



The Land of Brenninn

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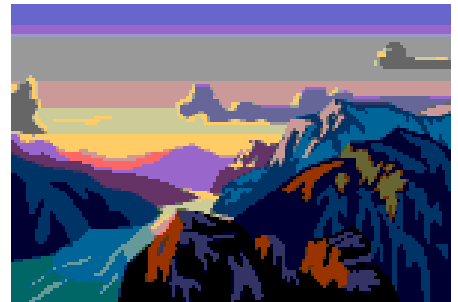
The landmass upon which the Empire of Brenninn is situated takes its name from that Empire, and indeed, from the Kingdom that bore the name before it.

Brenninn is a large land mass, with several island chains along the east and west coasts. It takes up a great deal of the Northern Hemisphere of the World, and extends an unknown distance to the south. It is rumoured that a long tortuous sea journey can bring one from the west, more civilised coast to the strange and foreign Eastern lands, and that this journey takes one far south to where even the stars are strange.

It is a strange place, the Empire. We live in a land that is ruled by an Emperor, unelected by the people, yet supported and not chosen without the will of the Senate, whom the people do chose. Our lands are governed by noble lords and ladies, yet we are serfs no longer, and most own their own property, unless they are truly destitute. It is a strange mixture of democracy and monarchy, yet it works well for the Empire. There are no tyrannical leaders demanding taxes that we cannot afford (though the taxes last year were higher than the year before) and the status quo remains unchanged. The capital of Endelon seems to be distant to most citizens, though they enjoy the protection of the Imperial Legions and the benefits they bring, such as improved highways and improvements to the protective walls of our villages and towns (when they do pass by).

It is a safe place, for the most part, except for the borders where chaos has the upper hand, and in the wilder parts, such as the hills and mountains- but then, we expect it to be so.

The farmer in the field grows his own food, and tithes a small amount of it to the Lord of his town and village, who provides the protection of his own castle or manor guard. And for the most part, the Lords of the Manor simply take the food they need, and distribute the rest to the poor and needy. For times are good, and there is no profit in greed. If a ruthless or evil Lord does arise, they soon come to the attention of the local Senator, and then the Legions come calling.





The Powers That Be

Our very world owes its existence to the Powers, the Three who brought us life and existence. They know of us, and are keen to show us that their Truth is the best Truth. Alas, the conflict between them has often brought much chaos and suffering upon us.

But those were primitive times, and now we build Churches and Temples to our Powers, and learn from them by way of Priest and Monk, the Holy Folk who spend their lives in deep communion with the Powers.

Terrin (Good, Healing plus aspect domains)

We are a pious folk here in the Empire, and we follow the laws and strictures laid down by Terrin, Lord of the Light. Three different sects follow and pursue differing aspects of Terrin and His teachings, which leads to many discussions and discourse between the Churches.

The Justice (Law, Knowledge)

This aspect of Terrin is concerned with the creation and application of Laws, considered to be fair and just for all. This aspect is followed by those who would make the Laws, and those who would Enforce it. When Evil is to be defeated, it is the Justice who brings the Victory. The Justice is most concerned with the stability of the Empire, and all Senators and Governors of the Empire follow the Justice in some manner. The noble warriors of Terrin, known as Paladins, are the most staunch followers of the Justice.

The Protector (Protection, Strength)

This aspect of Terrin is not concerned with law or stricture, but the best for all peoples. Those who follow the Protector do not bother themselves with the strict letter of the law, nor do they spend time trying to change society. They attempt to bring happiness and peace to those around them. Many monks follow this aspect of Terrin, and spend their time travelling the Empire

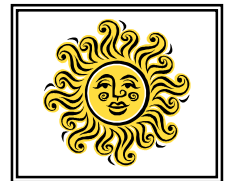
trying to make a difference in whatever way they can.

The Liberator (Luck, War)

This aspect of Terrin is always trying to bring freedom to His people- either literal freedom from unjust oppression, or a more philosophical liberty of the mind and soul. Those who follow the Liberator have little time for procedures or etiquette, and would rather spend their time bringing light and truth to those that have none. They present alternatives where before there seemed to be none.

Travelling artists and those who find they cannot fit into the life of the city or town follow the Liberator, and are often misunderstood (yet tolerated) by those who follow the other aspects of Terrin.

This is the symbol of Terrin, it is the sun that fills our hearts with the warmth of love and the heat of justice. His is the realm of light and hope. We thank him for our good fortune and raise prayers to Him on the Seventh Day of each week.



Arienn (Sun, Animal)

Some in our lands chose to follow the Goddess Arienn, who created the world and the creatures upon it. She is noble yet fair and though it may rain and the wind may blow harsh, it is part of Her great plan for the World, which is her responsibility. She does not interfere in the battle between Terrin and his dark Brother Mordanan. Like her brother Terrin, Arienn has three aspects.

The Mother (Plant, Earth)

In this aspect, Arienn refreshes the world each year, bringing food and water to the land and the lives of all of us, for we depend upon her bounty. She replenishes everything in nature, and the farmer and navigator thanks Her for Her reliability. The Mother has many monks and druids who help Her maintain this cycle, and they offer Her thanks.



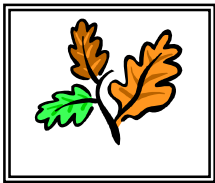


The Balancer (Law, Chaos)

This aspect is a powerful force. It regulates the very processes of the Universe itself, and stops any one force overwhelming another. This aspect is considered to be even greater than Terrin and Mordanan, and during any dispute between them, the Balancer will be there also. No direct confrontation may take place between the Powers without this aspect in place. For if she was not present, the entire world would surely be wrought in two. Few mortals follow the Balancer, for few can understand the truly powerful nature of Her. But some monasteries have built up around the study of the Balancer, and Her presence throughout all things.

The Tempest (Air, Water)

Nature is not always predictable, and though She runs through Her cycles with precision, within the boundaries of that clockwork world, there are many unforeseen and random happenings. The Tempest represents all the aspects of the unpredictable from each roll of a bone to the storms and sudden terrible weather that often affect the Western Coast. Those who follow the Tempest are full of careful respect for Her, and will often attempt appease such a sudden appearance with prayer and offerings. Also, those who are aware of the importance of chance and unpredictability in their lives find themselves in Her graces, good or otherwise.



This is the symbol of Arienn, the leaves of the mighty Oak tree, ancient and steadfast, something older than all our races yet part of our lives. Those who follow Arienn find Her in the woods and amongst nature, which is Her realm. They worship her during the four corners of the year, and at night when the moon is fat.

Mordanan (Evil, Fire)

Those that chose to follow Darkness and Evil follow the path of Mordanan. They are considered breakers of ancient laws amongst our peoples, and do not worship

this terrible Power openly. He is the God of Monsters, the Lord of Evil and Horror, and we shall speak little of him here in this tome, as even the mention of his name invites misfortune. All worship of Mordanan must occur in darkness, either that of night or that found beneath the ground. This is why so many monsters lurk in long forgotten holes, caves and dungeons, to be better able to commune with their fearsome God. Like his brother and sister, He has three aspects, all terrible to behold.

The Tyrant (Law, Strength)

This aspect of Mordanan delights in the oppression of the innocent, crushing their spirits and souls within a steely grip of terrible command. The Tyrant is the great enemy of all that is good and just, and seeks to control all that live, to better bring terrible glory to Him. The Tyrant is rarely followed, but obeyed out of mortal fear. Those few that chose to edify the Tyrant are well rewarded, but at the cost of their very soul.

The Dark (Magic, Death)

This aspect represents fear, the primeval terror of the night. But when the Dark is present, the night is indeed dangerous. This aspect has no strict form, and instead appears as the greatest fear of he who faces it. The absence of light is greatest tool, its sturdy cloak. It seeks not just the absence of all that is good, but the sinister and secret destruction of morality and comfort. Those who sleep content and safe have the most to fear from the Dark. Assassins and other cold blooded monsters follow the Dark, and may the Protector save us.

The Frenzy (Chaos, Destruction)

Of all the aspects of Mordanan, perhaps this is the most terrible. The Frenzy is barely even a sentient being, but more of a force, a madness that thirsts for blood and for murder. No one is safe from the followers of the Frenzy, if they even realise they follow Him. Where you find senseless death, killing for its own sake, there you will find the Frenzy. It has been postulated





that even Mordanan is unaware of this part of Himself, for surely no Power, no God could tolerate the sheer desire for utter destruction that is the Frenzy.



Know then that this is the symbol of the Dark God Mor'danan. It is He that brings night and the cold sting of winter to our lands, and it is He that taints the heart and brings Evil upon us. The monsters of the Darklands are his servants, and He demands blood sacrifice and deeds of the blackest nature.





The Recent Past

The Brennin Empire has been in existence for two hundred and fifty years. During this time, peace has been the rule, with small border skirmishes with nearby nations. The presence of evil within the Empire, in the misshapen form of humanoids and their monstrous kin has always been a problem, but for the most part the citizens of the Empire live in comfort and without worry.

What follows is a brief timeline of events in our land.

- 10,000 Humans arrive on the continent.
- 350 Hellsgate Keep built by Arhelm Dernany, a Renowned Warrior in the region.
- 300 Town of Hellsgate grows up around the original Keep.
- 100 City Charter drawn up. Hellsgate is now the largest settlement on the Western Coast. The city of Endelon is founded this same year.
- 30 Dark Knights appear mysteriously in Hellsgate. The adventurers that first encountered the DK's leave the city. Their leader, Curizan, warns the authorities of more to come. He vows to return and save the city.
- 29 Hellsgate falls to the Dark Knight incursion.
- 27 Curizan's Company travel around the continent trying to draw forces to lead against the Dark Knights. They arrive at Endelon, capital of the Kingdom of Brennin, and are sent on a Quest for the Orb of Stars, to use against the Dark Knights.
- 21 Dark Knights swarm out of Hellsgate and across the Northern reaches of the continent. The Steplands fall, and they prepare to move south.

-18 The Ironhold falls to the Dark Knights, and the Dwarves are left without a homeland.

-12 The Dark War goes badly for Brennin and her allies, and bodes worse as The Lord Barren itself, the leader of the Dark Knights, arrives in Hellsgate from Beyond.

-11 Curizan and his companions enter the city, and use the Orb to close all mirrors upon the continent of Brennin. The Lord Barren smashes the Orb and is destroyed. The Dark Knights leave Hellsgate once their leader has gone, and are last seen moving North.

-10 The Dark Knights have left the civilised lands. The War is considered to be over.

-9 Curizan is offered the leadership of the Brennin Protectorate, and he accepts.

YearZero The Brennin Protectorate becomes the Brennin Empire when representatives from all the participating regions agree to consolidate power in one place, partly as a reward to Curizan but mostly as an investment in the future. Curizan accepts the position of First Emperor, but puts in place a democratic senate to rule whilst he 'tours the Empire' (in other words, adventuring).

The intervening forty five years are known as the Pax Curizan, and is an unrivalled time of peace and prosperity throughout the Empire. The disinherited Dwarves of the Ironhold are given exclusive mining rights throughout the Empire, though in return they hire humans and gnomes to work along side them. The Elves of the Green Kingdom send envoys to meet with the Emperor, to whom they gave sanctuary during his search for the Orb of Stars.

The reclusive Halflings of the Vale also send diplomats and traders into the human lands, hopeful of better relations than before.





8 Imperial Scouts are sent north to seek out the Dark Knights.

20 The Imperial Scouts return, with the news that the Darklands, while filled with dangers and evil, is empty of Dark Knights.

45 Emperor Curizan I dies of old age. The Empire goes into mourning, while his successor, Empress Dayla I announces that his last wish, the formation of an official Imperial Army will be carried out. The first of Twenty Legions are formed in Endelon.

133 Empress Dayla III sends the XIX Legion into the Darklands. It fails to return.

140 The New City of Hellsgate is completed. 12 Valefolk, a rare occurrence, visits Hellsgate. 3 remain in the city, and enter the Old City with the permission of the Mayor. This is the first time the Old City has been unsealed in 140 years. They do not emerge again, and 1 month later, the Old City is resealed.

159 A number of undead escape from the Old City and the City Guard is decimated trying to control the situation. The XII Legion, stationed outside Hellsgate, is asked to help. They refuse, stating that it would be illegal to enter the city armed. They are frustrated by their inability to help. A group of Adventurers defeat the undead, but demand restitution for their actions. They are allowed to open the first Guild of Adventurers in the Empire.

168 Another undead attack is repelled quickly by the better organised City Guard with the assistance of the Adventurers Guild and the Temple of Terrin.

182 A border skirmish takes place between the XX Legion and an army of the Zalzok Republic. Four hundred die, and the First Warrior of the Republic sends a message to Emperor Arrany I, thanking him for the use of his troops during the Republics 'wargames'.

190 The Zalzok Republic allow a diplomatic mission to set up an Embassy in

Zal J'alan, though it is forbidden for foreigners to leave the grounds of the Embassy. Still, it is the first time in several hundred years that the Zalzoks have allowed anyone to meet with their government peacefully.

234 A trade mission to the T'Chaow Dynasty returns with good news. The T'Chaow have agreed to send one trading caravan every ten years into the Empire, and to accept the same in return.

236 The Emperor Arrany II visits Hellsgate and is said to have stood on the walls over the Old City and made some pressing statements to the Senator for the Hellsgate Coast. The details of their conversation remains unknown.

244 The First Caravan from T'Chaow arrives. It is nearly a mile long, and the bazaar that follows lasts a month. Millions of Gold Crowns change hands, and the Caravan leaves, burdened with goods bought in Endelon. It is the most successful period of trading in the Empire's history. People are still talking about it six years later.

248 Rumours of Dark Knights in the Northern Forest. Rumours of Dragons returning to the mountains. Rumours of war in faraway lands. The Old City is opened to willing parties of adventurers who wish to go in and clear it out. In the first six months, two hundred adventurers go in. Twenty-nine have emerged so far.

250 PRESENT DAY

The Old City continues to be cleared, though slowly and with the barely willing support of the Mayor, though the Imperial Senator based at Hellsgate is fully supportive of the actions.

The Caravan from Brennin is expected to return from the Dynasty any day now, and excitement is building.

There have been a growing number of raids from the Darklands, mostly of Orcs and Goblins. The Dwarven mines in the





Dragonsteeth Mountains have reported increasing numbers of raids from humanoids. There is a definite feeling of threat from the north once more, though not from the now almost mythical Dark Knights.

The Emperor Arrany II lies ill within his palace, having not yet chosen a successor. The Imperial Senate is split on the matter, some having already indicated a preferred successor, whilst the others prefer to wait until the Emperor has chosen.

More undead incursions have occurred in Hellsgate, and the people are getting impatient with the Senator, demanding action from the Imperial Government.

Goblin raids in the Darkmoors north of Hellsgate have been increasing, and trade caravans are beginning to detour from this route, much to the concern of the XII Legion who patrols this highway.

The Zalzok Republic have withdrawn their diplomats from Endelon, and no word has returned about the status of the Imperial Ambassador in Zal'alan





The Brenninn Empire

Population: 8 Million

Capital : Endelon

Leader: Emperor Arrany III

This is the largest organised state on the continent. With a population of nearly 8 Million humans and demi-humans, The Imperial State is a well organised and



efficient machine, which still manages to pay heed to it's original purpose- the protection of the continent against invaders from elsewhere in the world.

The Empire was formed after the defeat of Lord Barren, and the retreat of the Dark Knights. It was thought that the Knights would certainly regroup and return south, stronger than ever and perhaps even with hordes of Goblins and Orcs under their control.

This never occurred, but the Empire went on regardless.

With the 30 Legions at their command, the Imperial Senate, ruled over by Emperor Arrany III, have control over almost half the continent. They fear no outside threat, save that of the Dark Knights to the north, and even that seems like a threat long since vanished (See The Dark Lands, below).

When the Brenninn Empire was formed, it took in the original Kingdom of Brenninn, and seven other nations, including the lands of the Vale, and the Green Kingdom, both of which enjoy a protected status within the Empire.

The capital city of Endelon is a shining example of what two hundred and fifty years of peace can do for a nation. It is a league across and holds many treasures from across the world in museums and galleries. It is also home to the High

Church of Terrin, and the Imperial Palace, as well as the Bazaar, the largest marketplace in all of Brenninn.

The Vale

Population: 1 Million Halflings,
unknown number of Valefolk

Capital : None

Leader: None

Officially within the boundaries of the Brenninn Empire, the Vale was always a land which had no real borders or political status. Few humans lived there, beyond the mysterious Valefolk, thought to be more legend than reality until some turned up in the court of the Emperor several years ago.

The main inhabitants of the Vale are the Halflings, again thought to be mostly legend, as they did not travel much beyond their burrows and small villages. They seem to have a close relationship with the Valefolk, and the two 'races' trade mostly between themselves, though it appears that even they rarely meet with each other.

The Halflings have, in more recent years, begun to trade with towns and cities across the Empire, in what many have seen as a surprising but welcome move into commerce.

The Green Kingdom

Home of the Elves, the immortal original inhabitants of Brenninn, who have since retreated over the millennia to the vast forest that lies in the centre of the continent. They spend their days in study, meditation and a quiet watchfulness. They rarely venture out, though in times past, Elves were a common enough sight. This has not been so since the War, when the Lord Barren arrived on the continent. Its arrival was enough to send most Elves back to the Green, as it is colloquially known.



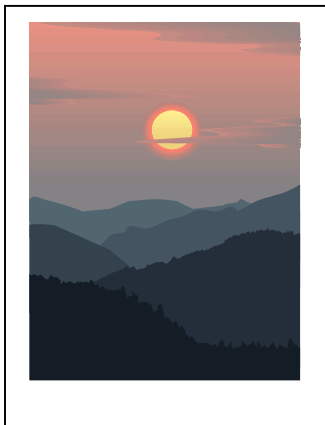


Half Elves, more commonly seen, yet rare enough, sometimes venture to their ancestral home, but do not- or cannot- stay long.

There is a strong alliance with the Elves, and a human trading post has been active a few miles into the Green Kingdom for several hundred years. The Elves have a representative on the Imperial Senate, and this may be some recognition of the importance of the Brennin Empire to the Elves.

The Dark Lands

Population: 20 Million Humanoids
1-3 Million humans and demi-humans
Capital : Nordenmak
Leader: None



Once the Shenray Steppes, ruled over by the Steppenfolk, these lands, and including Ironhold, the old domain of the dwarves, the Darklands are a shambolic union of several hundred tribes of goblins, hobgoblins, gnolls and other evil races. These lands were originally conquered by the Dark Knights under the leadership of the Lord

Barren, but recent Scout missions into the Darklands have discovered no trace of the Enemy.

There is no trade, and no diplomatic contact with the Empire, though there is an apparently well worn trade route into the Zalzik Republic (below).

Zalzik Republic

Population: 4 Million
Capital : Zal'alan
Leader: First Warrior Zalzik XXIII

A harsh regime, ruled over by First Warrior Zalzik XXIII, the latest in a long line of warrior kings. As a republic, it fares

badly, being more of a dictatorship. Mostly made up of Kellistin and some Westerners, the Republic is a reminder that not all evil is non-human.

There is an Imperial Embassy in Zalzarak, the capital city of the Republic, though the draconian rules of that urban blight forbid any non-Republican from stepping outside the Embassy. Very little trade takes place, but Zalzik is a good source of iron, ever since the fall of Ironhold to the Dark Knights.

The Zalzik Republic has never been openly hostile to the Empire, though they regularly send troops on 'exercises' across the border. The XX Legion is based just West of the Zalzar Mountains and are ready to react should the Zalzik war games become something more sinister.

Earlier this year, the Zalzik Ambassador and his staff withdrew without explanation from Endelon, and there has been no word from our Ambassador in Zal'Jalan. Could this be a prelude to war?

T'Chaow Dynasty

Population: Unknown, possible 10-20 Million
Capital : Ba C'hien
Leader: The Most Wise, Cha' Lien III

Considered to be a wise yet mysterious nation, the Dynasty rarely opens its border to others, and even more seldom are it's people seen abroad in other lands.

Recently, there has been some trade between the Dynasty and the Empire, with a Caravan that arrived in 244, an event that is still spoken of today. The bazaar that lasted a whole month still lives in the memories of those that attended.

The caravan that was sent by the Empire is expected to return very soon, and people





are already preparing for the great bazaar that will take place.

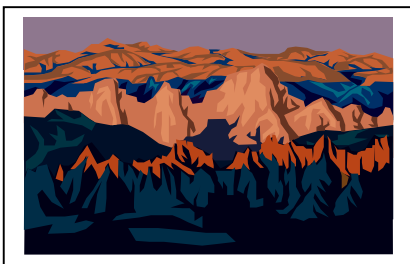
The Kingdom of Dust

Population: Unknown

Capital: Unknown

Leader: Unknown

Once it's borders were marked beyond the mountains, but sightings of Dusters in the forests just to the north of the Barrier Peaks have caused many to wonder if the tall dark-skinned Dusters have decided to try out a more affable climate. Regardless,



their land knows no southern border, and few explorers from Brennin have ever travelled so far. What is

known is that aside from a few oasis's and the rumoured Pyramid city, the Dusters are organised only by tribe, and even then, the nature of their state is more or less unknown. They do defend their territory, even if the borders are mercurial and fluid in their own minds.

There is some trade, mostly of fine spices and expensive leather and cloth, which indicates that somewhere in the Kingdom of Dust, lie fertile lands. No official diplomatic relationship exists.





The Dark Knights

No one is left alive, save some few Valefolk and ancient Elven sages, who remember the Dark Knights firsthand. All that remain are stories and the ruins of towers and towns across the northern reaches of the continent to show that the Dark Knights once ravaged the land and nearly brought civilisation to a brutal end.

The City of Hellsgate is where the Dark Knights first arrived in Brenninn, via magical gates, the descriptions of which are lost to us now. They ravaged the city, used it as a temporary base, and struck out against everyone upon Brenninn.

They appeared (in the drawings and paintings that remain) as tall humans, over seven feet in height, with dark hair and deep blue eyes. Their skin was pale, but they rarely removed the helms of their black enamelled plate armor.

They wielded greatswords of a black metal that did not shine but instead seemed to eat light. Their shields were emblazoned with a dark hemisphere of gleamless iron. They fought without fear, and even as they were dealt a killing blow, a fire would ignite within them and they would break into a murderous frenzy, killing all around, before they would fall dead and still.

Few would dare don their black armor, and those who did died short moments later, as it constricted upon them and snuffed out their life like a candle.

No one could take up a Dark Knight's sword without feeling their souls being torn away and ravaged by whatever darkness dwelt inside the blade.

The Captains of the Dark Knights were fearsome indeed, and could control a magical power similar to that of Priest and Mage. This power seemed to depend upon their dark leader, the Lord Barren, and would be seen to wax and wane with the proximity of his presence.

The Dark Knights moved in small units, for they could defeat many times their numbers and not lose a single Knight. They most commonly travelled in bands of twenty or so Dark Knights, the equal of a hundred ordinary men.

They were bent on destruction of that which they could not control, and they found much resistance amongst the peoples of the Western Kingdoms. Thus, they destroyed most of what they found.

They felt the least resistance to the north, and quickly conquered the vast expanses of the Shenray Steppes, later called the Darklands.

The people of the Shenray, called the Steppenfolk, were disorganised and nomadic, and could not put up a defence against the Dark Knights. The Steppenfolk were almost wiped out, and a few escaped south. Most went into hiding. The Dark Knights then drove the tribes of the Frenzy into hiding within the mountains, and many clans of orc and goblin fell upon the Dwarven Keep of Ironhold, desperate to find a hiding place from the Dark Knights. Ironhold fell, and the Dwarves were driven from their homeland, and to this day they are disinherited.

Eventually, the Dark Knights arrived at Ironhold, and stole it from the creatures that lived there. They remained in Ironhold for many years, although no one now knows who owns the Keep and its lands, save that no expedition to go there has yet to return.

For nearly twenty years, the Dark Knights waged war and ruled with an iron grip much of the Western Kingdoms, from Hellsgate and to the North. They seemed satisfied with what they had gained, and used the time to prepare for an even greater war against the rest of the continent. The Lord Barren arrived in Hellsgate and began to build itself a temple, a great dark church to better glorify itself.





These dark times came to an abrupt end.

The Dark Knights were defeated by a Company of Adventurers lead by a noble warrior named Curizan, who became the first Emperor of Brennin because of his actions and drive to save us all.

The Lord Barren, the leader of the Dark Knights was destroyed by Curizan. He and his companions had spent many years questing for the Orb of Stars, an artifact of great power. Curizan wielded the Orb against the Lord Barren. The Dark Knights leader shattered the Orb into countless pieces at the height of the fray. The power within the Orb was released and the Lord Barren was consumed by the energy. Curizan and his companions were spared, but all that witnessed that key event were forever blinded.

The area of Hellsgate where this battle occurred still lies in ruins, forever cursed by the blood of the Beast that was slain there. A new city was built alongside the ruins of the Old City, and only recently have attempts been made to clear out these ruins of the undead and unearthly beings that infest it.

The Dark Knights fell back to the Darklands, and legions of militia and the soldiers of the disparate Kingdoms of Man pushed them as they retreated- though no human army could hold their own in equal battle against Dark Knights, save with the Magic of Wizard and Priest, as the Dark Knights did not seem able to use Magic in this manner once the Lord Barren was destroyed.

What happened then is still a mystery. The Dark Knights, seemingly with vast tracts of territory upon our continent, went silent, and no scouting missions into the Darklands were able to find traces of our enemy.

Instead, the warring and once frightened tribes of humanoids ruled the Steppes, and the Steppenfolk were their slaves, and remain so to this day.

The disappearance of the Dark Knights remains one of the greatest mysteries of our time, along with how they arrived in our lands in the first place.

Many speculate that they may have travelled beyond the north, to another part of our world. Others dream that they have been defeated by the tribes of the Frenzy, yet this would be worrying indeed. For whatever force could defeat the Dark Knights would be a dire threat against the people of Brennin.





The Peoples of Brenninn

There are numerous races of human and demihuman upon the face of Brenninn. What follows is a discussion and description of these diverse folk.

The Humans

By far the most numerous and widespread of the Folk, humans make up probably 90% of the population of Brenninn.

The Elves

It is thought that the Elves once lived across a greater part of Brenninn than they now do. For the Elves now call only the Green Kingdom their home, and even that lands fall within the borders of the Brenninn Empire. But we are sure that if the Elves did not wish this to be so, they would easily be able to defeat any forces with their magic and force of will. Fortunate for us that they are peace loving and agreeable, and that they share a common goal of peace and higher mind with we of the Empire.

The Dwarves

It is a great tragedy that brings the Dwarven folk to be citizens of our Empire, and we share a wish with them that it did not have to be so. For their homelands, the mountains and hills of Ironhold were stolen from them during the war with the Dark Knights. This tale is recounted elsewhere, but remains a sad one.

The Dwarves work in the mountains and hills of the Empire, their new home. They are noble and proud and we value them greatly as producers of metal and stone. One day, the Empire will help the Dwarves retake their homeland, and we will be allies for long after. The 18th Legion of the Empire is almost entirely made up of Dwarven Warriors, and they protect the mountain holdings of the Empire, whilst preparing to be sent into the Ironhold to regain it once more.

The Halflings

A strange but peaceful folk, the Halflings are relatively new to us. They have long lived in the peaceful and bountiful lands of the Vale, but despite many expeditions through that area, no one had met the Halflings until roughly 100 years ago. It is rumoured that the Valefolk (see below) had been hiding the settlements of the Halflings from prying eyes. We can only speculate that we are now worthy of their friendship, such has been the influx of halfling travellers to our lands.

The Gnomes

The Gnomes are cousins to the Dwarves, and had long been allies of the humans of Brenning. They favour the magic of illusion, and shared the foothills and forests of Brenninn with us for a long while without either side encroaching upon the other. We enjoy a good relationship with the Gnomes, and they have strengthened their ties with the Dwarves.

The Half-orcs

Found mostly in the northern reaches of Brenninn, these poor people are the result of terrible acts of evil against the womenfolk of Brenninn – though a few have escaped the Darklands, seeking a better more moral life with us. We pity these folk, though many people hate and fear the half-orcs. They are sadly the targets of prejudice in our land.

The Valefolk

We know little about this mysterious race of humans, save that a few have made contact with the Empire during the years. They are tall, fair skinned and fair haired, and are possessed of a presence that is overwhelming to many. To meet a Valefolk is to meet a mystery made flesh, and it is said that one is never the same after such a meeting.





The Imperial Legions

The Brennin Empire exists only as long as those kingdoms within it agree to being ruled. Part of this agreement involves providing soldiers for the 20 Imperial Legions. These are the main military force for the Empire, and are the entire Empires best means of defence.

Formed to counter the threat of the Dark Knights two hundred years ago, the legions have instead found their role to be that of peacekeeper and engineer alike. They travel the Empire, and spend each summer building new and efficient highways between the main cities and towns. At any time, each highway has a legion upon it, and scouting patrols move up and down these roads, a serious deterrent to the bandits and creatures that would prey upon travellers and traders.



The legions also patrol our borders, and any one legion is a fearsome fighting force, able to hold back an entire invading county until other legions are able to arrive.

Every healthy male over the age of 16 is expected to serve at least one year

in the legions, and this often turns into two or more years. Young women have more recently been encouraged to join up as well, taking the example from Empress Janara, who spent four years in the XII Legion outside Hellsgate.

The rewards for spending time in the Legions are twofold: firstly, anyone who has served may vote in the senate elections for their region. Most do not vote, but they at least have the right to. Secondly, anyone who spends more than five years in the legions is given a small amount of land once they leave. This land is often in the area where they served, but it can be half a continent away. In cases such as these, the

land can be 'traded' for a stipend of Gold Crowns.

Anyone who has served with the legions keeps their short sword and their Ceremonial Armour.

What follows is a brief description of the legions, and how they are organised.

Organisation

There are, as mentioned before, 20 Imperial Legions.

Each legion consists of a thousand well trained foot soldiers, two hundred cavalry, and ten priests of Terrin and two mages (usually one master and one apprentice).

Within the thousand, there are trained cooks, engineers, blacksmiths and men and women of other skills and professions. When a legion sets up base, it is almost a small town in and of itself, and invites trade from villages nearby. As a settlement, they are almost self-sufficient, and with the blessings of the Priests of Terrin, divine nourishment means that for short times they can withstand sieges and famine. They are soldiers, however, and within hours can be ready to march across the continent to where they are needed.

As they were formed to counter the Dark Knight threat, each legion had a unit of elite warriors built up from within their ranks. These teams -called Breakers- consisted of eleven experienced warriors, one Priest of Terrin and a Mage (this mage was usually the Master that accompanied the legion, but was sometimes the Apprentice).

These warriors all carried magical weapons, necessary to harm a Dark Knight. Their armor was enchanted also, and it was considered that a unit of Breakers was equal to that of a Dark Knight band. Fortunately, no Breakers have ever had to face Dark Knights- unless the rumours about the XIX Legion are indeed true.





Breakers are distinguished from other soldiers by an enamelled black skull motif on their helms and shields, and are often placed in charge of patrols and other details.

Some of the Legions

The 1st Legion (I Legion)

This legion is based outside the city of Enedelon itself, and like all Imperial Legions, they are forbidden to enter the walls of an Imperial City (except in the case of extreme threat, such as an invasion or the return of the Dark Knights). This legion is much larger than all the others, consisting of over 5 thousand soldiers. They spend their time patrolling the ten leagues around the capital, and in fact are the only legion with a naval component. They have forty huge warships that patrol the bay to the west of the city, and the Western Coast beyond, as far as Blackport. They see little actual conflict, and the posting is considered to be one of prestige, reserved for the heroes of the other Legions who have brought much honor upon themselves and the Empire. Thus, the First Legion is made up on many who have served with other Legions, something of a rarity- you tend to stay with your legion for the length of your service.

The 12th Legion (XII Legion)

This legion is based outside the city of Hellsgate. Its' nickname is the "Just In Case" Legion, as its unspoken purpose is to wait outside the city in case the Dark Knights return through whatever portals exist inside the city.

Officially, it is stationed at Hellsgate as it is the last large city that any invading force from the north will pass before Endelon itself. Hellsgate's position at the edge of the central frontier is an important one, and the XII Legion spends much of its time patrolling the northern highway, sometimes as far as Blackport. There has been an increasing number of skirmishes in the area, as the number of goblin and orc tribes in mountains increases, and many

move down the River Hellis to the coast in search of booty and food.

The XII Legion is proud of their reputation, yet they have a secret shame, something that is not their fault yet they must live with. They are forbidden to enter the city of Hellsgate under Imperial Charter. This is frustrating for the XII Legion, as they know well that a single trip into the Old City of Hellsgate would result in the permanent clearing of all the undead from those ruins, and the entire city would benefit. Instead, Hellsgate must rely upon common adventurers, more interested in what they can steal from the ruins than the welfare of the city itself. Every time there is an undead incursion into the new city, and innocent people die, the XII Legion mourn and grow angrier at the rules that keep them at arms length.

The Senator for Hellsgate, Magitus, shares their frustration, yet as a half-elf, he has had to put up with this cruel irony for much longer.

The 20th Legion (XX Legion)

Based far to the east, on the borders of Brennin, the Zalzik Republic and the T'Chaow Dynasty, the XX Legion is far from home. Only the XV Legion is further away (to the north, on the border with the Darklands and the Zalzik Republic). They are the most experienced of the legions, due to their almost constant state of 'almost war' with the Republic. The First Warrior of the Republic sends small detachments of his army over the border and this results in almost weekly battles between patrols of the legion and the twenty / thirty man Republican units. It is well known that they are 'testing' the performance of the XX Legion. The Commander of the XX Legion, Klastar Micavich, has time and time again requested that another legion be sent to improve defences along the border, but the Senate fear that, with three legions in total at the border (the XX, the XV and another) would push the Republic into striking out more violently into the Empire. For the moment, it is a state of war that is cold.





HELLSGATE

Jewel of the Western Coast

This city is one of the oldest in Brennín, and has a history richer than that of many nations. Sometimes dark, sometimes painful, but always rich and detailed.

The demesne of Hellsgate includes the coast of Hellis Sound, a deep water bay that leads over a hundred miles out into the Western Ocean. Along this rich coastline lies many towns and villages, such as the ports of West Marsh and Saltmarsh, along with the monastery of South Point. Also, the Darkmoors to the north of the city, and Ryham Forest to the south fall under the control of the Hellsgate Council.

Weather and Climate

The climate of the area is mild for most of the year. It is warm, tending to hot in the summer, and cool, with a few weeks of ice and snow in the winter.

Twice a year, harsh winds from the mountains bring unusual weather to the area. In summer, this wind is called the Dragon's Breath, and the weather becomes very dry and very hot for several days. There is no rain, and rivers often dry up. This is always followed by a week of almost non-stop rain, which replenishes the land.

In winter, this wind is called Mordanan's Whisper, and brings with it icy snow, hail and blizzards. Fortunately, it marks the end of winter, and is followed by the spring thaw.

During the spring, it rains a little almost every day. In the summer, there can be a week without rain, though when it does come, it is heavy. In the fall, it is warm and humid during the mornings, and dry and cool in the evenings.

The Landscape

The land around Hellsgate is mostly that of gently undulating hills and dales. Some areas, such as the Darkmoors are much hillier, and somewhat barren compared to the rest of the area. The typical landscape is one of grassland, sometimes cultivated by local farmers. Small copses of trees are scattered across the landscape, and are considered 'unlucky' to cut down.

There are a number of small expanses of woods and forest in the area, the best example being the Ryham Forest, which extends for around twenty miles each side of Ryham Town, the western expanse of which is hilly and almost mountainous in places.

Some areas around the Sound are marshy, and can be quite dangerous if crossed without care.

The Wildlife

Much of the local wildlife is harmless, and lives alongside the folk of the area. The Darkmoors and the wooded areas are home to wolves and bears, whilst some of the hills to the east of Silverfork have wildcats and mountain lions.

Deer and cattle are common sights upon the grasslands, as are sheep and other grazing animals. Hunting is permitted as long as one is not within sight of a highway or track, or upon land owned by another.

The People

Most of the people that live in the area are human, though there are a number of demi-human races that make their homes here. The most common would be Dwarves, especially in the hills. There are some Elves that live in Ryham Forest, though they are usually visiting the area for a 'short' while (in elven terms, at least).





Towns and Villages

There are a number of towns and villages in the area around Hellsgate. The largest, or most important ones are as follows:

Saltmarsh Population 130

This town was once quite an important port, as it was the last major harbour before Hellsgate. However, when the town of West Marsh built their own harbour twenty years ago, they quickly took over from Saltmarsh as the stopover before the main city port.

This had a devastating effect upon Saltmarsh, and many of the dockhands moved to West Marsh in search of work. Many of the inns closed, as did a number of the shipwrights. The town dwindled until it had merely half the population of before.

Though Saltmarsh still supports a small fishing fleet, most of the talented folk have long since left, either to West Marsh or to Hellsgate.

There have been reports of strange lights and sounds in the old harbourmasters manor, overlooking the main bay, though no one has yet investigated these events.

Saltmarsh is ruled by the remains of the noble family of Hanfold, though their once magnificent manor house lies almost derelict.

West Marsh Population 530

A large town, relatively new to its prosperity, West Marsh used to be but a resting point on the highway to Saltmarsh. When the son of the existing Lord Tanrish came to his birthright, he began a vast engineering project- the building of a deep water harbour in place of the rather pathetic one that previously existed. He memorable hired a team of half-giants from the Dragonsteeth Mountains, who were

persuaded to assist in the heavy work of digging out the existing channel, along with the help of a pair of mages that the young Lord Tanrish had met on his adventures.

Within a few months, the harbour was finished, and it dealt a killing blow to the economy of the nearby port of Saltmarsh. Indeed, many in the Harbourmasters Guild in Hellsgate were concerned that they would also be threatened, though a series of meetings and deals led to something of an 'arrangement' between the guild and the new port.

The amount of money that the new harbour brought in was almost beyond belief. The location on the sound, less than a days sail from Hellsgate was considerably better than what Saltmarsh had to offer before. Along with the more sheltered waters of the Hellis Sound, and the ability to anchor relatively far off shore and still have good shelter were other selling points.

Not satisfied with his accomplishments, Lord Tanrish also opened a shipyard in West Marsh, and managed to get the exclusive rights to maintain the ships of the I Legion on their twice yearly stop in Hellis Sound, as part of their patrol of the Western Coast. This actually led to a small conflict, when those who had lost jobs because of this arrangement travelled from Hellsgate to West Marsh, and attempted to burn down the shipyards there. Twenty men died before a patrol from the XII Legion arrived to stop it.

The Lord Tanrish, now in his late forties, has reaped the harvest of the sea, and lives in a newly built castle some distance from the harbour itself. Some say he is the greatest economic thinker in the history of the Hellsgate area, and wonder what he will come up with next.

He has sent his men out this spring to begin building a road, through the marshes and the hills that lie a few miles to the north of the town.





Goldsand Population 245

Placed on an expanse of clean wide beaches, Goldsand is a very beautiful place. It is the home to a group of alchemists, and their products are famous throughout Brennin. 'Goldsand' elixirs and potions are known for their purity and strength, and the village, although small, supports a diverse range of professions, from the alchemists themselves, to glassmakers and silversmiths and other fine artisans.

Fifteen miles to the north lie the ruins of another town, which had been the site of another alchemical union. Such was the destruction that all the stone in the ruins turned to a black glassy substance, so the alchemists of Goldsand do their work a mile or so outside of the village itself, under a set of high sand-dunes that they have magically altered to remain solid and strong.

Although much of the industry in the village is geared towards the support of the alchemists, the various smiths do independent work as well, and one day a month they hold a market, where one may purchase the best of their intricate work for outrageous amounts of silver and gold.

Darkmoor Population 340

The last major stop on the Northern Highway before arriving at Hellsgate (or, the first stop on the way north) Darkmoor has long been the favoured resting point before heading further on. It lies a good six hours ride north of Hellsgate, and a couple of hours south of the edge of the Darkmoors (after which the town is named). Travelling the moors after darkness is too dangerous for most, and Darkmoor has many inns and taverns to offer the weary traveller.

Just south of the town is a small camp used exclusively by the small patrols that the legion send out along the Highway. It is

usually empty, but sometimes a few horsemen may be found here.

Darkmoor itself could be considered a small version of Hellsgate. For those too frightened to enter the city itself, or to finish the journey across the moors, Darkmoor offers many goods found in Hellsgate, though over priced and with only a fraction of the stock found in the city.

During the day there is a successful market in the town, and at night the inns and taverns are alight and loud with music and song.

Recently, however, there have been a number of midnight attacks upon the town by bands of goblins, who move in quickly and take as much as they can before leaving again.

The last stockade around the town was burnt down two years ago, and it is only partially complete again. The XII Legion plans to finish the wall this summer, but it is only spring and the raids threaten to overwhelm the town.

Silverfork Population 2,845

Where the River Hellis meets the Silver Stream, you will find the town of Silverfork. The population figure for this town includes the transient population of prospectors, as well as the 300 or so Dwarves that call the hills around the town their home.

Silverfork is a very reliable source of precious metals, including silver (of course) and gold, which are deposited in the rapids where the two rivers meet.

Of course, the Dwarves know that the best loads of metal are found higher up in the Silver Hills, and do most of their work there, as far as forty or fifty miles from Silverfork. But they usually spend time in the town, selling what they've found,





usually purer and in larger quantities than the nuggets brought in by the prospectors. This area is particularly dangerous at the moment, as over the last few years large tribes of goblins and orcs have been arriving high in the hills, seemingly in search of better pickings than they have been finding elsewhere.

The Dwarven hatred of the goblinoid race has not made them easier to deal with in Silverfork, and their demands that the XII Legion assist them in clearing out the Hills have not gone unnoticed.

Ryham Population 2,445

Nestled in the forest that shares its name, the town of Ryham lies a days ride south of Hellsgate. It is a large town, with a good trade in lumber and wood products. There is a section of the town owned by Elves, who use the town as a base to explore the Ryham Forest, which has been a source of interest to the Elves for several decades. They control the woodcutting guild in the town, and very strictly direct where and when trees may be felled. The cutters are restricted to a few dozen acres of forest near the town each year, and the Elves punish (with an Imperial Warrant) those who transgress those rules.

For the most part, the town is peaceful and quiet, and the woods near the populated areas are safe and beautiful. There are wolves and bears in the deeper wood, and perhaps some other entities as well, being protected by the Elves.

The largest population of Half-Elves in the Hellsgate area live in or around Ryham. The best bows in the region are made in Ryham and are exported as far as Val Monis in the East.

Norrow Population 125

Lying on the road to the Monastery, Norrow is a small farming community that

lies on the edge of the Ryham Hills on the southern coast of the Hellis Sound. An unremarkable town, if not for the market which, twice monthly, sells items made at the monastery further along the coast.

They sell items made from wood, sea shells, stone and metal, all related to Terrin and his Aspects. Many symbols holy to Terrin may be bought here, and the faithful from Hellsgate and the other towns nearby often travel here once or twice a year to make purchases.

The money goes back to the monks, with a small tithe given in thanks to the people of Norrow who sell them. That said, the villagers probably don't make much money on the items, as each market day finds them giving away food and lodging to those that are visiting the village.

The folk of Norrow are known as being amongst the most generous in the Empire, and the phrase "we were given a Norrow welcome" means much to most people.

South Bay Monastery Population 400

Few ever visit the Monastery, unless they are very curious or have a pressing need to experience a peaceful and quiet lifestyle for a few months.

The monks of South Bay exclusively follow Terrin, though there are three sects within the Monastery that follow each Aspect of the God. The monks dress in sackcloth, and have no earthly possessions to distract them from their contemplation of Terrin.

Many spend their time making objects of art, some of which are sold at the town of Norrow, two days walk to the east. Coming across a procession of monks making their way too or from Norrow is a common site on this road.

The monks accept visitors, though they must enter the monastery wearing sackcloth, and absolutely no weapons or armour is allowed. Mages, surprisingly, are





welcome, though anyone who enters the Monastery must lay their hands upon a Holy Relic at the gates, to determine that they are not followers of Mordanan's Path. Those that refuse to touch the relic, or would prefer their religious or moral values to remain private, are allowed to stay in small huts along the clifftops near the monastery, and they are brought bread, cheese and fresh water. They are not allowed to enter the Monastery under any circumstances.

The monks offer healing at the Monastery, and will remove curses and provide other holy curatives. They will expect considerable donations to their cause, however, depending upon what services are requested.

If one should offend the monks in some way (which does not happen lightly) then that person is forever banned from even approaching the Monastery- they will suffer ill effects should they even try, such is the Ban that Terrin Himself places upon the unfortunate. An act of penitence may remove such Bans.

Kelmark Population 589

The town of Kelmark lies two days ride south of Hellsgate, and is the last major habitation in the region. Beyond this, the highway winds its way to Endelon, the capital of the Empire, two or three weeks journey away.

Kelmark is well known for the huge stone walls that surround it, and it was the location of a major battle in the war against the Dark Knights over two hundred and fifty years ago. The walls stood strong against the Dark Knights, and it is known that Curizan and his Company fought the Dark Knights from those walls, and held them back for three days and nights before reinforcements arrived.

It was from this point that the Dark Knights were driven back to Hellsgate, and

a few weeks later, the Lord Barren was destroyed by Curizan with the Orb of Stars. Some say the Orb of Stars spent some time in Kelmark, and the main inn is named after the artifact.

Kelmark has not seen as much excitement since then, and is now merely a peaceful place to break ones journey south.

Hellsgate Population 110,045

The jewel of the Western Coast, the city of hope, Hellsgate is place with much history, and is still full of adventure even today. A vast place, stretching over a mile across and surrounded by high strong walls, Hellsgate is two cities in one. There is the Old City, surrounded by its original walls (strengthened by magic) that lies to the south of the Hellis River. To the north is the New City, built after the War.

For more on Hellsgate, see below.

