

# **Regents of the Undead Realm**

Lore Bible

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# States, Territories, and Water Bodies

## States

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- Albertine
  - Also known as: Albertine Oligarchy
- Buresea
- Confederacy of Lilah Isles
  - Also known as: Lilah Isles
- Hossian Empire
  - Also known as: Hoss
- Il'Hrar
  - Also known as: Theocracy of Il'Hrar
- Isolated Heights
  - Also known as: Isolated Heights Free City
- Republic of Mirrorfield
  - Also known as: Mirrorfield
- Ruffarian Union
  - Also known as: Ruffaria
- Tangleroth Tribal Territory
  - Also known as: Tangleroth
- The Commonwealth of Auroria
  - Also known as: Auroria
- The Conglomerate of Glacia
  - Also known as: Glacia
- The Crystal Provinces
- The Kingdom of Augustsent
  - Also known as: Augustsent
- The Holy State of Aetheria
  - Also known as: Aetheria
- The Shattered Combine
  - Also known as: Jebelia
- The Wonderhaven Realms
- Vulforian Empire
  - Also known as: Vulforia

## Territories

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- The Unblessed Domain
- The Soulless Dunefield
- The Undead Realm

## Water Bodies

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- Impervious Lake
- Perilous Channel
- The Abyssal Depth
- The Dreadbound Deeps
- The Evershifting Waters
- The Frigid Graveyard
- The Infinite Pool
- The Loveless Sea
- The Sea Eternal

## Context Exposition

### Uphaven

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Uphaven is the world that Regents takes place in.

Across its many dimensions, there is a dynamic that prevails in Uphaven, and shapes the lives of its citizens, unbeknownst to them. Creatures with conscience and awareness of self are bound in pairs, with a finite amount of happiness that they split between them. When one half is happy, the other half feels sadness, and vice versa. Pairs are not aware of this cosmic connection, and know not who their corresponding half is.

This emotional boundary was created by Persephone as a way to balance the need for artificial resource management on her behalf, as she thought that an entirely happy global population would easily use up all of Uphaven's natural resources. Additionally, she thought that it would help evolve the world's ambition and development in a sustainable manner, striking a stable equilibrium between those happy with what they have, and those who hunger for more.

This plan proved to be fruitful, and Uphaven's populace unknowingly made use of an artificial balancing system that limited their advancement just enough to keep them going, with competition at a healthy level and collaboration kept at a sustainable pace for the planet. But all of this changed when Persephone was betrayed by one of her trusted companions.

### The First Wave

As an archaic world reached a turning point when advanced technology was mysteriously found along with instructions of functioning and manufacture, a very fast industrial revolution was bound to happen.

Some interpreted the tech as a sign of higher beings to move forward as a whole, united world. Some took it as a way to profit, harvesting its knowledge and selling it to the highest bidders. Others took advantage of it, using its destructive potential to develop an army of unmatched power, unafraid to deploy cruel tactics to devastating effects.

Over time, as most countries unified to create a harmonious existence, a few strayed from the pack, exploring the limits of the found tech, with modifications to serve their own interests. Not all of them publicised this, as two kept up the façade of improving diplomatic relationships, and used this to plant strategic vantage points for the war to come.

From night to day, everything snapped. Nuclear warfare ensued not long after, and the damage did not stop at a regional level, effectively destroying Uphaven's environments and unbalancing vast portions of its landmass. All over the world, large patches of earth became unliveable, hostile, and at times even deadly.

Documentation of these events – that happened many centuries ago – was destroyed in the months that followed. Now that civilisation is rebuilt, stories of these times have become long-told tales enveloped in mystery and mythology, about what is now known as *The War That Nobody Won* or *The Day When The Gods Fell Asleep*.

## The Second Wave

Once a thriving planet with constant technological advances, most of Uphaven's previous civilizations have by now been extinguished, swept off the map by nuclear warfare and environmental changes.

What little population remained was left with a highly adverse and volatile environment, riddled with physical and mythical anomalies beyond their comprehension. It took decades and decades of famine and persistence to bring the farmlands back to a productive state, and even then, many regions were affected by side effects from the contaminated produce.

Throughout the recovery period, water levels rose once more, fully submerging several portions of the landmass. Some were affected immediately, with no chance to react; others took to the water with change in mind, and were able to adapt over time. The latter formed underwater civilizations, known to mostly prefer to stay out of sight, and to not have any known affiliations or trading arrangements with land states.

## Mythology

Every planet has its Creator. Uphaven's is Persephone. However, in fact, Uphaven is one of the very few worlds that is ruled by a Council of Gods. Creators – as the name indicates – are deities that create a world; their power to rule is very limited onwards from the point at which creatures are placed in the earth.

Persephone's approach was one of supervision only; confident in her creations, she formed a Council of lower deities and decided to let time play out on this new planet, vibrant with life and on its course to develop healthily over the ages. Unbeknownst to her, a minor deity known for mischief travelled to another planet, and collected advanced technology that was then dropped in Uphaven.

Much to Persephone's surprise, this unexpected event accelerated the empirical nature of the technological advancement process throughout the

globe, creating a group of armies with weapons they couldn't comprehend, but were ready to use. The eventual mass destruction of the world and its environment was a triggering moment for Persephone.

Seeing her creation fall apart at its own hands, Persephone promoted the group of lower deities to form the Council, a group of Gods that have powers to affect the world within certain dimensions, but no power to create or modify its essence.

Her last ever actions in Uphaven were to give nautical powers and abilities to those affected by the rising seas, and to give magical powers to those who would for sure become extinct without them. Her last known actions in the aethereal realm were to personify her divinity and disappear into a cosmically unreachable bubble with it, never to be heard of ever again, eternally hiding from what she had created.

## **The Undead Realm**

The Undead Realm is the courthouse of the Gods' favour in major verdicts. Whenever an important decision must be made regarding which side of an earthly conflict the Gods will stand in support, the two sides are represented by two teams of bellic masterminds in a battle. Each mastermind makes use of the Bonding Crystal to form a soul bond by selecting one from an array of available souls. Bonding Crystals are conceived in matching pairs, in such a way that the first crystal forges benevolent connections – the Bonded – , while the second originates its spiritual interdimensional ties by force – the Bound.

As mentioned, the Bonding Crystal is the entity that creates, controls, and maintains the soul bonds of a team. It is an otherworldly entity generated for the sole purpose of acting as a catalyst for a battle at the Undead Realm. It cannot be reproduced or exist in any material state, and is unbeknownst to any other being except the Gods and those involved in the conflict. Upon destruction, it severs the connection between its masterminds and their Bonds, effectively rendering their team unable to continue the fight.

Bonds can be made with souls that have volunteered in life, or have been chosen to participate by the deities. Those who pledge their essence to fight for eternity usually do so because of an important event in their lives; in this case, the corporeal rendition that will fight in the Undead Realm is a direct representation of the soul's owner at the time of oath. However, creatures can sometimes be chosen by the Council to enter the line-up of eligible souls. In these situations, they're portrayed as they were in an influential event in their lives that manifested or shaped their values.

The two groups of Bonds then clash in the Undead Realm, with each being provided with troops to help their combative efforts. After an epic battle

between the opposing factions, a victor emerges. The side who wins grants the Council's favour to their corresponding warring faction in Uphaven. Of course, divine support doesn't always mean a certain win, and there may even be councillors who decide to go against the collective resolution...

## **The Defective Dream Contraption**

The dream contraption is a dreamweaving instrument devised to independently produce dreams every time someone sleeps. First invented by Persephone and then untouched ever since, its multiple flaws hinder its main purpose, as most of the dreams it produces are nonsensical and forgotten during slumber. Besides those, the remaining dreams are mainly pleasant.

However, for all of these, there are creatures that try to turn the course of events into tragedy: the Sleepstalkers. There are many types of Sleepstalkers, but the most common are Changelings. Changelings are usually small or medium sized creatures able to shapeshift into the dreamer's fears, phobias, or visual representations of their deepest insecurities and doubts.

Other frequent visitors are Petrifiers. They typically report to a higher being of heinous features, and their purpose is to find the dreamer and cause sleep paralysis, which renders their psychological defences helpless against the unrelenting monster's presence. From here, it swiftly becomes a point of no return as the monster is free to do as it wishes. Sometimes it will just frighten the dreamer; other times, its actions may seep through to the corporeal world.

Many other forms of haunting exist in this dimension, with varying levels of power. Fortunately for the people of Uphaven, the Dreamweavers (a legion of interdimensional fighters) work tirelessly to protect those at sleep. Always on the move to shield anonymous strangers' repose, Dreamweavers can often be seen riding on many forms of empyrean transportation tailored to their preference, and are adept at using them as weapons in their skirmishes against the wicked.

Indeed, Uphaven's unconscious plane of existence is filled with invisible clashes between forces beyond earthly understanding. Unbeknownst to the people, they maintain the balance in their wake, and allow their lives to go by mostly unscathed. With the Dreamweavers' limited resources already spread thin, each successful malefic interaction between slumber and the mortal realm, the once-thick veil that splits the dimensions becomes more and more outworn; one day, it might very well give in.



## Western Hemisphere

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The western hemisphere is home to the vanguard of Uphaven's progress and technology. In a palpable divergence from the eastern mentality, the western search for power has driven its hunger for growth in all sectors, and it's not infrequent to find technological hubs within the western nations, whose sole purpose is the advancement of civilization through innovation, intentionally isolated from unrelated world events.

Apart from a couple of troublesome factions, there is an otherwise peaceful coexistence between all other countries in the west, provided everyone stays in their place, which is mostly the case. This fosters the fast growth of industry, at the cost of quality of life for some. Because of this, it is very common for occidental states to suffer from internal conflicts, deriving from the socioeconomic (un)sustainability of their accelerated progression for people unable – or unwilling – to endure the constant change.

Here, with the exception of Vulforia, tradition is at the bottom of the priority list, and generations far apart repeatedly clash over everything from principles and beliefs to trivial everyday tasks and habits. This part of the world is thus perpetually stuck juggling between the evolution of humankind and the well-being of its people: an impossible battle to win.



### **Albertine** *Oligarchy*

Very few places will value your possessions more than Albertine. Here, it's not even about who you are, it's about what you have. And, as you know, property changes all the time, and things your neighbours have can quickly become what you have, if you're smart about it.

Indeed, everything in Albertine can be bought, claimed, or stolen. What little authorities roam the street can be just as easily persuaded. However, a group of people trying to each make it on their own will never be anything but that. Most of the time, if you had a bird's eye view of an entire nation, the Albertine society would look like a back-and-forth chess game, where all the pieces are pawns, moving step by step, until they're eventually stuck or have to attack the nearest one to move on.

Under the cover of a seemingly free-for-all climb to the top, there's a limit for how high you can reach, based on a number of attributes. Three powerful aristocrats sit on their high chairs and watch the mindless chess game all day. With more money than they can count, they spare no expense to make their entertainment everlasting.

They've created a system to never allow themselves to fall into injury, and make use of such a system every day, thrilled and willing to launch everything from rigged lotteries to small-scale civil wars, just for amusement.

It's how they've avoided direct conflict with the Vulforian Empire for all these years, too. Excessively generous trading offers, mercenary work, slave trades, and even outright selling portions of land for profit; you name it, they've used it to get out of trouble.

What even the Albertines don't know is that Vulforians are secretly afraid to fight them. Because of its lacking governance and social security, Albertine's people will only ever have what's their own, and Vulforian forces are terrified that if they take that away, they'll have to confront an army of vengeance-bound loose cannons with nothing left to lose.

For all its ambition and desire, Albertine seems to be frozen in space and time, a money-driven snake biting its own tail in the eyes of everyone except its inhabitants. But the very few that see beyond this evolutionary façade may yet prove that when three snakes become fangless, they're barely worth their weight in gold.



## Auroria

### *Commonwealth*

Auroria: the once singular nation that saw its values being put in question. Neighbouring Adnew, Astralia, Cambria, and Lasia, the Aurorian people and their government were faced with the potential extinction of their allies. Vulforian invasions became more and more frequent, dissolving Astralia and threatening the annexation of the remaining territories.

The Commonwealth of Auroria was born. From a support-splitting decision, the creation of the Commonwealth as a form of unification was – from the government's point of view – the only way to deter the Vulforian Empire's advances. And indeed, skirmishes settled down as protection of the southern borders increased.

Modern Aurorian culture is a blend that resulted from a large migration from the united countries, where – despite the conflict's relief – people were uneasy by the near presence of such a powerful army that could strike at a moment's notice.

Although known for mostly keeping to themselves, Aurorians cherish hospitality and respect a core value commonly called "chosen family": a small group of friends that one trusts and loves deeply. Aurorian mentality places chosen family above bloodline, and it's not unusual to find people who live with friends and have changed their surname because they've distanced

themselves from blood relatives. This is respected by the given family if divergences are too significant to ignore, and no resentment is held on both parts.

The influx of new cultures and people into Auroria's mainland further bolstered this practice. Varied heritage, beliefs, traditions, and lifestyles disrupted what the natives thought to be deep-rooted ways of going about everyday activities. This combined knowledge launched the Commonwealth into an accelerated industrial revolution.

As industry moved forward at a rapid pace, many traditionalists felt forgotten in the race for mass automated production. Farmers, masons, carpenters, and blacksmiths: dozens upon dozens of career paths lagged behind in the intrinsic nature of their handcraft. As time passed, a feeling that wasn't there before started to rise: intolerance.

This portion of the population organised, and decided to keep their uprising hidden, as they prepare a revolution. Secret groups and societies were formed, and small segments of the Commonwealth were silently taken over, either through thoroughly planned attacks, or outright bribing.

Auroria is a place where hope arises, where safe haven is provided to those with evolution in mind. Yet, beneath the sheets, those left behind plot to jump ahead. They're preparing to take the country for their own, and should they fail, their backup plan may just require some assistance from a neighbour that's eager to help...



## **Glacia**

### *Conglomerate*

The people of Glacia hold the weight of the old world on their shoulders. Composed of mostly robots and androids, the migration to the northern territory of Glacia was part of a large-scale AI philosophical movement to take away massively destructive and harmful technology from the human population that survived the nuclear devastation.

The mission of their exodus was to preserve humanity in a controlled environment, where the exposure to violence was restrained from each human life's start. The massive group of robots adopted the newly orphaned and those voluntarily entrusted to them by parents seeking better paths for their children, and set off on their journey north.

They formed multiple settlements all over what is presently known as the Conglomerate of Glacia, where they destroyed the weapons and tech they could, buried and hid what they couldn't. They salvaged old technology and

developed new machinery to maintain sustainable habitats in the frigid environment they found themselves in.

And they covered their tracks as they arrived. The Glacials are not known to any other population in Uphaven, and it's the code-driven's responsibility to keep it that way.

The machine lifeforms implemented societal rules to make Glacial humans feel more at home. At any given settlement, everyone wears masks, as well as clothing that reveals no skin – or lack thereof. This helps with the very cold nature of the region, and preserves a sense of equality between all members. It becomes unknowable if someone is human or machine without an explicit disclosure of identity on their behalf.

Every voice is equally valid and heard within a fluid hierarchical structure that undergoes periodic elections. There is no governing or ruling body for the settlements as a whole, because all computer-based devices are connected, and humans are given access to the shared stream of information since childhood.

But, alas, humans aren't all the same, are they? Many are happy to stay and help build a greater tomorrow; others secretly bring home an extra slice of bread to pack a bag for a trip under the radar, tired of being unbeknownst to the unexplored world.

What these wanderlust-filled, travel bound inhabitants are intentionally kept from is that it's not uncommon for Glacia to have visits from outsiders, but there are only two possible outcomes for such occasions: either the visitors don't see anyone, or no one ever sees the visitors again.



## Lilah Isles

*Confederacy of Islands*

Before it was a group of small patches of land on sea, the Lilah Isles were a group of three large islands, each their own state. It is suspected that, even earlier, it was a unified landmass.

With the rising oceans, many Lilian cities and trading centres sunk. Only the reduced, detached territories that are seen today stayed liveable, so they kept their alliance and identity, as well as trading and business agreements.

Though most isles are self-sufficient and sustainable for basic day-to-day needs, trading for relics and different kinds of precious stones and materials is highly valued in their culture. Lilian calendars have multiple dates to celebrate the practice of business, with a special focus on trading instead of purchasing.

An additional huge factor in the maintenance of the islands' alliance was the frequent scouting from Vulforian ships.

The disconnection of Lilah's mainland – for all the devastation it has brought the Lilian people – has increased their ability to defend against Vulforian attacks.

All Lilian islands have a stronghold at their northernmost points. These strongholds are equipped with very powerful light signals that can be seen from any other island, and are used to frequently pass over messages according to a secret cypher defined ahead of time. Their main purpose, of course, is to allow any island to alert the others if it comes or may come under attack, so that a proper reaction is given in time.

Though far from perfect, this system has made the Lilah Isles virtually impenetrable for the Vulforian Empire, their main attacker.

Pirate attacks are also frequent, usually with greater success rates associated with smaller ship sizes. This also means that successful pirate attacks tend to be on a more reduced scale.

It has been quite some time since the Isles have been the target of Vulforian attacks, and this leaves the question in the populace's minds: is the conflict over, or have they not yet seen its beginning?



### **Tangleroth**

*Tribal Territory*

For an unorganised territory, Tangleroth's tribes are surprisingly connected between each other, and highly collaborative at that. Although they don't have any trading agreements in place and rarely meet in the wilderness, they're very friendly and supportive, especially in cases of outside invasion.

Tangleroth's priority is and always has been the preservation of its land as one of harmony between nature and humankind. Many attempted invasions have failed because the tribes unite for the defence of their shared values, and are not afraid to use magic powers in concealment. In these defensive efforts, the tribal side blends with the dense vegetation to keep themselves unseen.

Their main purpose is to eliminate trespassers in such a way that seems like the jungle was protecting itself. Their arrows are remnant of mere twigs, their traps are made to look natural, and their wild animals are trained to attack on command. The magic they employ is passed down through generations of experience defending their motherland, and it's been honed to blurrily integrate with the featureless foliage.

When Tangleroth's population first settled in, they were approached by surrounding inhabitants, curious about the arcane powers they'd seen the

exploring groups use to hunt and clear forest land. They revealed their abilities to the visitors, who later came by offering resources to the newly arrived. Distracted and ambushed, Tangleroth's people were massacred by troops hidden in the then unknown woodland.

Most of what little populace survived was captured and sold to slavery. The rest managed to escape into the deep jungle, never looking back. Over time, they organised and formed small tribes. Exhausted and devoid of any hope, in a dividing collective decision, they chose to stay hidden from general civilisation, rebuilding their own lives and relationships.

All of this was long ago, and the tribes' culture has since then cemented in seclusion from the outside world, and the preservation of their home as a place of community between people and the wilderness. It's become a big factor of their defensive strategies to use magical and physical force by any means and be ruthless within the realm of necessary. They do not wish to make invaders suffer, they wish them to die as quickly as possible, to help keep their existence private.

As mentioned, internal relations between the tribes are friendly and well-developed. Though not frequent, there have been cases of personal relationships between members of different tribes, that even sprouted children. These are celebrated, and, in very rare cases pertaining to significant members of a tribe, may result in the joining of the respective tribes. Such merges have been known to have happened only two times in the history of the tribal period, and from them arose two of the largest celebratory ceremonies, with the welcoming presence from every other tribe.

The early ideas of rebellion were snuffed out over the ages, from parents to children. But small embers of insurgence still live on inside the hearts and minds of some regions. As such, the recent increase in trespassing activity is bound to be a potential tipping point for those who dream with a free-ranging existence, and plan to globalise the wild.



## **Vulforia** *Empire*

Vulforia is a name to fear in any country, city or cave on this side of the planet. Infamous for its iron-fist government, persistent military forces, and uncaring civil system. The lines of socioeconomical structure are sharp and defined, and justice is skewed to the side it benefits more from.

You see, in Vulforia, knowledge is power, and power is a ladder. Those with the means to obtain knowledge climb above those they hold in the palm of their hand. The importance of knowledge is held from the ones at the

bottom of the ladder, which – along with the rest of the systems – contributes to their established fate to stay in their place.

One shortcut to wealth and status for those in dire need of them is private military. Indeed, there are mercenary groups aplenty throughout the whole empire. They're very frequently hired – to keep the empress's bloodthirst quenched –, and make good money off of it, too. These hired weapons become known in their hometowns as heroes that spread the might of the empire, and fill the pockets of their families in the process.

Essentially, their entry into higher classes is purchased, and although this attracts some side-eyes from those born into wealth, private military members are generally well accepted. Perhaps because the elite would rather be on their good side and make connections than to antagonise them. A favour for a favour, and the empire's upper society moves on.

Vulforians are a very proud people. They take great pleasure from the glory and vastness their homeland holds, and the rich history and cultural blend built along the many years of war and conquer. When a new state is taken, they speak with the local population to learn of their customs and traditions, before killing or enslaving them. They subjugate their enemies, but take deep pride in maintaining their heritage, as they believe this demonstrates how powerful their nation is.

The Empire's focus on internal production is its main source of income. With only a couple of trading agreements with foreign countries, the artificial economic growth through the expansion of industries such as agriculture and bellic item manufacture has proven to be worth the initial investment. Of course, most of these industries saw almost instant increases in development from the practice of slavery. This created something of an *ouroboros* system, where the forced profits depend on success at war and make up the main fuel for new skirmishes in foreign lands. Such a prosperous balance, but quite delicate, too.

It seems that the structural stability of this framework may be in peril, as many mercenary groups have been dealing with overdue payments for months at a time. Thoughts of revolt are regularly voiced out during their recent meetings. Should they turn into concrete plans, the recruitment of the oppressed – the backbone of the Vulforian money-making machine – is not out of the table, and the snake's head and tail may work together to destroy its whole body.

## The Sea Eternal

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The Sea Eternal is a path that leads where it wants, and not where you want to go. Once a medium-sized sea, the Sea Eternal has expanded with the gradual rise of sea levels in Uphaven and the demolition of entire chunks of the global landmass, eventually connecting with the Dreadbound Deepes at the latitudinal extremities of the world.

Here, the Gods and the Winds of Change are in control of navigation. While the Gods discuss how to proceed, vessels traversing the Sea Eternal are put in an infinite journey through featureless water. Some helpless souls keep it together; others lose their minds in the infinite vastness of the surrounding blue, wondering what fate may have in store for them.

While navigating through the Sea Eternal with an undefined destiny, the bewildering nature of the crossing winds and the nondescript array of waves of different colours blend perfectly with the lengthy daylight stretches, and time becomes a mystery. Alas, it's not frequent for vessels to return from expeditions deep into the Sea, but even less likely for them to reach the other side.



### **Aetheria** *Holy State*

Aetheria. Where souls rest for -near- eternity.

The skies are blue, and structures of gold and white paint the Aethereal island as the hub of natural and man-made beauty that it is. Not devoid of its internal issues, violence is kept out of the main island and there is no currency; people are given what they're given, and ask the Beyond for more if they wish. Though not immortal, its people have extended lifespans, with more durability and usually less prone to perish early in life, due to the inherent activities of the island.

Nonetheless, disputes and divergences may be settled with a duel on an isolated, smaller island, and audience attendance is frequent. In cases regarding more personal matters between two people, the battle is taken in private.

In duels, it is accepted that the losing party will be taken to the Afterlife for judgement and immediate entry into their appointed immortal sector. The winning part will continue about their life on the main island, and might need to place a request for any future duel they may choose to initiate.



Anyone attempting to purposefully leave will be placed on the Sea Eternal, with any memory of Aetheria wiped out, stripped of any clothing, and dispossessed of any and all powers, abilities or items obtained in Aetheria. There have only been four known cases of people escaping, and the population's opinion is split between considering them crazy, admiring their courage, and wondering what the outside world may have to offer.

Aetheria's problem lies not with those leaving, but with those trying to break in. Its divine invisibility is becoming more and more strained with each passing day, and tiny little fractures are already visible for those from the outside with the appropriate magical attunement, if they're not looking directly at them.



**Buresea**  
*Free City*

A curious place, truly. After a gravitational anomaly caused a cylindrical earth displacement on the other side of the planet, the surrounding waters descended. This formed an ocean pit with a deep bottom: the calm aquatic plane upon which Buresea rests to this day.

Gravity works differently here, and that's one of the very few things keeping the populace safe from the neighbouring sea creatures and monsters. The forces of nature vary wildly throughout the day, and Bureseans face quite diverse challenges every day.

The island is protected by the Border Guard, an armed force that keeps watch the encircling water walls at all times, fending off marine beasts and monstrosities that are able to break through. The peacefully reposed water on which Buresea floats actually holds a strong pull downwards; knowledge that the Border Guard uses to help fight or send off attackers.

The islanders' direct sunlight time is limited and there is practically no wind current, so they tend to have very peculiar housing and green areas. The land is home to some of the most beautiful species of vegetation and animals, many of which are bioluminescent and are, respectively, kept as decoration and pets, for their beauty and usefulness.

The people are known to be affectionate and passionate, with a big sense of community and sharing. There are frequent events throughout the year where the whole population gets together to celebrate everything from the start of a new year to a specific person's birthday.

One of the most anticipated celebration is the yearly Passing of the Trident ceremony, where retiring members of the Border Guard bestow their personal weapons onto a new generation of coming-of-age trainees, as a

symbolic passage of trust, strength, and the Guard's values.

It is considered a great honour in Buresean households for their youngsters to qualify for the Guard's training camp, and many children are brought up with this aspiration in mind.

The uneven gravity supports the island's safety, and when that fails, the Border Guard helps keep everything in line. But is there a larger force keeping danger at bay? And could it be that this force is beginning to fade?



## The Winds of Change

*Wind Zone*

The Winds of Change are the winds that flow above the Sea Eternal. Controlled by the Council of Gods, this wind zone was first created to banish the radiation-filled nuclear fallout towards the Unblessed Domain.

Since then, the Winds of Change were repurposed to help the Sea Eternal in its everlasting effort to avoid connection between the Western and Eastern hemispheres. More specifically, though, this wind zone is meant to forbid unauthorised access to Aetheria. Only vessels allowed by the Gods to pass through may reach Aetheria, and it's the responsibility of the Winds of Change to assure that.

Until further notice, the Winds do the Council's bidding. But were a stray God to use them with their own interests in mind, this delicate house of cards could fall apart with a soft breeze, swiftly opening a path to a celestial dimension for mere mortals.

## Eastern Hemisphere

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Uphaven's eastern hemisphere actively refuses to let itself fit a descriptive box, such is its richness in cultural diversity and extremely unique social and geopolitical dynamics. With abundant natural and artificial anomalies, its vast territory contains some of the world's most intriguing creatures ever seen, and its people are the epitome of respect for societal heritage (and, sometimes, the refusal of improvement because of it).

Diplomatic relationships are somewhere between war and cold, strictly commercial alliances at any given time, with few and far apart exceptions that keep friendly international ties. Throughout the post-catastrophe decades, the focus on adaptation and survival in the new environmental circumstances hindered hospitable interactions between foreign populations.

Despite its multiplicity of ethnic identities, with no clear goal in common and conflict always in mind, the eastern nations often seem doomed to repeat their tragic history, burdened with the hostility of their ancestors, for reasons not even remembered these days.



### **Augustsent** *Kingdom*

The Kingdom of Augustsent is famous for wildlife presence and respective preservation, and through interspecies connections and cooperative relations between humans and animals, its people have fostered friendly sustenance systems. In addition, logistical networks were created, for purposes such as transportation, mailing services and communal security programs.

Though their alliance with the Ruffarian Union has kept both sides strong and safe from Hossian dry land invasions, Augustsent naval forces are effectively null. Their military power lies in vast knowledge of their own terrain, which leaves them vulnerable from sea. There is a small group of marine creatures that help keep the immediate shoreline safe, but the weight of their proximity is often cut short by the occupying empire's large ships.

Due to the lack of reliable protection from seaborne attacks, the Augustsent have settled inland, avoiding the seaside exposure as much as necessary. As such, their survivability activities are composed mainly of hunting and foraging, and their diet adapted as well.

Their culture is based upon worshipping the arid habitats they call 'home'. With frequent gatherings, ceremonies and performances aimed at the Gods of nature, they treasure water above all else, and that plays a central part

in the routine of the average citizen. The *Echeveria 'Lola'* is a venerated plant, and in popular belief, is considered a natural deity and represents the perseverance necessary for responsible water consumption.

At its best, Augustsent is the prime prototype for harmonious ways of life, where animals are integrated in civilized society. At its worst, feral instincts and mentalities arise, and divergences cause brute force to become the only valued attribute. Indeed, an aggressive change in its power dynamics may be on the near horizon for this otherwise peaceful land, and every species may soon need to choose which side they're on.



## **Hoss** *Empire*

Ah, the Hossian Empire. Such a rich history, filled with misery and revenge. Once a wide nation riddled with suffering and oppression, a group of slaves planned an uprising, and “brought down flames from the skies and brought up tides from the oceans”, as the old Hossian books recall.

Dispossessed of their magic, the group of slaves spent many years of their lives trying to get back the power that was theirs. When one of the insurgents killed the mayor of the town they were held in, the stolen power was returned to her and her alone; she became the most powerful free soul in Hoss. She distributed some of this power to the people, claiming it was equally distributed and everyone was at the same level. But in truth, she kept most of the might to herself, saving it for an occasion in which something would depend on her.

They overtook those that mistreated them for so long, and – when nothing was left standing – moved on to the closest town to do the same. Throughout the following months, they took towns and isolated villages by storm, with not even enough time for the invaded to send an alert to the government. Their group became stronger and larger, as their enemy's became weaker and spread thin. By the time a year had passed, they had liberated most of the country, and proceeded to the capital. They had mimicked regular communication with the king for the past months, so their visit was unannounced, unwelcome and unexpected.

To put it mildly, it swiftly became a slaughter. As the free souls fought to the best of their magical and physical abilities, they were no match for the royal army in preparation and training. Starting to see her life's plan go sideways, the rebel leader unleashed her concealed potential, with consequences that even she didn't understand.

Her sight of friend and foe was blurred, and as she mowed down everything in her path towards the throne, her allies began to question her

leadership. She fired out slivers of black magic, instantly killing the royal family in one sudden motion. With the battle won almost by her hand alone, she emerged from the castle's doors, with the crown on her head.

The following decades brought periods of fear and hunger, contrasted with moments of wealth and victory. What started as a goal to liberate the people became a ploy to invade the ones around. The lack of any governmental virtue was often overshadowed by the territory and wealth taken by force, creating the massive span of land that now makes up the Hossian Empire. The small percentage of defenders that lived through the horrors of a Hossian invasion were put into work camps, with horrid conditions and little to no payment.

Nowadays, Hossians live an era of glory and riches. Known for enjoying life to the fullest, the Empire's populace is not a stranger to the finest things this side of the world has to offer. With cities filled with pleasures and vices, a brutally simple society lies underneath: a society that cherishes wealth and whose fulfilment depends on the constant satisfaction of one's desires. Liquor and parties, business and scamming; nothing can't be found in Hoss... For the right price, of course.

The first empress died a while back, and her power was passed to her son, who currently leads the nation. Is this young emperor ready to deal with those who work from the shadows, dreaming to do one day what his own mother did many years ago?



## Il'Hrar

*Theocracy*

The only known nation to still use Ancient tongues as secondary languages, Il'Hrar – *The Horizon* – is a place where faith runs in the blood of the people, where personal sacrifices are a natural part of a lifestyle of devotion. Here, parents offer a perceptive sense from their young to the Gods; some sacrifice their child's vision, others hearing, others taste, balance, touch, and so forth.

Children born with impaired proprioception are perceived as gifts from the Gods, and are usually predestined from birth to lead a life of spiritual guidance and pastoral pursuits. With the importance of clergy and its vital contribution to government, this attribution instantly places people with proprioceptive deficits on their way to play meaningful roles in shaping the state's history and culture.

Hrarian bellic mentality lies upon the acquisition of land through conflict-free means, such as occupation of free regions or the purchase of territory, with the state's bottomless treasury. They respect refusal to sell, and

are usually very respectful of their neighbouring nations, so as to maintain their lucrative trading agreements.

Defensively, Hrar's domain is protected by powerful magic shields that, although not impenetrable, pose such a sizeable barrier that any potential invaders consider that the trouble outweighs the benefits. There are not many records of nations invading Il'Hrar, but the ones that do show that the invaders were massacred by automated defences, and finished off by the mighty army. In addition, of course, most of the Hrarian land is adjacent to the Wonderhaven Realms, who are fighting their own battles.

Hrrarians worship daily with the hope of obtaining passage to Aetheria, the promised land. Hrarian funerals typically happen at shore, and the casket is laid upon the Eternal Sea along with a trinket or relic to serve as an admission token to enter the holy island. In the deceased person's hands, a letter is placed. This letter is first written by parents at conception, and is rewritten and improved by the progeny as they grow and throughout their life. It is a testament of good will and an expression of devotion to the Gods.

Although the most significant portion of the Hrarian population live a regular life, there are many groups that dedicate their lives to reverence. From monks and priests to more intense forms of adoration, the Afterlife is their main focus. Some underground societies are even intent on trying to use magic to open the path to Aetheria themselves.

The Gods give; the Gods take; the Gods jest. The people's efforts tend to be meaningless as their motivations are polluted, anyway. But when magic scratches the surface of what could become an interdimensional catastrophe, they may very well find themselves forced to step in.



### **Mirrorfield** *Republic*

Widely recognized for its motionless, reflective lakes and fjords, the Republic of Mirrorfield is a place of great inspiration and calmness. Its population is commonly contemplative and tend to keep to themselves. Its culture revolves around self-improvement through meditative daydreaming, and agronomy is a big part of daily life.

As one of the lesser affected lands after the nuclear contamination of global soil, the production and exportation of food has played a vital part in the country's livelihood since many years ago. Their education and engineering focus on agricultural branches, with philosophy, mental health and environmental responsibility as important foundations of the sustainable systems that rule the Mirrorfield economy.

Having its borders defined with a large margin of open terrain before population centres, Mirrorfield has managed to stay away from Hossian exploration and scouting expeditions. This strategy is supplemented by preparing for an imminent invasion, while keeping a patient attitude towards opposing nations roaming the empty territory. Mirrorfolk are known for their control under pressure, and this tactical approach has kept them hidden from their foes for a long time.

However, a lack of direct conflict doesn't mean unawareness, and there are those who lurk between the trees and hide inside the bushes, waiting for an opportunity to disturb Mirrorfield's peaceful waters at just the right time.



### **Ruffaria** *Union*

The Ruffarian Union carries itself as a place of justice, fairness, and equality. It has the utmost respect and benefits for those within the lines of the law, and its punishments for crime are applied with swiftness and determination.

Long ago, the countries that compose modern-day Ruffarian Union were almost equivalent to free territories, with underdeveloped civil protection systems, including legal organisation. Their populations lived in terror of gangs, posses and outlaws, and faith in law enforcement was through the floor. From there, a large group of military veterans revolted against their government, and took over. Their first priority was to fight off Hossian invasions from sea, and then start a complete overhaul of the constitutional system.

The way their plan was executed provided prompt closure for the thousands of families affected by the ongoing war and the life of fear up until then. Needless to say, their form of leading became very popular and, as word spread quickly, various groups elsewhere did the same, and soon enough, the Ruffarian Union came to life.

Curiously, one of Ruffaria's main income activities is prisoner importing. There are many institutional facilities throughout the less-populated areas of their territory, and dangerous or high-importance prisoners are held in them. Ruffarian rules dictate that serious crimes – such as premeditated murder, robbery, aggravated assault, among others – are punished with death almost always, so these secure prisons are mostly filled with foreign prisoners.

The formation of guards and soldiers is a very controlled process in the Ruffarian Union, and it's taken as a moment of distinction to have the government bestow that trust upon someone. Although there is no defined ceremony to celebrate becoming a guard or soldier, they are cherished by the

general population, and are often offered free meals at restaurants, free items in marketplaces, and many more benefits.

But the outlaw spirit is alive and well in rare parts of the Union, and rumours are that gangs aplenty are planning missions across the land, undercover as prison guards. Should they fail, they'll soon certainly see their last sunrise, but should they succeed, they may expose the many underlying interests that the limits of justice are guided by.



### **The Crystal Provinces**

*United Provinces*

The Crystal Provinces are a group of united provinces spared from brutal invasion by the Hossian Empire because of their extraction of crystals and precious materials from the dangerous cliffs of the Northeastern coastline.

The people of the Crystal Provinces traditionally wear thick scarves around their throats, as their frail necks are very easily broken or severed, and extracting materials from caves embedded into cliffs is a gruelling task. It often involves being strung by the waist from a rope and descended onto the precipices, and brought back up when a backpack has been filled. Knowing that their throats would give when presented with a force similar to a hard kick, each extraction trip is a situation of life and death.

Hossians see this as not only a valuable way to obtain rare minerals and artifacts without effort, but also as a source of entertainment. The idea of an enemy faction being kept alive by pity and having to risk their lives daily for a submissive task is a strategy used by the emperor as a power move, to show the Hossian populace that the empire's might is grand enough to even with opposing forces.

Folks from the Provinces are used to roll around in the dirt. They're used to being pushed down and kept in the dark. But from the dark, they're not seen planning. And from the dirt, they may just rise above and use the tools they know to burst free of the pressing fist.



### **The Shattered Combine**

*Combine of Separated Provinces*

Previously the nation of Jebelia, the Shattered Combine was the resulting territory of the devastation caused by the exodus of a mass of undead coming from the Unblessed Domain. Taking down whatever was on their way, the soulless mob took over most of the land, forming a man-made desert that very few dare to step foot on: the Undead Dunefield.



Jebelians barricaded each border with the Undead Dunefield with thick 20-meter-high fences, as well as the train lines and isolated stations they gradually built over time. Patrols guard every province border with the enclosing desert, and frequently have to intervene.

The lack of a defined structure and political hierarchy following the separation pushed the proper reinforcement of the barriers more and more into the background, instead prioritising solutions for the generalised lack of provisions and the need to maintain the trading agreements and routes that preserve their resources since before the land's severance.

Because of the adverse maritime conditions surrounding it, the Combine's provinces were then connected by train lines that run through the disconnected towns, carrying food and supplies from one end to the others. These trains pass through long, narrow fenced corridors that protect them from the undead populace. There are occasional loose stations that require heavy protection, but that are necessary for long journey maintenance. This railroad network crosses the country with crucial provisions for eel harvesting, Jebelia's main income source in the form of energy commerce.

The Combine lives under an effectively permanent plane of grey clouds, product of toxic winds that passed soon after the formation of the Unblessed Domain. Though the toxicity filtered away over time, the perpetually covered sky prevailed, and people had to adapt to this newfound lack of direct sunlight. Combine cities are often crammed conglomerates of tall buildings and people, with little to no green areas, and a big focus on societal productivity at the detriment of art and creativity.

Throughout the post-detachment era, the shortage of civil protection funding led to many regions of the Combine becoming corrupt, governed by gangs and factions, shanty towns... Ultimately, everything that could go wrong did, and everything that couldn't go wrong was barely left standing.

Factions rule the cities, fishermen rule the ports, and railroad officers rule the land no one wants to set foot in; but all of them may soon discover the consequences of doing business without first securing your own front door.



### **The Unblessed Domain**

*Highly dangerous and toxic uncharted wasteland*

After the Winds of Change banished the nuclear toxic clouds onto a mostly vacant desert area, the small population scattered around the land fell victim to an increase in radiation, which came to change their lives forever.

Amidst those who didn't survive and those who became ill or weakened by the environmental changes, there were many who overcame body changes

and, after much adaptation, made them beneficial to the everyday life of the various small groups. In addition to people, the animals went through physiological alterations, unbalancing the ecosystem and exacerbating the survival of the fittest.

The highly noxious and lawless nature of the desert has kept it uncharted and away from prying neighbouring eyes. The Unblessed appreciate their privacy, even more so after the transformation, and are usually off the grid except when hunting.

There are those who perished and those who thrived with the mutations. But the desert is wide and deep, with much to be discovered, and the kings at the top of the food chain may yet find out they're nothing but ants for what they've helped keep secret for all these years.



### **The Undead Dunefield**

*Free Territory*

The Undead Dunefield, previously part of Jebelia, is an abandoned, deserted area in which resides a massive population of undead. Its borders with the Shattered Combine are barricaded, and a railroad network runs through its land with fenced tracks and loose stations.

The undead mob moved into the desert as part of an exodus from the north part of present-day Unblessed Domain. After a group of large Unblessed settlements were affected by a plague, they devoured the nearby lifeforms, unscathed by the toxic atmosphere that only accelerated the decay of their skin and clothes.

Characterised by their slow movement, low intelligence and tendency to move in large crowds, the soulless invaders took over most of the country through the sheer power of their numbers, forcing the sparse Jebelian people to flee towards coastal towns, which quickly became densely populated urban centres.

Struggles to maintain order and economic stability have kept the Dunefield as a second thought in the Combine's politicians' minds, though it occupies a large portion of the population's concerns. Tape and nails don't hold forever, and the persistence of the hungry horde may just prove the citizens right.



### **The Wonderhaven Realms**

*Group of States, with very peculiar dynamics between them*

The Wonderhaven Realms are a weird place to be. All nations are at war at all times, and at the beginning of each month, each nation's population migrates and occupies the neighbouring nation's territory, in clockwise direction. During this short mass migration, there is no combat, and, in fact, any encounter with another group is highly celebrated, often resulting in brief festivities between the two sides.

After this relocation period, the conflict resumes. It is non-verbally agreed that governments and people will not leave the previous territory in deteriorated conditions, and will instead strive to preserve or improve them. Despite their cultural differences, it is globally recognised that nature and the lands and seas should not suffer for the disparities of the human race.

Bookheads; Cardheads; Chessheads; Clockheads; Cubeheads; Eggheads; Lampheads; Mirrorheads; Sphereheads; Teeveeheads.

There are countless warring nations in the Wonderhaven Realms. From them, mixed-race offspring – the likes of Coinheads and Coneheads – are frowned upon not for being different, but for the associated treason of their conception. In the rare cases where children come from parents of opposing factions, the parents face legal punishment according to their nation's laws, and the child is either imprisoned or banished, becoming a Nameless Wanderer.

Known for instability and bizarreness, the Wonderhaven Realms are home to some of the most interesting phenomena that Uphaven has to offer. It's not uncommon to have rains of semen and manure sent from the Beyond to bless a land with prosperity and fertility, and sporadic alien ship passages give colour to the otherwise faded landscape, where tones of sepia and pastel flow through the atmosphere, and spread through the land.

Stadiums filled with tomato crops and train tracks if you need to go nowhere fast and on foot, as those warm metal bars have never seen the rolling majesty of a moving train. In Wonderhaven, you're easily found if you're lost on purpose, and never seen again if you unintentionally wander off course.

It is indeed a place of beauty, albeit quite a bit mysterious.

There is virtue in moving on... Clockwise, that is. You live and you learn, and your future will be brighter. Some prefer to live the present, though, and might just break the delicate balance of this strange culture by staying in one place.



### **Tranquil Gardens**

*Holy Province*

Believed by many to be a fairy tale, the story of Tranquil Gardens is one that spans many generations in the Wonderhaven mythos. It is believed that

the Tranquil Gardens hold the ideal way of life: a constantly perfect weather, a peaceful and meaningful existence, protection from the great darkness... In general, a lack of longing for anything at all.

Each nation's folklore definition of each of these is immensely varied ways, however. The Sphereheads define the perfect weather as sunny with eight mid-sized clouds in the sky, while the Teeveeheads would live an eternity with periodic rains of semen and manure, that would keep the crops forevermore healthy and the people fertile. Cubeheads find a sense of purpose in celebrating community; Cardheads tend to keep to themselves, and value their art and craft as a way of life.

Some definitions of this paradise don't even mention the Coneheads, the Coinheads, the Octaheads... As luck would have it, not everyone would be welcome in this promised land, according to some beliefs.

But something they all have in common is the faith that one true wish will be granted to the ones who make it. Of course, some take this as a hope that there will someday be peace in the Realms; others ponder the power that such a wish could bring.

## The Dreadbound Deeps

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The Dreadbound Deeps are home to some of Uphaven's most dangerous and powerful sea creatures. With regions of viscous, oil-like black water where electric eels reside, and tumultuous foggy waters where the Abyssal Maw lurks, those who venture into the deep ocean rarely make it back to land.

It's a place where not even the Gods have a say, and whoever is insane enough to leave shore with the bottomless ocean in mind does so without any help or hindrance from fate itself, and must rely on the best of their abilities to survive the extremely hostile aquatic environment they'll face. It is not known of anyone that has successfully traversed the Dreadbound Deeps across the hemispheres, nor of anyone that made it back after trying to no avail.



### Isolated Heights

*Free City*

The Isolated Heights were formed when a gravitational anomaly occurred, causing a small patch of land at the bottom of the sea to rise above. The internal pressure built inside the risen rock causes ocean water to flow upwards, creating what is essentially a permanent fountain, that serves as the city's water supply.

As water flows inside the altered land, it's filtered by the porous sedimentary rock, as well as subjected to variations in temperature that cause cycles of evaporation and condensation, and form pockets of water that are then merged into the main stream. When it comes out at the top, it is once more filtered by plants and microorganisms placed by the Heights' population, that rid the water of contaminants.

The ocean water suction doesn't go unnoticed, though. In the Dreadbound Deeps, nothing is safe, and the Heights' inhabitants frequently have to halt their water harvest to lay low, lest they attract the attention of surrounding sea monsters and creatures.

But these periods of not collecting water can extend anywhere from hours to days, weeks, and even months: while dangerous creatures are nearby, the Heights tend not to harvest. This means that the plants and microorganisms are kept from feeding, and may perish in the process.

Almost invariably far from any diplomatic issues, Isolated Heights has its own battles with the environment itself, and one that can leave them in very precarious situations in the blink of an eye.