators included a large number of Mentalists. Now while not spellcasters, they are still tricky individuals.

Roles in Society

Due to its deeply held practical view on life the Iron Nation has never differentiated by gender roles, both are known for being productive in thought and action.

Warriors, Rogues and Artificers have always formed the backbone of the nation, as metalwork and military could be considered some of the nations defining aspects.

Priests of their main faiths are valued and respected, while Mentalists are regularly found in the service of the Dictator. Traditionally medical work was performed by surgeons and doctors, over time the number of Biomancers has risen although the majority of the common people prefer and trust doctors more.

The Iron Nation has always been shunned, even ignored Mages, viewing them and their magic as unnecessary and of little practical use.

Key Faiths

Telmor is highly thought of by many, especially the nations nobility and top military personnel. Others favour the practical outlook of Insidium.

Quite surprisingly a temple of Veritas exists within central Cheron and the faith has a reasonable following within the villages outside the city, although this temple is notably different from similar temples to the goddess of truth due to the countries unique views on law and order.

Law, Order and Temperament of the Nation

As befitting a nation founded on tradition and power, criminal activity is heavily punished in such ways as execution and slavery. This is accepted as the norm by its people as things have been so for hundreds of years, especially since the Iron Nation has the lowest crime rates in the Heartland Nations, allowing its steady people to live their lives free of concern of theft or vandalism.

Further to this cause is that the law enforcers are well equipped and have been trained to treat nobles and commoners equally without discrimination.

In regard to other things its people are known to be stubborn and traditional while heavily opposed to cheats and trickery. More well known is its peoples practical and accepting approach to what others would call corruption.

Relations with other Nations

In the past the Iron Nation has waged or threatened war with all of its neighbours. It was also the last to sign the peace pact, although despite this the Iron Nation has stuck to the pact perfectly despite maintaining its powerful military.

It has a mixed opinion of Håven, with the majority of that nation being seen as untrustworthy. On the other hand, many of Håven's smiths are well known to the warriors and crafters of the Iron Nation.

The Iron Nation and the Blessed Kingdom have always been strong rivals, meaning that even now contact and trade between the two is quite terse.

Union of Ethos

"Peace is at the heart of life, stay true to that heart."

Regional Location

South of Myr, the Union of Ethos spans from the hills overlooking Háven to the south eastern edge of the Heartlands itself. No rivers flow in the Union of Ethos, as the rainfall is spread wide across the flat, soft land. As such large portions of the country consist of shallow marshland which go on for as far as many miles as the eye can see.

Notable Settlements

The Union of Ethos has a single settlement which sits close to the lands centre. This city, Sinreal is filled with numerous squares and other wide open plan spaces. Dozens of varying temples exist, the largest stand on the outer edge of the city facing out towards the rest of the world. No great buildings stand in the centre as even the Hall of Reasoning is situated on the outer border like the great temples.

Nations Ruler

The Union of Ethos is led by a ruler and a number of counsellors which assist them. Since its founding, tradition and law has decreed that in order to validate their position as governor and advisor to the people, the Unions ruler must replace there given name with that of Overseer while keeping their surname. This position is viewed as one of pure enlightenment and is only given to those who have dedicated their life to the Union of Ethos, the notion of peace and to the gods. For over eighty years this position has been held by Overseer Qwen, a wise and skilled maiden whose family originated from the high elven forest. This inspirational leader could perhaps be credited with ending the Age of Darkness. She is assisted by sixty individuals known as the Counsel, each accepted as having the position by both the other council members and the people of the country. Position on the Counsel is a life term and no more than sixty members are allowed by law.

Nations History

Early in the War of Loss it is claimed men and women seeking peace gathered together, led by sixty divine spellcasters under the guidance of an unnamed saint empowered by the gods to foresee the result of the war and also to be able to lead the devout people to a land of safety.

At the start of the Age of Darkness, these people founded the Union of Ethos and throughout that terrible age strived to teach peace and prevent war. Sometime this was not possible and thus through defence the Union grew in size.

Finally a ray of hope appeared in the form of Overseer Qwen, as it was she who devised the first documents which in time became the Peace Pact. The path to unite the Heartlands is long and slow as she says and has included a number of trouble situations but Overseer Qwen has worked tirelessly to keep it working.

She is quite old now and many fear what will happen if she were to die, she is viewed as a saint by many in the country and few believe any replacement will have the strength of character to hold the Peace Pact together.

Roles in Society

"You may decide your own path, as long as it is the gods you follow." is a common phrase used by the Union of Ethos' people, unsurprisingly religious practise is the cornerstone of every profession within the country.

Craftsmen and smiths seek favour from the gods in their work, scholars look to the heavens for answers and farmers pray that the weather will be good.

Those that wish to join any of the multitude of temples face a harsh, rigorous and strict path. Such is the faith its people have in religion, the priests who lead them are expected to be wise and practised in all areas including combat.

Unlike the other Heartland nations, the Union of Ethos' population includes a multitude of races. Humans are by far the most common, yet the number of elves increases each decade and even a few orcs, goblins and beastkin live their lives in the country as it proudly accepts people of all races and genders, if religious.

Key Faiths

All Faiths are welcome in the Union of Ethos, even those of Atrax as long as they abide by what has been decreed by the Counsel and Overseer. Temples to a great number of other lesser deities exist within the city of Sinreal as would be expected. Of the seven more prevalent deities, at least five have huge cathedrals on the outskirts of the city facing the rest of the world. It is known that neither Atrax nor Galdrin have temples, the first by diplomatic agreement and the second due to the gods dislike for temples. No temple to Insidium is visible on maps of the city, yet one can be certain that one exists somewhere out of sight.

Law, Order and Temperament of the Nation

Due to the amount of gods worshipped within the country and the importance such worship plays, there are many different laws, many existing only in certain districts or individual temples. Many churches maintain small armed forces in order to enforce these laws, each acting with different degrees of severity.

More importantly the military of these churches exist to keep the Peace Pact working for the betterment of all the Heartland nations, as it is known that military consequence is unfortunately the only thing keeping some individuals peaceful.

Relations with other Nations

At the very least Overseer Qwen is favoured by the leaders of each nation, thanks to her actions forming the Peace Pact and keeping it strong. Other than that many of the other nations find it difficult to understand the Union of Ethos' people, with the exception of the religious faiths across the Heartlands who maintain strong ties with their shared temples in the Union of Ethos.

Háven

"Actions speak louder than blood or history."

Regional Location

Háven occupies a wide valley quite central in the Heartlands, the great river Vorbis which formed it and still flows through it, is by far the largest known.

The valley itself is quite beautiful and one of the few areas outside the elven regions where areas of forest have been allowed to grow wild instead of trimmed or cut back to allow vast sections of farmland, as such fruit is a staple food in Háven.

Notable Settlements

The capitol city, also called Háven is an impressive place known for its looks, as even the stone walls and towers which make up its moderate defences give the impression of careful design rather than militaristic planning.

Farden is the countries main trading post, situated at the narrowest portion of the river where it covers both sides for several miles, linked by its famous large stone bridge as well as a number of smaller trade bridges.

Nations Ruler

At current the Brankah Clan rules the nation with each of its adult members having equal responsibility for Háven, all of them are well educated in politics. Every ten years, control shifts to another such family.

Nations History

Háven was officially founded when a family fleeing prosecution from another nation succeeded in uniting three smaller countries under the new name of Háven. In the few years between this and the signing of the peace pact the founding family brought several other countries under Háven's administration.

The country of Háven, new to the world yet surprisingly large in size was quick to sign the peace pact when the Union of Ethos brought the idea to them.

There are some conflicting thoughts regarding Háven's beginnings, with many claiming that the families leader was indeed guilty of harsh crimes which he was fleeing, others claim him innocent. A common, yet highly fanciful story is taught to the children of Háven itself tells that the crime was an act of righteous revenge against a vile murderer who had attempted to kill the founding fathers beautiful wife. Whether this tale or any of the rumours are true remain to be revealed.

Since the peace pact Háven has settled into the Heartlands new way of working better than most and has been the only country to expand its borders when the last two lesser countries in the Heartlands allied themselves under Háven's banner.

Class Roles

A lot of honour and responsibility is placed upon the craftsmen and smiths of Háven. Its people always judge themselves and others on their actions rather than what training they have received, meaning there is no prevailing class. Spellcasters are common enough, although Biomancers are heavily frowned on and often have a very hard time gaining the respect of people, even if backed by one of the leading families which watch over the country.

Key Faiths

Galdrin is the most favoured deity within Háven, as many of its people believe that they should better themselves and be self-sufficient rather than be beholden to a higher being. A thought which Galdrin himself supports.

Law, Order and Temperament within the Nation

While laws exist in Háven they are quite lenient with much of the process on the shoulders of the individual wronged. If someone is caught stealing, they are arrested and charged by the towns militia but it is the victim (or his family where this is impossible) who decides on the punishment.

Its people do not make good traders, as they have an unfortunate habit of taking advantage of deals or overcharging without cause, the nations smiths are seen as an exception to this, so proud of their work they are usually eager and determined to share it with the world by trading at affordable fair prices.

Relations with other Nations

Despite their affinity with the Union of Ethos at the time of the signing of the Peace Pact, the two countries have very little in common and agree on little beside peace. Háven and the Iron Nation have a peculiar relationship as many of the formers people view the latter as overly seriously and set in their way, while still respecting their peoples level headedness, likely advanced by the fact that the Iron Nation has long been the largest patron of Háven's craftsmen and smiths.

Relations with the Blessed Kingdom are less agreeable, some believe it was the kingdom that Sturn Farden fled from before founding Háven and although no proof of this exists this belief shows in dealings between traders of both nations.

A hush settled throughout the tavern as the bard adjusted his instrument, a smile spreading across his face as he gazed around at the attentive faces.

"Today I'm here to tell you of the founding of Håven, a tale of heartache and of loss, yet also a tale of love and most especially what loves promise can lead to."

The Bard nods to the landlord for a drink as the bars patrons consider his words.

"Long ago, back in the age of darkness there lived a family, the leader of this family Sturn Farden was a strong, proud blacksmith. He lived together with his beautiful wife Aria and their two children Horst and Ebrecht in a small town relatively free of trouble. Indeed the Farden's were the pride of the town, Sturn was the greatest smith for many miles and his sons were expected to be surpass him in time. Aria of course was equally as known for her kind heart, her wonderful paintings and not least her voice and unmatched good looks! More so than many around here I'm sure!"

Laughter erupted around the tavern at the look upon the serving girls face as she slams down the Bards drink and strides off. The Bard himself does not laugh however and soon this silence spreads over the drinkers leaving the place quite still.

"Trouble began when Aria fell ill, first it seemed like winter illness, just a slight headache and dizziness but as the weeks wore on she got worse and worse, by spring she was bedridden, her skin pale and her once golden hair almost like straw. Sturn, terrified he would lose his love showered the regions Biomancer, a man named Carter, with goods, asking him to do all he could to make her well again. More weeks past and even with the use of Carters magic her condition seemed to worsen!"

The Bard sipped slowly of his ale, his dark eyes echoing that of the tale. Across the bar the barmaids anger had subsided, leaving her face worrisome and attentive.

"One night after drinking deep to drown his fears Sturn arrived at Carter's home, planning to ask him what else could be done. When knocking received no answer he stumbled inside and searched for the man, staggering upstairs he paused at the threshold of Carters bedroom, expecting him to be asleep, before slipping inside. Dragging back the covers of the bed he found it empty. Confused by the drink and lack of Carter, Sturn collapsed onto the end of the bed. Blurry eyed he glanced around the room, there in front of him hung one of Aria's paintings, next to it another and another, more than a dozen in total!"

Faint muttering spread across the crowd as the Bard paused to take a sip of his ale.

"Scrambling across the room Sturn pulled open the dressed beneath the wall of pictures, nervously he pulled out a collection of papers. Atop the pile was a sheet of music, easily recognisable as that of La Tristesta, Aria's favourite song. Next came a sketch, presumably by Carter of a field of corn and in the centre, Aria picking flowers oblivious to the artists presence."

"Sturn angrily searched deeper in the drawer, seeking some explanation. As his knuckles hit the bottom he heard a faint echoing thud... A secret compartment! Throwing the remaining contents to the floor, Sturn pulled open the compartment to reveal a number of sheets, seemingly written in blood. The transcription of a spell of some kind, beneath it in the common tongue were the details of the spell."

A gasp slipped from the throat of the distraught serving girl before the landlord could lay a comforting arm on her shoulder, around the room the crowd waited.

"It took a moment for Sturn's eyes and mind to focus, yet when he did the words detailed a curse which would poison someone over time, a curse that causes the body to degrade as if by illness... Anger swelled in Sturn's heart as he tore the paper apart, suddenly sober he stormed from the house, rushing to his forge where he grasped his hammer from its place on the anvil."

Cries of agreement and encouragement came from the back of the crowd, quickly hushed by others wanting the Bard to continue.

"Stepping out of the forge Sturn's eyes settled upon the bedroom window of his house, a candle illuminated the curtains yet Aria would be sleeping at this time. Cautiously Sturn slipped inside and up the stairs, peering through a gap in the door he spied Carter seated at the edge of the bed stroking Aria's hair and repeatedly whispering the words of a mantra. Screaming Sturn threw himself into the room and set upon Carter, stronger and more experienced as he was the blacksmith knew he also needed the element of surprise to get this treacherous beast, this jealous poisoner away from his wife before any more harm could be done. The two rolled across the floor, the candlestick flying from the table in the scuffle, alerted by the noise Horst and Ebrecht entered the room and putting their tiredness behind them set about stopping the spread of the flames. Carter thrashed wildly, using every ounce of his strength in his attempt to escape, yet empowered as he was by his anger Sturn could not be stopped. Slamming Carter against the floor again, he drew his hammer from his belt and raised it high."

Around the tavern argumentative yells of both yes and no arose, arguments over whether Sturn was right were struck up between fellows until the Bard spoke again, his quite voice cutting through the yells, silencing them.

"Horst grasped his fathers arm, holding it in place. Realising what he had almost done Sturn recoiled, throwing himself across the room away from the injured man. Struggling for consciousness Carter glared at the blacksmith for almost a minute before dragging himself to his feet with the aide of the bedpost.

"Begone Carter!" Sturn cried, "Leave my house, leave this town, leave the country! If I ever lay eyes on you again...". Carters answering voice slipped from his throat sounding cold, heartless and embittered "By my power and the energies of life..."

All but the Bard froze at that moment, each recognising the words of magic. Calmly the Bard reached again for his ale, taking his time to finish what remained. After a minute the barmaid called out "What happened next, the spell?"

"The spell was not cast!" The Bard cried, slamming his mug down. "Sturn flew across the room, his arm swinging round, the hammer descending like the wrath of the heavens! One single decisive blow, it struck Carters temple and crushed his skull instantly. Sturn and his sons peered down at the body of the fallen spellcaster, outside the sounds of the townfolk, having seen the signs of fire, could be heard. "We cannot remain here." Sturn spoke to his family, "We must take Aria somewhere safe, somewhere where anything like this will never happen again.""

Smiles spread on the faces of many of the listeners, the barmaid still stood hesitant.

"Aria recovered over the next year, as emboldened by his desire to protect his wife Sturn proceeded to unite two nearby nations calling the new land Háven. In time more were to join, creating the country we know today..."

The Elven Forests

While much of the Heartlands has in time been turned into vast plains or farmland, two areas of forest have remained true to their origins since before the Age of Darkness if elven legend can be believed.

These two forests are said to have been settled by elves of two highly different beliefs after the War of Loss. One by elves who had opposed the war against the First Ones and the other by those who supported and led the war, unfortunately neither faction of elves can now agree which group was which.

Wood Elves

The western forest was settled by elves who viewed that the First Ones were right in their actions and still believe that it was the excessive use of magic which led to the War of loss. These elves are primarily motivated in training themselves to live in harmony with nature, feeling that if they were to do so then the world will grow to be as fertile and green as it was in ancient times.

Their forest home, now known as the Forest of Twilight is well defended and those who enter without permission are often slain without seeing the wood elves as their most favoured weapon is the bow. Single edged blades are only drawn if facing foes capable of surviving the initial volley of arrows. Their leaders are expected to be skilled with both these weapons while having the utmost respect for nature.

Spellcasters do exist but are not leaders, instead acting as spiritual advisers to the warriors and wilderness experts who command their people.

They are a strong willed people with little trust for outsiders, especially those from the Iron Nation as more than two centuries ago the Iron Nation attempted to invade their forest in order to gain a better position in a war against the Blessed Kingdom. Many of the older wood elves remember the brief battles as the elves defended their land.

High Elves

The high elves of the eastern forest, near the country of Myr, are of the belief that the First Ones brought magic to an end out of jealousy, knowing they would lose the war. Even in current times the high elves believe that as magical lore was the foundation for the ancient empire, that world peace could be regained if magic was powerful once more. These elves blame the war on the actions of the orcs and the ancient elven lords inability to lead the empire. They also despise those lords for failing to counter the ritual of the First Ones which led to the Age of Darkness.

The high elves favour spellcasting in all situations, but distrust others races use of magical power. Many of them claim that they alone have the experience and foresight to practise and obtain the oldest of magic. In order to safeguard their land against the intrusion of those who may wish to steal their magical knowledge they train warriors and scouts, often armed with gleaming swords and elegantly designed armour.

Beyond the border of the home, the Forest of Dawn, the high elves are more accepting of others and have long standing friendly relations with the Union of Ethos and since the signing of the Peace Pact have made arrangements with the spellcasters of Myr to trade certain magical lore and historical tales.

Orc Clans

Every region of the Wildlands can be said to be home to orcs, since the War of Loss the race has spread far and wide reproducing without care for food concerns. Few seriously believe that orcs were ever as calm as the spiritual spellcasters which legend claims were common before the war. They are instead viewed as savages to be feared thanks to their brutal nature and lack of foresight, which is indeed true of the majority of orcs encountered. There are still a few shamans which serenely guide their clans, using spiritual power to guide those that listen.

Clans

The orc race typically gathers into clans, which they become ferociously loyal to. All of these clans are led by a war leader, usually the biggest and strongest orc in the clan. A few clans also include a spellcaster known as their shaman, no matter what form of magic he uses. If sane, these spellcasters do their best to keep calm within the clan while attempting to guide the orcs in the ways of their ancestors. Unfortunately insanity seems to be not uncommon amongst orc shamans.

Orc clans show no concerns for things unrelated to their own survival and will regularly fight other clans over territory or prey. Due to the lack of fertility in the Wildlands, the orc clans travel almost at random seeking food and things to fight. Many orc clans include slaves, usually these are goblin but ogres and humans are not unknown. These slaves are marked with scars and will be hunted if they escape.

Fighting

Fighting can be seen as the basis of an orcs way of life. Most of the food they eat is made from animals hunted by the tribes warriors, whenever a dispute arises within the clan a duel is used to resolve the issue and whenever the clan encounters another group attacking them is seen as the best policy, along with theft of food. All orcs thus strive to be able to fight and few survive that cannot at least competently wield a weapon and shout threats. The most famous orcs were all great and powerful war leaders, often best known for the number of tribes they destroyed.

Ancestors

The shamans of the orc race teach that just as magic still exists after it was slain, so do the ancestors of the orcs, just weaker and less visible as magic now is. All orcs believe their ancestors watch over them, as such even when alone orcs rarely show fear or cowardice, knowing as they do that someone will witness it. Many shamans even claim to be able to contact these ancestral spirits, asking for wisdom and guidance. Often this is managed through the use of herbs and potions.

Loners

An orc without a clan, whether due to banishment or being the sole survivor of a failed encounter with a beast or other clan, is rarely able to join another. Even if accepted into another clan, the orc will be viewed more as a beast of burden or pack animal than one of the clan. Rarely, a strong loner can battle his way into the clan full. Those that don't join other clans usually die alone in the wilderness, others sometimes find their way to the Heartlands and often manage to survive doing small tasks for the people there, as a struggling lone orc faces less oppression or military action than an invading clan. These orcs are still insulted, but often only behind their backs.

Goblins

Its unknown whether goblins existed before the Age of Darkness, it is possible they were simply ignored by legend and forgotten during the War of Loss. Some theorise they were orcs who were changed before or during Age of Darkness, although both the orcs and goblins strongly and viciously oppose that theory.

Unique amongst the humanoid people of the Heartlands, goblins are not nomadic and rarely travel far from the regions they call home. Due to this and the lack of healthy growth in the Wildlands, especially areas settled by goblins for long, means the species has always lived lives which others would not consider.

Goblin Diet

As they never travel far enough to locate animals and always eat whatever foods grows in their territory without thought of planting or growing more, goblins are accustomed to eating anything even slightly edible. Typically they ambush creatures foolish enough to wander near their lairs, simply attacking stragglers in the case of powerful herds or strong humanoid tribes. Some even develop a preference for humanoid flesh, although those who take this to the extreme and try to kill his own kind are often killed and usually, quite ironically eaten by his fellows.

Past Slavery

Due to being small and easily intimidated, goblins have regularly found themselves enslaved by orc clans. It is not unknown for as many as a dozen goblins to be enslaved to a large clan, usually they fear the orcs enough not to dare escape. Goblins have even been enslaved by human factions in the past, although not in great numbers and never for very long thanks to the typical goblin prowess at escape.

Relations with Others

Goblins seem to have a deep distrust for other races, perhaps brought on by their mild distrust of their own family and friends. Orcs are especially distrusted, in this case it is because of a history of goblins being bullied and enslaved by them. Further distrust between species is that since they were first encountered by other races, goblins have become commonly thought of as sneaky, vicious and mean by all which is backed by the goblins preference for ambush. This belief is actually quite true in regard to the majority of goblins, although a few are different. Elven dislike for goblins is quite well known, primarily due to the goblin belief that the flesh of elves tastes far better than that of any other species alive.

Cowardice and Culture

As befitting their lifestyle and the orcs actions to them in the past, goblins are an extremely cowardly race by nature. Due to this the concept of a fair fight is entirely alien and beyond their comprehension, as exemplified by their preference for attacks by ambush. At other times they tend to rely on dirty tricks.

They have no culture anywhere across the Wildlands, each pack is separate yet if one goblin were to be lost they would be accepted by another pack and would be treated just as family, equally distrusted but supported in order to survive. Closer to the Heartlands, goblins have been known to be taken in by human families or organisations, such goblins adjust and become as loyal as they would be elsewhere.

The Beastkin Tribes

Beastkin is a collective term for all manner of humanoid creatures with physical similarities to animals and beasts, each related closely to the other despite their differences. Despite this all beastkin are invariably fur coated.

Legends told by the beastkin say that after the incarnation of magic was slain at the culmination of the War of Loss the incarnations mortal form was cremated and its ashes spread across the world in order to imbue a new lesser magic in the world. Whenever these ashes fell amongst the animals of the world, these creatures gained new intelligence and in time took humanoid form becoming the beastkin.

Physical Forms

The various forms taken by beastkin is not just physical, many of the forms have mindsets quite different from the others which in turn leads to different societal roles and training. Those that physically bear resemblance to predatory animals tend to become hunters or warriors yet like all beastkin they dislike violence. As such they learn to use their physical presence to intimidate others so combat can be avoided. Other beastkin, especially those who physically resemble herbivorous creatures take a more cautious and thoughtful outlook often learning herbs and medicine, they cannot be viewed as prey like many of their animal descendants however as this strength of mind has taught all such beastkin to stand strong and not fear others.

Tribes and Trading

While beastkin forms run in families from generation to generation, the beastkin tribes which wander the Wildlands are comprised of all physical forms. These tribes are highly nomadic and travel the Wildlands regularly but unlike the orc clans the beastkin tribes are regularly happy to encounter each other, making use of the time to trade goods and information. Often members of one tribe will travel with others in order to see more of the world and learn about its wonders.

Beastkin tribes close to the Heartlands even welcome human traders and enjoy learning of human society and its tales and legends.

Lost Secret

Many believe that the beastkin travel the Wildlands not just for survival as the orcs do but because they are seeking some unknown secret which is hidden somewhere across the wide expanses of the world. Whether this is rumour or truth is hard to determine as even beastkin who openly tell others of this state only to the eldest beastkin of each tribe know what the secret is or how to recognise it.

Magic

Beastkin are surprisingly adept at magic for a species whose written language is secondary to word of mouth and never used for books or long lasting records. Like all their teaching it is done through verbal communication and action. Beastkin view magic different from other races, seeing it as part of life rather than something amazing or different and certainly not something to be revered.

Similarly beastkin do not worship gods or spirits, instead they believe in life and strangely this belief does lead to the study of Guardian and Necromancer magic even without the need for a god of any kind. Instead such beastkin are guided by the cycle of life and death and the needs of both respectively.

The Sea

Outside of the Heartlands there exists only the Wildlands and the sea. Neither of these are of much concern to the Heartland nations, although the sea does provide better opportunities for food than the Wildlands.

Many of the people of the Wildlands who regularly travel routes near the sea become skilled fishermen and many even build small boats for such use. With the Heartland nations only the Blessed Kingdom and the Iron Nation border the ocean both maintain only a single harbour with a small number of vessels and ships.

Harbours

Its unknown which of the two countries first made use of the sea, but its known that it was the Iron Nation which first used it for war. The Blessed Kingdom has a far larger sea border than the Iron Nation, but the border is almost entirely cliffs. The countries port was built into a bay cut into the cliffs by man. This fact did not stop the Iron Nation from building warships and attempting to make use of a new method of attack during one of the many wars the two countries had before the Peace Pact.

Since the Peace Pact the Iron Nations port has become almost vestigial and populated only by a small number of fishing families in service of the country. The Blessed Kingdoms port however has become a thriving place which feeds many of the nearby settlements. Both countries still maintain warships however.

Wide Ocean

No species on Terris is able to make boats or ships capable of travelling more than a dozen miles from shore and nor would any have reason to.

The ocean is an unpredictable and dangerous region, even if fish swam in vast numbers in the deeper regions of the ocean the risks of seeking them would make the voyage worthless and a vast waste of time and resources.

Islands

Some islands are known to the people of the world, the beastkin tell of many they are spotted in their travels while the small islands near the Heartlands have been explored and declared of little worth for hundreds of years.

Recent advances such as spyglasses as well as magical observation has led to the discovery of a yet unknown island in the far distant ocean. Some believe this land to be special, yet many claim this fanciful and declare it simply more Wildlands.

Trade and Traders

Trade has become increasingly common between the Heartland Nations since the signing of the Peace Pact, in current times many of the countries are eager to trade with each other for goods they otherwise will have trouble procuring. Common folk have always held trade in high regard however. As no currency within the Heartland Nations has ever been common enough or of little value to be of use to the more common folk trade and barter has always been part of life. For example, the only way for a blacksmith to obtain food other than that he grows himself would be in exchange for goods or services of his own.

Trade now exists for almost every item or service imaginable, although many countries attempt to enforce laws against some.

Peace Pact

While the pact brought an end to war between the Heartland Nations, with the exception of a few it took some time for the different countries to trust each other enough to do trade. A number of the more fortunate trade families in the Heartlands took advantage of this, using the Peace Pacts rules to monopolise trading opportunities and regularly acting as intermediaries between the countries which would not otherwise meet with each other.

As the years past such opportunities have become rare as each country has taken to arranging its own deals and many have built border cities with the idea of trade in mind. Even so, many of the trade families which grew rich from the Peace Pact still hold much wealth and trading power in the Heartlands.

The Wildlands

While the beastkin tribes are known to regularly trade with each other, none of the other Wildland races care much for trade and have little to spare of value. A number of traders within the Heartlands however have taken to doing trade with the people of the Wildlands, often crossing borders without permission and sometimes even trading with enemies of the Heartland Nations for personal profit. Of the people they deal with most, the many exiles who were banished from the Heartlands likely rank top of such lists, especially the trade lists of the more unscrupulous traders. Whilst many of those who trade in the Wildlands are dangerous, almost all can be trusted as their arrangements and deals are based heavily upon their word and past actions. As such explorers and wanderers in the Wildlands often welcome the sight of travelling traders, especially those who venture far as they sometimes obtain magical items of power which they sometimes trade. It should be noted that such traders should not be underestimated as they tend to make personal bonds with the most powerful magical items they find and employ guards capable of defending them in the more distant areas of the Wildlands.

The Wardens of Terris

Since the signing of the Peace Pact, independent traders operating between the various Heartland nations have become increasingly wealthy setting the foundation for the countries themselves to organise trade and business with their neighbours. Of these traders, the Michaelborn family were one of the few who successfully operated across all of the great nations. Duncan C. Michaelborn, current heir to the Michaelborn family wealth has turned against his families tradition however, leaving much of the business to his younger sister while he invested much of the remaining fortune into an organisation of his own devising.

The Michaelborn foundation, otherwise known as the Wardens of Terris is this organisation which exists outside of the control of any government in the Heartlands. The ideas behind the foundation was to enlist adventurers and explorers from all walks of life in order to explore the Wildlands and discover information and treasures of bygone ages in order to gain wealth and prestige.

Membership

Some of those enlisting in the foundation are simply treasure hunters, out to make money but others seek exploration, knowledge or simply excitement and adventure. Duncan has declared that the foundation will accept all races, whether from the Heartlands or the Wildlands as he believes each will provide something of benefit to the foundation as a whole. Humans from all of the Heartland nations still make up the largest percentage of the foundations members but elves, orcs, goblins and beastkin numbers are steadily growing as more join up.

Official Duty

The observers of the Peace Pact, who tirelessly work to ensue that the pact is maintained have declared their support of the foundation on the agreement that if the foundation were to discover anything that could be a threat to the Heartlands as a whole would be dealt with and not ignored by the foundations members.

Beyond this term, its members are free to explore and deal with others however they like in the hopes that freedom of thoughts will allow the foundation to swell in power.

Opportunities

While the Heartland nations have no interest in expanding into the Wildlands, seers and keepers of knowledge from all nations have expressed a willingness to pay for maps and information about the Wildlands. As well as this the foundation boasts a chance for its members to find treasures hidden for centuries and perhaps even magical artefacts and secrets from before the Age of Darkness.

The Michaelborn fortune has been used to provide simple armament for those members which need it and of course food and shelter for its members.

Items of Power

Magical items possess an almost limitless variety of powers and abilities, although they are often limited by the methods of their construction. Some items of lesser or greater construction include weaknesses which allow for a higher flow of energy. It is common knowledge that three types of magical item exist, noted by their means of construction but often only those who have studied the arcane will recognise the difference, especially between Magecraft and True Magical items.

Creation

The creation of lesser magic items such as Scrolls and Runestones are commonplace and crafters exist within almost every race in varying stations. More complex magical items were once thought to only be legend, until almost a hundred years when a number of spellcasters of different races discovered the means of creating Magecraft items, which use outside energy rather than stored magic.

At first Magecraft items were kept secret and given only to powerful leaders and military commanders, but since the signing of the Peace Pact they have seen other uses across the Heartlands. Still, Magecraft items of war are still considered more common than those of trade or other use.

Even today only the most talented masters of the most basic magics can learn their creation and then only if they have devoted time to studying non-magical artisan methods. Such crafters are few and often become well known by scholars.

The knowledge and ability to create True Magical items is believed to have been lost when the Ancient Empire collapsed. Several nations possess a limited number of such items which are carefully monitored and watched over, irreplaceable as they are.

Abilities

It is impossible to list the abilities of Magecraft or True Magic items. Some such as Swords and other weapons vary from the most basic of magical charge which is still enough to allow the user to cut spirits and other incorporeal beings, to causing bursts of energy on impact which throw their victims aside or cause additional injury or pain. Armour and shields have even more potential, giving various resistances to both physical and magical attack. Other items such as rings or amulets again have more varying abilities which are often impossible to predict at first sight.

A small number of items bestow knowledge of their abilities to those who touch them, more regularly yet still rare are those which bestow knowledge when they form a bond or link. The majority unfortunately require identification in order to understand their exact abilities, luckily over the generations several methods of such identification have been developed ranging from detailed research and observation to advanced forms of magical detection.

True Magical items are known to be able to possess greater abilities than Magecraft items, although many possess similar or identical abilities. Even a sword of fundamental magical power of True Magical origin is more valuable than many more powerful Magecraft items, if only because it can be transferred to others during battle and of course passed along to the owners descendants.

Commonly Known Items

As noted the magical abilities of objects can be highly varied, despite this a number of items of power are known even to peasants. When spellcasters first devised methods of creating Magecraft items, military leaders demanded that they obtain weapons capable of countering certain enemy spells. Since the fundamental infusion of magic into a blade was relatively simple for those capable of making Magecraft items, such weapons were made in large numbers and are often thought of as a sign of command amongst a great number of military groups.

Another well known, yet feared Magecraft item are the Exile Brands which were based upon a small number of True Magic items recovered by a number countries. The power of these items is to brand the torso of an individual with a mark that cannot be removed except by the one who did the branding or certain powerful rituals. Since the signing of the Peace Pact these have found use within each country.

The most well known True Magical items are the Utopian Staffs, believed to have been crafted by the First Ones long before the War of Loss. These items bestow magical knowledge to those who hold them, capable of allowing even a simple peasant the power to cast standard magical spells of an equal level to a skilled magi. In the hands of those actually learned in the correct magical sphere they grant knowledge and spellcasting capability beyond that of any amount of magical study or learning.

Sources of Energy

Magic is not limitless, as such magical items require energy and power to allow the use of their abilities. Some such as Scrolls and Runestones are simply act as storage for the magical power and mana of their creators, as such once they are used the energy contained within them is gone and the item no longer has power.

Magecraft magical items generate energy from the innate energies generated by living creatures (and also some undead creatures to a lesser degree). Such items are designed to be thirsty for energy to help bond this bond between item and user, as such it is more than possible for such items to create links with individuals without them realising it simply by picking up or making use of it. This same thirst means that once a Magecraft item has bonded the link cannot be undone, the item has been irrecoverably altered to require the unique energies of a wielder. Once bonded a Magecraft item works only for the person whom it is bonded to, although a complex ritual exists which can alter the pattern of energy a Magecraft item has in order to transfer ownership to another.

Interestingly those who have led eventful lives and learnt numerous skills and talents seem to generate more innate energy that Magecraft items can use. Adversely it is obvious that regular use of magical spells renders ones innate energies less stable than that of someone incapable of casting magic.

True Magical items, otherwise known as artefacts to some, while outwardly quite similar and sometimes identical in terms of ability, they require no outside energy. Indeed all the True Magic items known to exist today have held their own power as long as any can remember and many theorise they were created at the time of the Ancient Empire. This means that True Magic items maintain their abilities and power no matter who holds them.

Bestiary

As well as the common humanoid races detailed previously, people exploring the Wildlands, especially the Wardens of Terris who seek adventure may well encounter all manner of other people and creatures which exist in the Wildlands.

Exiles and Bandit People

One of the few magical artefacts used by all the Heartland nations is the Exile Brand, a device used to place a magical mark upon the body of criminals and traitors exiled from their country and sent into the Wildlands to survive alone. The signing of the Peace Pact further increased the use of such devices, as it decreed banishment from one country was banishment from all.

Such marks even appear on the torsos of any child born to those with the mark and because of this groups exist who have never committed a crime yet are unable to enter the Heartlands without fear of insult or attack if discovered.

Such people are rarely friendly or good however, survival in the Wildlands is not easy and many of these people take to banditry, operating in small groups and attacking travellers near the borders of the Heartlands.

Ogres

Ogres are rarer than orcs, goblins or beastkin yet have existed in the Wildlands for as long as any race can remember. Ogres are known to be of far lower intelligence than other humanoid races but make up for this lack in their size and strength.

Originally they travelled in small families of two or three but in current times the race has dwindled so that it is rare to see more than one wandering in search of a partner to form a family. Some are even encountered enslaved by orcs, while more than capable of escape many such ogres accept the role as they are typically well fed and few orcs dare regularly beat ogre slaves in case the ogre decides enough is enough.

Trolls

Trolls are an exceedingly rare creature, similar to an Ogre yet far more brutish, in addition to great strength and toughness, Trolls are infamous for their ability to regenerate injury of almost any kind. Due to this it is impossible to intimidate or force a Troll into servitude as they fear nothing, even fire which is the one thing they cannot easily heal. When faced with fire, Trolls typically become further enraged.

Tattooed Elves

While only two groups of elves reside within the Heartlands, tales of travellers who deal with the bandits and other people of the Wildlands tell of elves who never joined those of the Heartlands. Elves who have fallen to corruption over the years practising dark arts such as necromancy, humanoid sacrifice or worse.

These elves are said to tattoo their faces with symbols representing blood, thorns or vicious looking blades. Their spellcasters also bear unknown runes.

If these tales are true, these savage tattooed make their homes in caves beneath the surface of the world coming up only to steal victims for their hidden rituals.

The Undead

Evil magic is thought to be the source of all undead in existence, however this magic was employed with such wild disregard during the War of Loss that, while rare, is it not unknown for individuals to arise as undead without the aide of necromancy. All undead are immune to poisons of all kinds, many are also immune or highly resistant to mental assault such as the spells of a Mentalist.

Skeletons

Undead are not uncommon in the Wildlands, where lone necromancers fleeing prosecution for vile deeds amongst their own kind try to spread further chaos. Of the undead, skeletons and zombies are the most common. Skeletons lack the minds of the creature they were created from, instead following orders although if left alone they turn savage and attack anyone who approaches. Skeletons are as quick and nimble as living people, but typically less durable to physical attack. They are however immune to mental assault and poisons.

Zombies

Zombies are similar to skeletons in creation and action, strangely the magic that causes them to initially decay also halts that decay at a point most beneficial for the defence of the zombie. As such zombies are more resilient to injury or harm than skeletons although the dead flesh adorning their bones also slows them. As with skeletons, zombies are considered by many to be vastly evil creatures despite being mindless. They are immune to poisons and mind affecting abilities.

Wights

Wights are similar to skeletons and zombies, but far more powerful. The skin of the creature they were before are drawn tight and drained of blood yet dark magic empowered their muscles meaning they are both fast and difficult to kill. The necromantic power within them means that Wights go savage faster than skeletons or zombies and are less inclined to obey orders if left alone for too long. Some uncontrolled wights have even been known to gain faint hints of intelligence from feasting on their victims, although this can enable them to talk they rarely have anything to say and are just as bloodthirsty as their mindless kin.

Vampires

Ancient legends tell of a transformation which turned mortal men into vastly powerful creatures whose power was so tied to darkness that sunlight seared their flesh. If this is true, the transformation has weakened over the years as Vampires are known to walk beneath the sky of day in order to better prey on wanderers. Their powers are highly varied, most common however are heightened strength, speed and innate magical powers over the minds of others. Vampires are at least as intelligent as living men, but as with Skeletons, Zombies and Wights, Vampires can succumb to savage blood-lust which causes the loss of all conscious thought. Unlike the lesser undead they are able to negate this by feeding upon the blood of living creatures. While some believe that those drained of life by Vampires will arise as one themselves, the truth is that the transformation takes time and is often only done as a gift from a Vampire to a worthy servant.

Lich

A lich is a skilled spellcaster who has transformed themselves into an undead being permanently in order to seek power and immortality. Only those who have dedicated their lives to the mastery of necromantic magic can hope to manage such a transformation. The powers or abilities gained from the transformation are unknown, besides the obvious immunity to poisons and physical pain.

Many downsides occur from such a transformation however, such as conventional healing methods no longer being able to aid or sustain your body. This together with the pressure of storing necromantic energies within the body cause it to rot.

Despite this, many still seek the dark knowledge of such immortality.

Wraiths

Wraiths, while weak, are a highly dangerous form of undead. As incorporeal entities they cannot interact with objects in the physical world and thus can float through walls and can only be harmed by magical attacks. Whilst they cannot touch or life physical objects, their touch interacts with living creatures typically rendering such creatures temporarily paralysed, if this contact is maintained it can even lead to death. There are various degrees of wraith, ranging from those barely capable of thought which endlessly seek to end life but flee from any form of magic to the highly intellectual kind which sometimes develop magical ability of their own.

As undead wraiths are immune to mind affecting abilities and poisons.

Ghosts

Ghosts are far more rare than Wraiths and occur when the spirit of someone who has died refuses to pass on from this world while also having the mental strength to hold their thoughts together without the necromantic energies taking over their minds.

Whatever caused the deceased to remain in this world as a ghost is usually the key for their existence, some ghosts remain solely to get revenge on their murderer, others have been known to simply wish to pass on something to others. In any case, the ghost will generally disappear if allowed to fulfil this desire.

Like Wraiths, Ghosts are incorporeal and immune to non-magical effects. They do not share a Wraiths thirst for living energy but are somehow bound to the area of their death, unable to travel more than a short distance from it. Most peculiarly it is believed that no necromancer has ever devised a spell or ritual to create a ghost.

Celestial Avatars

All deities have the power to create powerful incarnations of themselves to enter the material world to act as messengers or champions. The number and abilities of these avatars vary by god and is highly dependant on that deities power. By their nature as physically formed portions of godly power, as long as they exist the deity itself is weakened slightly. Such is the price of influencing the mortal world.

They are able to appear in almost any form, but the most seen is that of a winged man bearing the deities most favoured weapon. In tales and legends they have regularly appeared before great heroes and villains, although some local tales tell of them manifesting at other times for seemingly less vital tasks such as the defence of ancient temples or acts of peculiar magic.

It is believed that as deities watch each other, many others will know when one has manifested a Celestial Avatar in the world to influence mortals.

Demonic Entities

The original demonic entities were living beings created by the Primal Dark and then banished from Terris in the aftermath of its demise. Whether those that exist now are the same or whether they interbred or transformed over the years is unknown. They were all but unknown in the world until a great many were summoned to fight the First Ones during the War of Loss. It is difficult to tell whether those that trouble the world now have existed in Terris since that time or were summoned more recently by dark rituals. All manner of demonic entities exist today and each form is vastly different from the other. The only similarities they have is their thirst for magical energy and their inescapably evil nature which governs all of their actions.

Their powers are varied and many possess a fair knowledge of magic. The weakest demons such as imps tend to run in packs when not serving mortal servants of evil, while the most powerful of demons have powers beyond that of even the best archmages in the Heartlands and should be avoided at all costs.

Spirits of Nature

Its unsure when beings and spirits of nature first appeared, many say they were created in opposition of the first demonic entities but none can say for certain. The various spirits of the natural world are highly diverse and their thoughts and attitudes difficult to comprehend beyond the most simple outlook, often this is their desire to protect the natural regions of the world from danger. Many believe they were once peaceful but that the devastation caused during the War of Loss turned them against the humanoid people of Terris, in many cases this distrust seems evident even today. Spirits of Nature tend to be resistant to magic making them dangerous foes, their physical attributes and toughness vary wildly but some are known to be quite powerful. Those that are incorporeal are the most dangerous.

Elemental Beings

Elemental Beings are sometimes called forth from another planes of existence by the spirits of the natural world. The vast majority of Elemental Beings are almost as intelligent as the average man but thoroughly single minded and prone to disregarding information or facts not relevant to their desires, relying and trusting more on primal instinct. All such elementals are physically powerful and possess varying abilities, all notably more impressive than that of the animate tree creatures created by the spirits despite their similar mental abilities and outlooks.

The Sidhe

The Sidhe, also known as Fey to mortals, are an immortal race presumably from another plane of existence who came to Terris perhaps before even the Ancient Empire. Little is truly known about them as they are exceptionally capable of hiding from even a number of magical forms of detection.

They avoid settlements and dwell out of the way, where they are prone to mischief and trickery. It is said they have great powers in the way of disguise, enchantments and suchlike and their skill is such that no mortal can affect them with such.

They are often found near rare natural sites which they seem to treat as sacred ground and are often highly protective of it. How they reach these areas of where they are at other times is unknown and yet to be divined.

Dragons

The Dragons of legend were one of the first living beings to come into existence and the first to have intelligence and the ability to communicate. Many religious beliefs state that the deities of Terris blessed them with great power in order to help protect the other emerging living creatures. Unfortunately the same religious beliefs note that a great many Dragons were amongst those corrupted by the Primal Dark in his uprising becoming some of the most powerful beings of evil, beside the creatures which the Primal Dark had created entirely of his own.

Almost no trustworthy account of Dragons has been found, even in the legends of the Ancient Empire and the War of Loss. Many believe they died out.

The Drachen

During the Age of Darkness more than a century ago, a new race appeared on the shores of the world. They arrived by sailing vessel, quite damaged by the sea yet had somehow managed to survive the perilous journey from wherever they came.

This race of lizard men, believed to be related to the Dragons of this world because their skin is scaled and their bodies are infused with magic, were later divined to have come from another plane of existence, intent on invading and enslaving the people of the world. Its unknown who defeated them but by the time their ships appeared on the shores the species was in disarray and hateful of everyone.

Physically and intellectually on par with humans, the Drachen rely on weapons, armour and magic as many other races. One thing sets them aside in battle however, as upon their death the magic infused in them explodes outwards.

Constructs

As their name suggests, Constructs are beings built from inanimate materials and then animated through magical means. Typically they are made of wood or stone.

No construct is capable of intelligent thought and they exist purely to fulfil some function as desired by their creator. Often this is to protect something or someone.

Due to their nature they are immune to many forms of attack, such as all forms of poison and mind affecting abilities. Most are sturdy enough to resist physical force and resistant enough to survive a great amount of damage before collapsing.