

## The Starfall:



**H**umankind had lived and prospered for thousands of years, kingdoms and empires rose and fell as the wheels of time turned inexorably towards the future. But the wheel was shattered and the world remade, a massive rock fell through the sky and burned millions as it crashed. The shockwave and earthquakes that spread over much of the world flattened entire forests, leveled whole cities and razed castles, temples and villages.

Mankind endured, from the ashes and ruins rose the survivors who try to eke a living in a broken world. As they searched for places where they could start anew, they discovered the full extent to which their world had changed. The Starfall brought the blight, a dust released from the rock when it crashed; where it fell, it remade the land into a grotesque landscape of fleshy growths and somber skies, a landscape prowled by monstrous creatures with human faces.



### The Blighted Lands.

Once inhabited by humans with long and proud histories the blighted lands are now a place of ruins and roaming monstrosities. Only the Star-spawn prosper in these regions of grey skies where the ash clouds forever block the sunlight. Few venture into these forsaken lands willingly and fewer still return alive, those that do tell tales of corpses fused together and given life anew, of stalking creatures laden with tendrils and tentacles and of trees made of flesh that bear eyes instead of fruits.

The land is plagued with plants made of flesh and bone; they grow from the rotting soil as tentacles and limbs. What sustains these growths is unknown; they resemble plants only in form and upon dissection reveal blood, organs and bones. Many of the blighted creatures consume these fleshy constructs to sustain themselves, and some claim that the horrific fruits from this flesh plants contain powerful alchemical properties.

Animals that were changed by the blight tend to retain their general form and behavior. They become stronger

and more resilient and aggressive. Physically they experience grotesque changes, with extra limbs that serve no apparent purpose and bony protrusions that end in edges sharp as razors.

Humans affected by the blight tend to undergo the most dramatic and hideous changes. Their bodies mutate in horrendous ways and the appearance of tentacles and tendrils is common. Limbs grow disproportionately larger compared with the rest of the body and often end in vicious claws. Some of the creatures seem to be amalgamations of various bodies fused together and others are so mutated as to barely appear human.

Most humans changed by the blight lose their sanity and their capacity to reason; but some are blessed with inhuman powers and heightened intellects; these creatures are called the Star-spawns, and they have their own goals and motivations.



### The Star-spawn.

Humans that are transformed by the blight and retain their intelligence and capacity to communicate are often referred to as a Star-spawn, these beings often exhibit powers far beyond those of their lesser peers and usually of a mystical or arcane nature.

Star-spawns tend to have their own bizarre agendas and plans, some like the warlocks are arcane masters who incessantly seek new knowledge to increase their powers. Others become the object of human cults that worship them as divine entities and bestow dark gifts upon their most devoted followers. Some claim to be prophets of a god that fell from the void and slumbers deep beneath the earth.

The goals and obsessions of the Star-spawns are as varied and bizarre as the many tentacles and tendrils that grow from their bodies. Star-spawns rarely have any humanity left and they have very little regard for human life; often killing, consuming or enslaving any person they come across.

## A short history of the settled lands of the world:



### The Great Journey.

Survivors roamed the burned landscapes and blighted lands after the Starfall, many succumbed to starvation, disease, and the monsters of the blight. Eventually word spread that small pockets of land untouched and untainted by the Starfall remained. A great diaspora ensued and survivors began an arduous journey to reach these havens amidst a dying and changing land. Many died in the journeys and some chose to stay behind rather than face the horrors of the blight.

The journey was arduous and difficult, some walked for weeks, others for months, but all faced horrors and deprivations along the way. Most of the stories and beliefs of the new religions come from the many heroic deeds performed during this period, of the strange and mysterious things witnessed in the blight lands and of the unspeakable depths that men can fall when desperate and hungry.



### The Settlements.

As soon as the first survivors reached the untainted lands, they began to settle and colonize. Numerous settlements were stablished and people began to claim as much land as they could work and farm. The first years were difficult, people formed small communities and new traditions and cultures began to emerge.

In the harsh realities of this new world, people sought comfort in spirituality and communion. New beliefs that revolved around the rebirth of the world and on the hardships of the great journey appeared among the settlers. Some built temples and altars; others built great rune stones commemorating events and heroes and some chose to commune with nature so that the land might heal their weakened spirits.

As time passed and more people arrived they begun to settle closer and closer to the edges of the blight, eventually the creatures that inhabited there began to enter the untainted lands searching for prey and people to satisfy their twisted needs.



### The time of the Warlords.

With nowhere else to go and unwilling to face the horrors of the great journey again, most people were determined to fight and drive the encroaching blight spawns from the settled lands. Warlords and chiefs arose from among those who took up arms; they led their warriors against the horrors from the blighted wastes that surrounded their new homelands.

Eventually most lands managed to drive out the denizens of the blight, but leaders were needed to organize, pay and supply the standing armies required to patrol and defend the borders. The men who fought and those who led them as warlords and chiefs rose to a place of prominence and were natural choices for the position of leadership. In some places, the warriors took power for themselves. In others, they were given this power in exchange for protection.

In some lands, kings were crowned and their soldiers and advisors made knights and lords. In others, there were chiefs or jarls for each settlement and a high king elected above them. Sometimes it was the wealthy who had equipped and payed the soldiers and they formed councils of nobles or patricians who ruled with cold and detached efficiency. Some lands have not experienced a crisis that has forced them to form armies and governments and they still live in relatively isolated and independent settlements. And in a few places humans worship the Star-Spawns who now lord over them as rulers and gods of horror and misery.

## The Lands Beneath The Korrin River





## The Settled Lands



The Settled Lands is the region that lies directly beneath the Korrin River and is populated by thousands of people who live in small settlements. These lands are within the domains of the city of Solasta and all settlers must pay taxes to the patricians who rule there. The region was densely forested before the arrival of the settlers, but much of the old forest has been cleared to make space for agriculture and for wood and timber for construction.



### Communities and Culture:

Most people near the Korrin live in settlements that comprise of two or three longhouses where several related families dwell. Some have dedicated buildings such as storage houses, barns, granaries and small religious temples or altars. Structures are built with stone foundations and walls made of wood, peat, stone, sod turf or a combination of these materials.

Settlements are surrounded by fertile land in which they cultivate two or three different crops such as wheat, barley, potatoes, cabbages, carrots, sugarbeets, corn and others that they use for their own consumption and for trading at the nearest enclave. They usually have small gardens where families cultivate fruits and vegetables such as apples, lemons, onions, tomatoes and lettuces that they use for their own cooking.

Settlers keep a wide variety of domestic animals and considerable portions of land are devoted for pasturing and grazing. Chicken and pigs are the most common livestock bred for slaughter, cows and goats are not uncommon and their number depends mostly on the amount of land available. Most settlements have at least one horse for transportation and field work and only the most prosperous can afford their own oxen and

plow, often multiple settlements pool their resources to acquire and share one.

The people living in a settlement are usually all related by blood, the daughters leave when they marry and the sons bring their wives to start a new family, it is not uncommon that two or more families share the same longhouse. When there is not enough land to support more families the youngest males are encouraged to go to the enclaves where they may find work in one of the nearby manorial farms or leave for the new settlements in Hadrans Forest or the Galdan Wilds.

According to the laws of Solasta all produce from a farm that is not to be consumed by its inhabitants must be traded at an enclave where the appropriate taxes are levied. Trading outside of the enclave is forbidden and those caught doing so are put to death or sold-off into slavery at the great bazaar in Solasta. Few people choose to risk their life or their freedom and most take their produce to the enclave's market. There they can mill their wheat, barley and corn into flour; trade crops and animal produce for tools, salt, spices and a wide variety of goods manufactured at the workshops in Solasta. Most settlers grudgingly accept the high taxes in exchange for the protection and stability that Solasta has brought to their lives.

Large settlements are usually protected with surrounding stockades, wooden palisades or earthen walls. These walls are used to deter raiders and poachers, keep predators away from livestock and defend from creatures that stray too far from the wastes. All settlers have tools such as axes, sickles, tridents and hunting bows that can be used as effective weapons if the need ever arises. Communities that are within the Settled Lands rarely have to deal with anything more than common thieves and small predators since the Solastan Guard patrols the borders for raiders and Star-Spawn.



### Enclaves and Taxes:

The city of Solasta levies taxes on all trade that occurs within the settled lands, the taxes take the form of a percentage of the goods traded. These goods are then transported to the city where they are used as raw materials for the workshops or sold at the great bazaar to the local population and to the foreign merchants that sail to the city. Eventually all the proceeds from the taxes end up in the coffers of the patricians who rule Solasta.

To ensure that settlers pay their taxes the city has established strict laws and harsh punishments and has built many Solastan enclaves throughout the land. Enclaves are walled market towns where people from nearby settlements bring their produce to be processed at the mills owned by the city or to sell them at the market square. Stores and services such as herbalists, taverns, inns, butchers, blacksmiths, and carpenters are available for the local population, passing travelers and travelling merchants.

Enclaves are administered by a prefect, an official appointed by the city who is responsible for collecting taxes and maintaining order within the enclave and in the nearby communities. Prefects will hunt anyone who does not pay the appropriate taxes or attempts to trade outside the enclave, but beyond that Solasta does not interfere with the beliefs and culture of the settlers and lets them follow their own laws, religions and traditions as long as they pay their taxes.

Barracks for the Solastan Guard are always present in an enclave; from there the Guard patrols the roads and ensures that no one challenges the authority of Solasta and its Patricians.



### Manorial Farms:

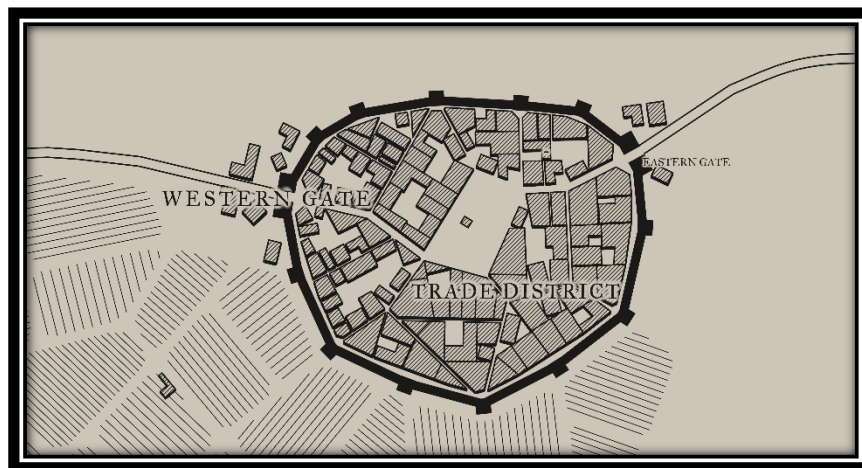
Rich merchants and nobles from Solasta often acquire the lands nearby enclaves and build splendid manors surrounded by fields where they cultivate expensive and profitable crops such as Oranges, Olives, Onions, apples, pears and malted barley. They also breed horses, raise cattle, sheeps and goats for slaughter, and animal produce such as milk, cheese, leathers and wool.

Manorial farms are run by a factor who is trusted and appointed by the owner of the manor. Settlers that are landless or had to leave their own settlements due to overpopulation go to the manorial farms for work, they are granted small plots of land where they may build a house to start a new family, raise chicken and pigs and tend to small gardens. In exchange they sow and harvest the land for the owner of the manor.

These farms are dedicated to expensive crops with relative low yields and low nutritional value compared to those cultivated in settlements, however they command higher prices in the great bazaar of Solasta and in foreign markets. Small industries exist in these farms dedicated to processing its products before they are transported, for example beer is made from barley, jams from fruits, vegetables are pickled and salted, sausages, smoked or cured meat made from the slaughtered animals, cheese from cow and goat milk and sorting different types of wool from the fleece sheared from sheeps.

Manorial farms are established with the sole purpose of generating wealth for its owner, most are owned by the Patrician families and the richest merchants of Solasta. Some farms employ only indentured workers, but this practice is not very common as it is seen as a sign of excessive greed and deprives the local population of the opportunity for work and a place to raise new families.

Typical Solastan Enclave and surrounding manorial farms.



## The city of Solasta



**S**olasta was the first settlement in the lands beneath the Korrin river, what began as a camp of desperate and starving survivors has transformed into a small city of a few thousands. Solasta is the trading hub of the region, all villages and hamlets bring their goods to the great bazaar and merchants from faraway lands sail there to acquire them.

Solasta is ruled by a small council of families that descend from its original settlers. They have used their wealth in coin, land and food to become patricians and rule over the survivors that have migrated to the city through the years. They rule with an iron grip and deal harshly with anyone who breaks the law or challenges their authority.

The perimeter wall and many of the larger buildings inside Solasta are made of stone salvaged from the ruins of castles, temples and cities that stood in the region before the Starfall. As the nearby ruins have all been scavenged, new buildings are constructed using timber and wood.



### Dominion over the land.

The city of Solasta has established dominion over all the settlements in the lands beneath the Korrin River. A strict system of laws, taxes and tributes ensures that most of the wealth and production generated in the region flows through the city and its Patricians. The Solastan Guard, a small but well trained and equipped army, ensures that all heed the laws of the Patricians and pay them tribute for protection from raiders and the creatures and denizens of the blight.



### Economy and society.

Solasta is a city of tradesmen and merchants, all of the resources extracted in the region are brought to the city to be crafted into something else or to be sold to foreign merchants at the great bazaar. By law, all crafts and trades except Butchery, Carpentry and minor Blacksmithing can only be practiced within the walls of the city or one of its enclaves, this way the rulers of Solasta control and tax the flow of all resources and commerce in the region. It is this strict law that allows a city of two thousand to exist and thrive in the lands beneath the Korrin River.

Tradesmen and craftsmen form the economical backbone of Solasta, they are organized into different guilds that exercise limited political power within the city. The first years after the Starfall anyone who wanted to learn a trade could do so and training and techniques were shared freely, but as competition increased the guilds became more secretive and selective in their sharing of knowledge.

Local and foreign merchants are a constant presence in Solasta, local traders travel through villages and hamlets selling goods manufactured in the city and returning with raw resources for the forges and workshops. Foreign merchants come to Solasta by sea or river looking for salt, iron, steel tools, weapons, armor, cloth, wheat, beer, dried foodstuffs and sometimes livestock. From the north, they come in their long ships with goods such as furs, honey, leather, ivory, fish, mead, tin and copper. Merchants from the south sail in large vessels that survived the starfall and bring goods such as horses, silver, gold, silk, spices, wine, jewelry, glass and rice. From up river come the barbarians in their rowing ships, when they are more interested in trading than raiding they bring slaves, strange artifacts from the

inland wastes, precious stones, relics from before the starfall and fierce warriors willing to fight for coin.

The life of the average Solastan is somewhat poor, they work from dawn to dusk every day except the last day of the week and the payment they receive is often barely enough to buy food and pay for housing. They must obey the laws or be expelled or executed and challenging a patrician's authority is always punished by death. Even though some view their lives as cruel and miserable most Solastans remember the deprivation and horrors of the Starfall and are willing to live in this conditions rather than live in the settlements or face the blight and its denizens without the protection of the Patricians and their Guard.

The Patricians are the heads of six families that descend from the original settlers of Solasta, they hold absolute power in the city and they rule the lands beneath the Korrin through a system of laws and tributes. Patricians believe that their right to rule comes from their economic and military power; they value the pursuit of knowledge, art and martial prowess. Most are patrons to artists, scholars and explorers; they are specially inclined to funding and sponsoring expeditions to the ruins in the wastes to recover artifacts from the times before the Starfall.

Refugee camps are often present just outside the stonewalls of Solasta, those who brave the blight to reach the fertile lands beneath the Korrin River often find themselves in this camps for varying periods of time. Eventually some refugees are hired in the city, by passing traders from the villages and hamlets or find passage with foreign ships. A refugee who is skilled in a trade will soon find himself in the employ of one of the guilds where he can expect to advance and be treated fairly, those who are skilled warriors are often taken as auxiliaries by the Solastan Guard or hired as mercenaries and guards by traders and merchants. Those that have no skills deemed useful usually end up as indentured workers in farms or mines, where they work without pay for periods of three to five years in exchange for food and living quarters. Indentured workers perform the hardest labors in Korrin but most prefer the chance to escape the horrors of the blight and the hunger and the depredation of the camps outside Solasta.

Slavery is outlawed outside of Solasta's walls but is tolerated within; the main motivation for this is the lucrative slave trade that takes place in the great bazaar where the barbarians that sail from upriver bring slaves that are later purchased by Northern and Southern traders.



## Military and defense.

A small but very well trained and equipped guard is maintained by Solasta, it defends the city walls, patrols the roads between the main settlements and man the watchtowers on the edges of the wasteland. Soldiers in the Solastan Guard are well paid and well fed and there is never a lack of volunteers willing to fight instead of starve in the refugee camps or toil in the farms and mines of Korrin, this allows the captains to select only the most promising candidates.

The size of the Solastan Guard is relatively small, comprised of six centuries of a hundred men each and each lead by a captain. Two centuries are stationed on Solasta at all times and the remaining soldiers patrol the roads and man the watchtowers. In times of need, the Guard may conscript anyone to fight as an auxiliary, and indeed each century often maintains a considerable number of auxiliaries drawn mostly from the refugee camps outside Solasta's walls.

Each century is raised and equipped by a Patrician family and by law no century can have over a hundred men; every year the two centuries that guard Solasta must rotate out to patrol and guard duty. A Commander of the Guard is appointed each year from one of the six captains to lead and coordinate the efforts of the Guard outside the walls of Solasta, the captains who leads the two centuries stationed in the city cannot be elected as Commander of the Guard. Although not strictly required, tradition dictates that at least one blood relative of a patrician must join a century as a lieutenant or captain, in practice almost all captains and lieutenants of the Guard are members of one of the patrician families.

The first years after its creation the Guard was seen as protectors who defended the land from barbarian raiders and the denizens of the wastes. As the attacks diminished and the Patricians consolidated, their power the Guard has shifted its role to maintain order and ensure that every settlement pays its tribute and respects the laws imposed by Solasta.



## The Blighted Lands

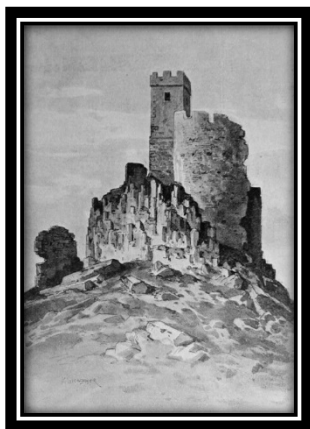


The areas affected by the changing properties of the Blight are collectively referred to as the Blighted Lands. Four large areas infested with the blight exists in the vicinity of the Korrin River; the ancient lands of Riedra to the North, the region near the once proud city state of Inara farther east, the blighted forests of Valmora to the south and the jagged mountains of the Kiter Ridge to the South-East.



### The ancient lands of Riedra:

Once a small but proud nation of nobility and royal titles, Riedra is now a land filled with ruins and ruled by monsters. Many broken castles and fallen towers exist in the desolated landscapes of Riedra.

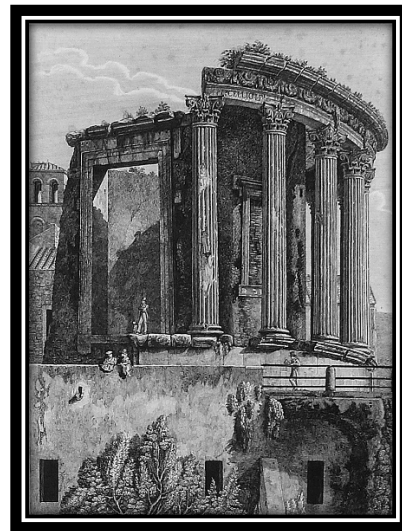


Blighted creatures and Star-Spawns inhabit most of these ruins. Many treasures, artifacts, legendary weapons and full sets of armor remain unclaimed in the vaults and armories of the former nobles of Riedra. No large city stood in Riedra, but many small villages and walled towns that were once prosperous communities remain today as infested places filled with the crazed remains of their former inhabitants.



### The City-State of Inara:

A place once famous for its philosophers and scholars, with magnificent universities dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the discovery of the mysteries of science. With building that stood for hundreds of years and were adorned with statues sculpted from marble.



The countryside of Inara is dotted with temples dedicated to ancient and forgotten gods, crumbling universities sitting atop hills and mountains and idyllic villas overlooking the rotten fields of miasma and corrupted plantlife.

Much knowledge remains in crumbling scrolls, books and parchments on the many ruined universities and forums of Inara and its surrounding lands. The temples and grandiose architecture has also drawn the attention of a cult of Star-Spawn worshipers who believe in the so-called Prophet of the void.





### Valmora, the city of pilgrims:

A land where they practiced the old fate with special zeal and fervor. Countless temples and chapels still stand in various states of ruin, all dedicated to the one true god that promised salvation to the faithful and apocalyptic punishment for the sinners. Unsurprisingly, a considerable number of people still follow this religion and believe themselves to be the chosen of god to rebuild the world.



Many icons, idols and symbols made of precious gems and metals remain in the temples and altars that still stand in the lands of Valmora. The monks and scribes wrote many books about history, philosophy and theology that are extremely valuable to collectors and scholars; theses monks also transcribed various scrolls and ancient text dealing with esoteric and mystical knowledge and stored them in the vaults of the holy cathedral in the city of Valmora itself.



Warriors and monks often sail to the lands beneath the Korrin in a holy quest to rid the city of Valmora of the blighted creatures that infests it.



### The Kiter Ridge:

The jagged mountains of Kiter Ridge are home to abandoned mines and natural caves that have become infested with all manner of creatures. From the safety of these caves, they launch raids on the nearby settlements and are a constant source of problems and conflict.



The mountains of the Kiter Ridge are rich in iron and silver, with many abandoned mines that have become infested with all manner of blighted creatures since the Starfall.

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