## **The Parcels — Reference & Exposition (Expanded Canon)**

### **📍 Quick Reference: The Parcels**

* **Type:** Agrarian Communes / Semi-Autonomous Territories
* **Founding:** Gradual expansion of farmland and villages surrounding the Twisting City; coalesced through trade and Constabulary influence.
* **Headquarters:** No centralized authority; local leaders and stewards govern independently.
* **Operational Range:** Sprawling regions surrounding the Twisting City, extending into rural Halferth.
* **Governance:** Local councils, guildelders, and cooperatives manage disputes and resources. Constabulary Outguardings maintain overarching authority.
* **Economy:** Agriculture, tradecraft, localized bartering. High reliance on Twisting City for tools and technology.
* **Cultural Identity:** Cooperative, pragmatic, and resilient. Deeply tied to the land and community-oriented.
* **Technological Status:** Moderately advanced—primarily in agricultural techniques. Basic mechanization; reliance on the Twisting City for more complex tech.
* **Cultural Values:** Self-sufficiency, hospitality, shared labor, and oral tradition.

### **🌾 1. Geographical Overview**

The Parcels span the fertile lands surrounding the Twisting City, stretching outward in patchwork regions of farmland, forests, and sprawling homesteads. These lands are segmented into smaller territories—each known as a Parcel—managed by local stewards or families who maintain order and productivity. Unlike the dense iron sprawl of the City, the Parcels are open and sprawling, defined by dirt roads, wind-worn fences, and communal fields. Streams and irrigation lines crisscross the landscape, feeding the robust agricultural output that sustains much of Halferth.

The Parcels, like much of the High Circle, are cold and dark for most of the year. This harsh climate has led to hearty, resilient crops and livestock, often cultivated under chemical lamps to simulate sunlight during the colder months. Farming methods are deeply traditional, though some technological innovations have trickled in from the Twisting City—mostly outdated or heavily marked-up in price.

While many Parcels are self-governing, the influence of the Twisting City remains ever-present. Constabulary Outguardings dot the landscape, serving as watchtowers, trading posts, and occasional lawkeeping hubs. The further one travels from the City, the looser its grip becomes, with distant Parcels often functioning as near-autonomous communes, guided more by tradition and community than City ordinance.

### **🛡️ 2. Social Structure and Governance**

Governance within the Parcels is informal compared to the rigid hierarchy of the Twisting City. Each Parcel is managed by local councils, guildelders, or cooperatives who settle disputes, organize labor, and manage resources. Leadership is often hereditary, though challenges and community votes are not uncommon. Some regions elect their stewards through ritualized seasonal gatherings, while others follow long-standing family lines without question.

The Constabulary's presence is felt, though not always welcomed. Outguardings function as outposts of City law, issuing decrees, collecting taxes, and intervening when disputes surpass local control. These towers often house small squads of Constables who rotate shifts, rarely becoming permanent fixtures in any one place. Among the people, there is a quiet but pervasive resentment toward the Constabulary's reach, tempered by the understanding that their intervention sometimes quells greater chaos.

The influence of the Constabulary is stronger the closer one gets to Twisting City. In the outer reaches, local stewards may go months or even years without seeing a City constable, while those in the inner Parcels live under frequent watch. Despite this imbalance, the presence of Outguardings ensures that City law is never fully forgotten, even in the most distant corners.

### **💰 3. Economy and Trade**

The Parcels operate largely on a barter economy supplemented by seasonal trade with the Twisting City. Farmers, blacksmiths, carpenters, and various tradesfolk contribute to a cooperative system of goods exchange, with surplus often funneled into City markets. Though coin is accepted, many prefer direct barter—grain for tools, meat for textiles, labor for lodging.

Large-scale trade routes connect key settlements, allowing the movement of foodstuffs, crafted goods, and raw materials into City borders. In exchange, the Parcels receive manufactured goods, mechanized tools, and occasional technological augmentations. This exchange, though critical for Parcel survival, is heavily regulated by the City, with tariffs and inspections enforced by Constabulary checkpoints.

Parcelers are heavily dependent on the Twisting City for tools, chemicals, and technology. Trade is stifled intentionally, with the City setting price points that keep the Parcels functional but never prosperous. This monopoly ensures that while the Parcels supply the City with food and raw materials, they remain dependent and subservient, with little room for upward mobility.

### **🎭 4. Customs and Daily Life**

Life in the Parcels is one of cyclical rhythm. Seasons dictate labor, festivals mark harvests, and family histories are told through oral tradition. Villagers work communally—planting, harvesting, building, and celebrating together. Rituals of hospitality are sacred; a traveler is always offered food and shelter, but expected to contribute in return.

Storytelling is a prized art, with elders recounting tales of ancient floods, battles, and the rise of the Twisting City. Folktales of the H’Rask, Hillkin, and Netterlings are told as both caution and celebration. Music is practical, serving as work rhythm and ritual marker. Instruments are simple—flutes, drums, stringed lyres—crafted from local materials.

Despite a simpler life than their City counterparts, Parcel folk are anything but provincial. Knowledge of land, weather, and craft is passed generationally, with innovation emerging from necessity rather than ambition.

### **🏙️ 5. Relationship with the Twisting City**

The Parcels occupy a delicate, almost symbiotic relationship with the Twisting City. Providing the lion’s share of Halferth's agricultural output, they are indispensable to the City's continued growth. Yet, this dependency is tightly controlled—Parcel-grown food, raw materials, and labor are funneled into the City through highly regulated trade routes, where tariffs and Constabulary oversight are constant.

This dynamic breeds resentment. Parcelers often view the City as a distant overlord, bleeding them dry while returning only the bare minimum in tools, medicine, and mechanization. Yet, without the City’s technological support, life in the Parcels would be far grimmer.

### **🗺️ 6. Notable Parcels**

**Hobble**

A small, fortified market town situated on the edge of the Parcels, close to the outskirts of the Twisting City. Hobble is one of the last meaningful outposts before the roads begin to turn to mud. It serves as a trade hub for those moving between the Twisting City and the Parcels. Known for its stout buildings and thick chimneys, Hobble functions as both lookout and bottleneck, heavily trafficked by Traders and informally overseen by a local constable-order at the Outguarding there. It is also home to a long-standing school for blind and chronically ill children, operated with support from the townsfolk as well as private benefactors.

**Worms Port**

Sitting at the furthest edge of the Parcels, Worms Port is a brackish harbor town infamous for its pungent air and its production of Vingarum—a fermented delicacy both reviled and revered across Halferth. Its streets are winding and cramped, designed for secrecy as much as trade. Though it stands outside the City's direct control, the shadow of Twisting City influence is never far behind.

Its namesake is a reminder of its dangerous shores; colossal predatory worms known as Ormaormos burrow deep into the mudflats, emerging unpredictably to snatch cattle, boats, and even the occasional traveler. These massive, segmented creatures, colloquially referred to as "Worms," have infested the harbor since its founding, transforming what was once called "The Port of Flowers" into the grimly named Worms Port. Some say the beasts are attracted by the fermenting Vingarum itself, though the truth remains buried in the silt.