

# MONOTONE MUSE モノトーンミュージアム RPG

すがのたすく  
/ F.E.A.R.



ログイン  
テーブルトーク  
RPGシリーズ







THIS IS THE STORY OF A WORLD  
THAT WAS ONCE BEAUTIFUL.

A FINELY PAINTED CANVAS,  
DISCARDED LIKE TRASH.

A MUSICAL SCORE  
REDUCED TO CHAOTIC NOISE.

A CACOPHONY OF  
BLACK AND WHITE.

A WORLD ONCE FILLED WITH  
HOPES AND DREAMS, NOW BUT AN  
ASYLUM FOR THE STRANGE.

ONCE UPON  
A TIME...





THIS WAS A LAND  
WHERE PEOPLE  
FOLLOWED THE WAYS.

「化物は騎士に退治され」

THE KNIGHT SLEW  
THE MONSTER

「眠った姫は目を覚まし」

THE SLEEPING PRINCESS  
OPENED HER EYES

「正直者の青年は  
大金持ちになりました」

THE HONEST BOY WAS  
REWARDED WITH RICHES

「悪い魔女は火にくべられて」

THE WICKED WITCH WAS  
ENGULFED IN FLAME

THIS WAS A WORLD  
WHERE GOD TOLD  
BEAUTIFUL STORIES.

「めでたしめでたし」

HAPPILY EVER AFTER

「少女は王子様と  
幸せに暮らしました」

THE GIRL AND  
THE PRINCE LIVED

BUT NOW—



THE KINGDOM WAS INVADED BY DEMONS

「国は悪魔に蝕まれ」

THE WORLD HAS BEEN REBORN  
AS A PLACE WHERE ONLY HORROR  
STORIES AND TRAGEDIES UNFOLD

「人々は恐怖に押しつぶされて」

THE PEOPLE LIVED  
IN TERROR FOREVERMORE

「少女は想いを告げることなく」

THE GIRL WAS NEVER ABLE  
TO EXPRESS HER FEELINGS

「奇跡が起こることとはなく」

THE MIRACLE NEVER HAPPENED

「絶望のうちに」

OVERCOME BY DESPAIR,

「めでたしめでたし」

HAPPILY EVER AFTER

「亡くなりました」

THEY DIED

「国は滅びました」

THE KINGDOM FELL

「めでたしめでたし」

HAPPILY EVER AFTER

「哀れな少女は怖い女王に」

THE POOR GIRL

N, NO...

HAPPILY EVER AFTER

「めでたしめでたし」

「引き裂かれてしまいました」

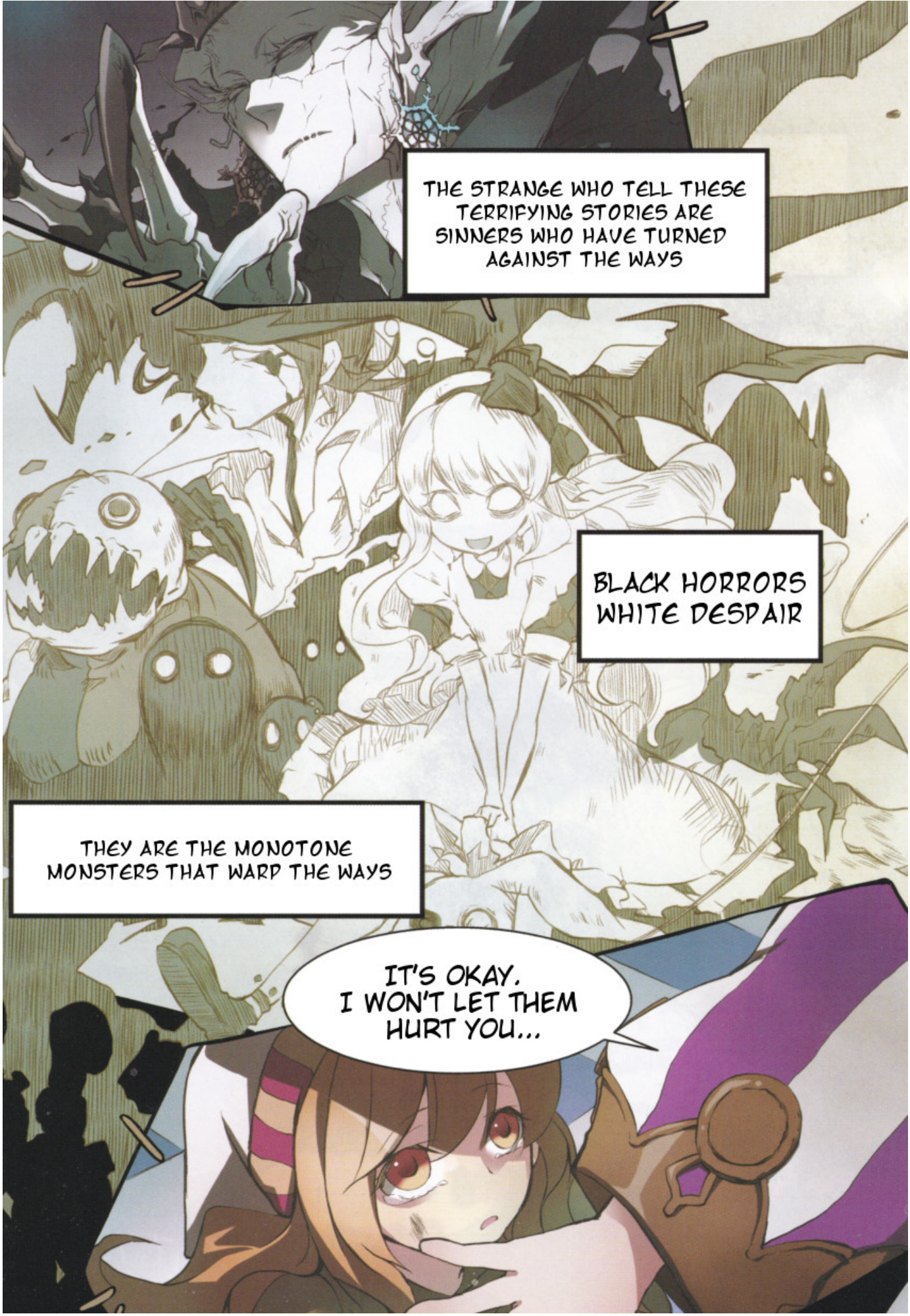
WAS TORN TO SHREDS  
BY THE WICKED QUEEN

I DON'T WANT  
TO DIE...!

「めでたしめでたし」

HAPPILY EVER AFTER





THE STRANGE WHO TELL THESE  
TERRIFYING STORIES ARE  
SINNERS WHO HAVE TURNED  
AGAINST THE WAYS

BLACK HORRORS  
WHITE DESPAIR

THEY ARE THE MONOTONE  
MONSTERS THAT WARD THE WAYS

IT'S OKAY.  
I WON'T LET THEM  
HURT YOU...





WEAVERS—

CRIMSON ZEAL  
AZURE LOYALTY

NO MATTER WHAT COLOR  
THEIR CONVICTION, THEY  
TURN AGAINST THE WAYS  
FOR OTHERS' SAKE

IN ORDER TO RETELL THESE  
TWISTED STORIES AND SET  
THE WORLD RIGHT

THAT ARM...!



A comic book page featuring several anime-style characters. At the top, a character with pink hair and red eyes, wearing a dark horned headpiece and a red and white outfit, is shown from the chest up. Below them, a character in a purple robe and hat is visible. In the lower left, a character with long black hair and a large black hat is shown. In the lower right, a character with brown hair and purple eyes is shown, and below them, a character with blonde hair and a red hat is shown. The background is dark and indistinct. The page is filled with speech bubbles containing text.

I'M SORRY FOR  
FRIGHTENING YOU

AS THEY ABSORB DISTORTIONS  
INTO THEMSELVES,

THEY ARE BRANDED  
AS HERETICS  
AND HUNTED

LOOK, AN  
UNRAVELING

I KNEW THERE WAS  
A WARPED WAY  
AROUND HERE

OF COURSE. WHO  
WOULD HAVE WANTED  
THAT STORY  
TO BE TOLD?

IT DIDN'T HAVE  
A HAPPY ENDING  
AT ALL!





LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!

WELCOME TO THE  
MONOTONE MUSEUM!



# INTRODUCTION

The world is painted upon the canvas of the Void.

The Void was blank, empty and content before God imposed Her will upon it. It resents Her meddling, and takes action against it. Her masterpiece frays at the edges. Holes open within it that must be patched lest the entire world unravel. Flakes of creation peel off, exposing the artifice beneath.

God strives to keep the world from disintegrating altogether, but She cannot—or will not—do it alone. For maintaining the grandest of tapestries alone is an ordeal for even the most skilled worker of threads.

God thus directs those threads of Her creation which have been granted sentience to go where they belong upon their own initiative. She does so in the form of the Ways, instructions delivered directly from Her heart to theirs. Ways, when obeyed, bring happiness to everyone.

But Her creations have free will, and they can disobey her. Doing so will warp the tapestry, open holes through which the Void can enter it, and perhaps result in those threads in being swallowed entirely by the oblivion that lurks beyond.

But there are those aside from God who, despite being part of the tapestry itself, can mend the world and shape it to their own will.

They are the Weavers.

This story is about them.





## THE WAYS

*Just as the princess was finally caught by the monsters...  
The blue-eyed boy arrived and saved her.  
The two of them were wed, and lived together.  
Happily ever after.*

—A certain Way

## WHAT ARE THE WAYS?

Destiny. Guidance. The will of God. There are many ways the Ways could be described, but in essence, they are instructions from God to Her creations that must be followed to ensure the protection of the world.



God does not appear before people, nor does She speak directly to them, but all feel the touch of the phenomenon known as the Ways. They guide each individual to their destiny, and also ordain the fate of countries and the world itself.

Using the Ways, God seeks to create a happy future. The definition of happiness varies depending on the individual, but God accounts for this. All Ways end in happiness for those involved; this is a given, as they always end in the words "happily ever after." If not for that, it would be impossible for people to live in this cruel world. God loves Her children, and the Ways are an expression of Her love.

Ways appear to people in a variety of manners, often as a vision seen in a dream, or an instruction spoken by a phantom voice. Sometimes, automatic writing will reveal a Way. Other times, one of *Them* (or even an ordinary plant or animal) will suddenly speak to inform a person of a Way. They may even appear as writing in a book or upon a wall.

However, it is always apparent to the one receiving it that a Way is a Way, no matter how it is revealed. When one learns of a Way, it is accompanied by a powerful feeling somewhat akin to fear or awe.

Of course, this only happens to the people for whom that Way is meant. If someone learns of their personal Way in a dream, then mentions it to others in conversation, those others will feel nothing. It is also not a given that others will arrive at the same understanding of a Way that is not their own.

It is not uncommon for people from the same area and the same time period to share a Way with each other. For instance, villages near the Holy Capital typically receive the Way "The people held a festival before sowing seeds, and they found love and lived in prosperity happily ever after" on a yearly basis, and by following this Way they have prospered.



Though it is not possible to misunderstand what a Way is directing you to do, they do not rob you of your free will. For instance, someone with the Way "The prince defeated the monsters and rescued the princess" will understand clearly which monsters must he must defeat. But only if he makes this false choice will he will receive his reward.

Generally, people devote their utmost effort to fulfilling the Ways, as it guarantees happiness until they receive their next Way. Even slackers and ne'er-do-wells understand from their childhood what the Ways have in store for them.

## **DISOBEYING THE WAY**

Those who choose to live in opposition to the Ways place themselves in grave danger. The majority of people who disobey the Ways turn into monsters known as Strange and lose their sense of reason. As becoming estranged is said to be proof that one has rejected the will of God, countries that are faithful to the Holy Church consider the Strange criminals and execute them without trial.

In addition, only those who disobey their Way know the fear of an uncertain future. The Ways promise a happy future to those who obey them, and all who do believe that they will surely be guided to happiness.

Even so, there are people who disobey the Ways. Some do so due to their beliefs. Some do so out of love. Some do so out of madness. And some do so out of simple foolishness. There are also tragic times when people simply fail to anticipate the measures necessary to fulfill their Way, and thus doom themselves to a tragic fate.

Stories of these tragedies circle amongst the population, as a warning to those who would defy the Ways.



## **UNFULFILLED WAYS**

If one fails to accomplish a Way for reasons beyond their control, what exactly happens?

This depends on a case by case basis. However, since the story did not lead to the happy ending that was foretold, the result is often unfortunate. For example, the princess will not be saved, or the village will not live in prosperity.

But conversely, if a person fails to accomplish a Way that promises them love, they may still find love on their own through no doing of the Way. An unfulfilled Way does not guarantee that the result it promised will never come to pass; it simply fails to guarantee that it will.

## **STORYTELLERS**

Many Ways are revealed personally by God Herself to the people who must follow them, but larger-scale Ways are often revealed through a mortal medium. These mediums are known as Storytellers.

Storytellers are considered holy people, and most kingdoms guarantee them hospitality. They are often appointed as priests, prophets, or advisors at court. In kingdoms which follow the Holy Church, Storytellers are held to be second in social importance only to the Undying.

While one can attempt to feign being a Storyteller, and thus enjoy a life of luxury, to do this is considered the deadly sin of attempting to take the glory of God for oneself. False Storytellers can expect to be harshly punished upon discovery.





# THE STRANGE

*This is your reward. The ugly truth of the world. The entrails of the beautiful scenery you believed in, like the gears of a broken clock.*

*Tell me again, friend...*

*Which one of us here is the mad one?*

—One of the Strange

## WHAT ARE THE STRANGE?

The Strange are those people and things that have lost, or rejected, the protection of God. This world was created from the Void by God, and only God protects it and everything in it from being reclaimed by the Void.



When someone or something loses God's protection, their bodies are invaded by the Void, and they transform into the Strange. Both living and non-living things can become estranged, though it is significantly more common for living creatures to become estranged as a consequence of their own actions.

There are few who consider the Strange anything other than enemies of all life. After the Strange began to create Warped Ways of their own, the Holy Church and most kingdoms drove them out, and some actively hunt them. Merely to be a Strange is considered an irredeemable sin.

Though the process of becoming estranged does not always begin with physical mutations, generally the Strange remain as they were mentally. However, they are always aware that they have become estranged. As to become estranged one must reject or be rejected by God, this is only to be expected.

## **THE ORIGINS OF THE STRANGE**

In general, the origins of the Strange can be divided into three categories. Though this division does not cover everything, in the present experience of civilized beings, these categories account for the vast majority of cases of estrangement.

- **Those who reject the Ways**

To reject the Ways, or in other words to reject the will of God, is to cast off Her protection.

It is God who protects people from being consumed by the Void, and thus to reject this protection makes it highly likely that one will be invaded by the Void and become estranged. This is the consequence of refusing to take the hand God holds out to all of Her children.



- **Those who are lead astray by their own desires**

The Holy Church teaches that those who have weak spirits are prone to being invaded by the Void. The Void whispers to them and leads them astray from the Ways by inflaming their base desires. If they heed these whispers, they will be infiltrated by the Void and become estranged.

Strange created in this way are said to have "listened to the whispers of the Void." Though it is a sad thing, this world cannot abide those with weak spirits. They will only lead to tragedy--the tragedy known as the Strange.

- **Those who become involved with the Strange**

Even more tragically, anyone or anything may become estranged if they are too deeply involved with the Strange. The presence of a Strange distorts the world and leads to further aberrations in its vicinity, much as an open flame may set anything nearby ablaze. This is why the Strange are hunted; so they do not give rise to others of their kind.

There are also Strange capable of directly transmitting their curse to others. These Strange can willfully transform others of their choice into fellow Strange. Among all the Strange, these ones are particularly dreaded, and are hunted down with the highest urgency.

## **THE HOLLOW**

A Strange who has been consumed by the Void until not even their mind remains is known as a Hollow. The Hollow are no longer capable of intelligent communication. Though they react to speech and can even hold conversations, this is merely a sort of reflex; they have no actual understanding of the speech, actions or feelings of other people.



The Hollow tend to act suddenly in response to fear or egoistic impulses and no longer possess any kind of morality, making their behavior unpredictable. As they possess the same powers as other Strange, they are extremely dangerous.

Once someone has become a Hollow, they can no longer be healed by the power of a Weaver. Weavers are those whose wills are strong enough to reweave the Ways of others and heal their spirits. However, they cannot save someone whose spirit has been broken.

A Hollow can no longer be healed of their estrangement or restored to being human, for in a sense they no longer have a spirit at all. It would be much like trying to cleanse water after it has been absorbed by sand.

There are cases in which people have become Hollow without first becoming estranged. These people will appear to be human and may even successfully mimic their normal lifestyle for a while, but are incapable of emotion or self-restraint, and will eventually expose themselves through their bizarre and destructive impulses. Typically they will become estranged in body as well as mind after being threatened with injury.

It is difficult to detect this type of Hollow. For this reason, it is not unheard of that people will be falsely accused of being a Hollow and put to death. Eccentric people, outsiders, people who seem to have abandoned their Ways, and those whom the authority figures hold a grudge against are all prone to being suspected of being a Hollow and losing their lives. Sometimes, the Hollow themselves are behind these accusations.

It seems a strange mistake to make, does it not? But whom can say whether their heart is empty? Can you yourself assert that you are not a Hollow? There is no one who can say for sure that even their own spirit has not been touched by the Void.



## **THE PROCESS OF ESTRANGEMENT**

Estrangement properly refers to the process by which the body of a Strange physically changes to become monstrous.

The first step of estrangement is the color of the affected area changing to either a sinister pitch-black, or a pale white akin to the pallor of death. There are also cases in which the body part loses all color and becomes transparent. It is thought that this color change is representative of one's body being invaded by the Void.

The next step of estrangement is when the owner loses control over the affected part. Without their will, it will move on its own, presenting a danger to those on the vicinity. Sometimes it will attempt to injure itself or the user's own body. If it succeeds to the point of destruction, this is known as "returning to the Void."

The speed of these changes varies widely; some people will turn into a Hollow nigh-immediately, while others can take years to become fully estranged.

Adepts know spells that can alter the speed of estrangement, but they cannot stop it completely. Only those unconstrained by the laws of physics, the aberrations known as Weavers, can defeat the Strange and reverse the process of estrangement. Of course, the Holy Church denies that this is possible.

## **THE POWERS OF THE STRANGE**

When the Strange become separated from the Ways, they gain terrifying powers that are unconstrained by the physical laws of the world.



Most notably, the Strange can warp the Way to their own liking. This makes them similar to the Weavers described in the next section, but in general, the power of the Strange to create Warped Ways is born of deep subconscious desire rather than conscious willpower.

In addition, the Strange are stronger than normal flesh and blood, and even those enchanted by magic. As the Strange have been touched by the Void, they gain the ability to violate the laws of the world, distorting reality in the vicinity to become estranged much as they themselves are. Or so it is thought; no one knows the source of their strength for sure.

## **THE VOID**

The Void, as its name implies, is a space that will not tolerate the existence of anything. Little is understood about it. The Holy Church teaches that the world is an existence imposed upon the Void by God and preserved by Her power alone. However, this is a simple article of their faith.

It is clear, however, that the Void seeks to destroy existence. When something is fully possessed by the Void, it simply ceases to exist, as when the Strange "return to the Void."

On rare occasions, the Void itself can appear in the world without having a destructive effect upon it. The Soft Waters that separate the Left Land and the Right Land is thought to be one of these occasions. These waters cannot be seen, touched, or indeed perceived in any way, leaving them an utter mystery.

## **WARPED WAYS**

The most fearsome power of the Strange is their ability to create Warped Ways. In accordance with their own desires, they will warp existing Ways to suit their purposes or sometimes create entirely new ones.



For example, consider the Way "The prince defeated the monster and saved the princess, and they lived happily ever after." This might be twisted into "The prince tried to save the princess from the monster, but he was killed and eaten, because the princess herself was a monster. The kingdom then suffered under the rule of the monsters happily ever after."

To ordinary people, the most terrifying aspect of this is that they cannot tell when a Way is a Warped Way. They can doubt it, if it seems at odds with common sense. However, since the consequence of failing to follow a Way—even a Warped Way—is to become estranged yourself, who would dare disobey what might be the will of God, even if it might also be the whim of a malevolent Strange?

People at large are well aware that the Strange are distorting the world. This is why they fear them and seek to drive them out.

## **UNRAVELINGS**

An Unraveling is a phenomenon created at the time a Strange weaves a new Warped Way.

When a Strange recklessly creates a Way that demands the arrival of an impossible future, it distorts the world itself in a visible way, creating a literal hole in reality. This is known as an Unraveling. On the other side of the Unraveling is the Void, and in extreme cases, the entire vicinity of the Strange will be swallowed up, disappearing as if it never existed.

If the Warped Way that created the Unraveling is destroyed, the world will mend itself from the Unraveling. However, for large ones, this can take quite some time. For this reason, if someone suspects a Way is a Warped Way, they hunt for any nearby Unravelings. The presence of an Unraveling is objective proof that a Strange has been warping the Ways.



## **HOW OTHERS SEE THE STRANGE**

The Strange are fearsome existences that create destructive Ways and cause harm to people. For this reason, from the moment of their discovery, they are hunted and driven away. Knights and levies are often raised to defend against the Strange when they are prevalent.

However, even so, people cannot oppose the Ways. Even if they realize it is a Warped Way created by a Strange, to go against a Way can result in becoming estranged oneself. Even if a Way will lead to misery and destruction, most have no choice but to follow it.

Thus, some kingdoms have been unable to both fulfill the Ways and resist the powers of the Strange. Entire kingdoms have "returned to the Void" in this fashion.

Some see the Strange as an opportunity rather than a source of fear. The kingdoms involved in the Southern War have attempted to use the Strange as weapons, while others in the Artisans' Kingdom attempt to find a way to profit from them. However, this is a reckless and dangerous gamble, and in general the Strange are only seen by people as enemies.

## **MONSTERS**

Strange who have entirely lost any trace of their humanity are known as monsters, and are relatively common. From ogres that attack travelers on the roads to giants that dwell deep in the mountains, monsters are terrifying creature that superficially resemble humans but bear a deep hatred for them all.

Though they possess mighty powers borne of the Void and are extremely dangerous, as monsters do not have a sentient mind, they are incapable of creating Warped Ways.



# WEAVERS

*Weavers weave the world's threads  
And unravel them as well  
Defy the Ways, and those fools will  
Surely descend to hell!*

—A song sung by girls in the Holy Capital

## WHAT ARE WEAVERS?

Weavers are those who live apart from the Ways. Among those who choose not to follow the Ways, there are those who possess enough force of will to resist the corruption of the Void that threatens to befall them, even without God's protection. These fortunate few are known as Weavers.



Weavers can be of any intelligent species; Humans, *Them*, Automatons, and all other sentient beings are capable of becoming Weavers.

Why do Weavers exist? That is a question that cannot be easily answered. Even the Weavers themselves do not know.

The one common point among the Weavers is that they all possess an iron will. It is this will which allows them to believe that the Ways, the will of God Herself, are mistaken and that they can better find happiness through their own power. The strength of this conviction allows them to resist the Void as it attempts to invade their bodies.

Being a Weaver does not make you a good person. Each Weaver has their own individual way of thinking, and there are some Weavers with sinister objectives. However, many of these Weavers realize they can more easily accomplish their goals by entrusting themselves to the void and becoming Hollow, and thus are merely Hollows in the guise of Weavers.

## **POPULAR KNOWLEDGE OF WEAVERS**

After the "Day of the Black Spot" 13 years ago, the Inquisition of the Holy Church redoubled its efforts to hunt Weavers. Existences that defy the Ways, such as Weavers, cannot be permitted to exist by the Church.

The feelings that the people of the world bear towards Weavers can be divided into two categories.

The first is fear and hatred. To the Holy Church, Weavers are sinners who have rejected God, just as are the Strange. They make no distinction between the Strange and and Weavers. It is no concern of theirs whether a heretic warps the Ways or lives outside them entirely; both are the same sin.

The second is hope. A hundred years ago, when the world was engulfed in the Dark Age, it was Weavers who saved it by destroying the Warped Ways and repairing the Unravelings that covered the world. There are a few people who remember this time still and look upon Weavers with admiration, even within the Inquisition (in secret, of course.)

It was in the Artisans' Kingdom that the people were saved from the Warped Way created by "She of the Evening Calm," and so they welcome and support Weavers.

There are even said to be Weavers hidden inside the Holy Church itself, where they use their powers to fight the Strange.

## **THE TAILORS' GUILD**

The Tailors' Guild is an underground organization that was created in its current form to fight against "She of the Evening Calm" and the Warped Way she created, which threatened to destroy the world. They also protect Weavers from being hunted by the Inquisition and support them. Weavers who are members of the Guild are known as Tailors.

The members of the Tailors' Guild have honed their power beyond "the power to resist becoming estranged" into "the power to alter the laws of the world," and teach this to others. They can be considered the most skilled Weavers in the world.

The Inquisition views Tailors as mortal enemies and will stop at nothing to destroy the Tailors' Guild.

The Tailors' Guild is headquartered in the "Sewing Box" in the Merchants' Kingdom. Its current head, the "Queen of the Night" Aria B. Cororatura, has established branches in many other kingdoms in order to support Tailors around the world.



In recent years, the Tailors' Guild has come into conflict with the Hollow terrorist organization "The Apostles of Dusk," which seeks to fulfill the legacy of "She of the Evening Calm", along with the cult of Weavers known as the Shores of Dawn that is manipulating the Southern War to their own ends.

Since few common people know much about the Tailors' Guild, they often mistake these organizations for each other and live in fear of all Tailors.

## **TELETHREADS**

Tailors are famous for their many powerful tools, such as the needles which they use to mend Unravelings. One tool at their disposal is the Telethreads.

A Telethread is a short thread attached to a cup. Through the magical arts of the Tailors, this thread is connected to the Queen of the Night in her chamber in the Sewing Box. By speaking into the cup or holding it to your ear, you can receive instructions from the Queen of the Night, no matter where you are in the world.

Though this device was once known as the Soulspeak Communication Device, recently the Artisans' Kingdom invented a device called a "Telephone", and young Tailors began to call their communicators a "Telethread" in imitation of those.

## **DISTORTIONS**

The Strange and Hollows can subconsciously warp the Ways in accordance with their own egos. The reason for this phenomenon is explained by the Tailors' Guild as such.

The Law of the World (a term used primarily by the Tailors' Guild) is a system of physical laws established by God that directs the entire plane of reality, including the Ways.

Existences that can act outside this system are necessarily capable of manipulating the Ways as well. Thus, the establishment of a Warped Way will also alter reality in the vicinity. The only ones capable of intervening in and reversing this are Weavers.

If reality itself is not able to accomodate the Warped Way, an Unraveling will form in the vicinity. Even more frighteningly, some Strange and Hollows possess Distortion Powers that can actively alter reality at their whim.

For example, the Law of the World states that if you drop a metal sphere and an apple, discounting air resistance, both will fall at the same speed. This is true in the Holy Capital, in the Artisans' Kingdom, and everywhere else in the Left Land.

However, in a distorted part of the world, this may not be true. The apple may fall faster than the metal sphere, or vice versa, or they may not fall at all! This is the power of meddling with the Ways, the stories set down by God. There is no limit to the degree a Way can influence reality.

Think of the world as a picture in a frame, and the power of the Strange and Hollows to warp the ways as them holding a brush with which they can alter the picture, or paint an entirely new one on the same canvas. It is this defaced painting that is the world, and without the power of the Weavers, nothing would survive the many meddlers constantly worrying at it.

## **PEELING**

The Law of the World represents reality itself. It expresses such common-sense facts such as that rocks are hard, clouds float in the sky, fish swim in water, the Seas are square, and the world is divided into left and right. Even beings such as *Them* and the Undying cannot escape from these truths.



However, these things are not for certain when the story of a Warped Way is being told. This phenomenon, in which reality itself comes apart, is called Peeling.

When Peeling occurs, the line between fact and fantasy blurs, as the truth of the world itself is polluted by the Void. Within the vicinity of a Warped Way, those who use a Distortion Power to alter the world—including Weavers themselves—risk allowing the Void to invade and estrange them.

As distortion and Peeling occur, omens will manifest and before long, anyone caught within them will cease to be themselves. Whether they become estranged or Hollow, it is unlikely they will ever be able to return to the way they were.

## **ABSORBING DISTORTIONS**

In addition to the freedom to act in a manner not bound by the Ways, Weavers possess one additional power.

That is the ability to absorb distortions. As existences outside the Law of the World, when all their efforts come to naught and a Warped Way begins to change the world, a Weaver can take that change upon themselves instead, thus stopping the world from going any further mad, if only slightly.

Of course, this comes at a price. The Unraveling created by this act inside oneself will allow the Void to more easily invade one's body.

When the world is distorted, it generally means that a Strange has created a Warped Way. Any Weavers in the vicinity can choose to endure the distortion, take action against the being that created the distortion, or perhaps, absorb the distortion. This is because Weavers, too, are existences not bound by the Law of the World, and who possess the power to interfere with the World.

Ultimately, a Weaver who absorbs too many distortions will peel away from the world far more quickly than they otherwise would.

The Tailors' Guild teaches that Weavers should distribute the duty of absorbing distortions upon themselves. However, the number of distortions present in the world is increasing, while the number of Weavers remains small. Slowly, gradually, the world seems to be on the course towards its destruction.

## **WEAVERS AND DISTORTION POWERS**

As existences separated from the world and outside its laws, many Weavers can use Distortion Powers much like the Strange can.

When they escape from the Law of the World and draw near to the Void, in a fashion similar to how the Strange create Warped Ways, Weavers can weave the reality that they desire. In the eyes of many, this makes them the same as the Warped; the enemies of God and the enemies of humanity. They are seen as two sides of the same coin.

However, this does not discourage the Weavers from using the power they have found. Even if they have turned from the Ways, they have things they want to protect. Even if they must exile themselves from the world, there are things they must do.

## **WHEN WEAVERS DIE**

Despite not living in the world as others do, Weavers have physical bodies just like other people, and can die. This is true even if they are an Automaton or one of *Them*. Whether it's in battle, from illness, or at the end of a long life, all Weavers die eventually. Since they have turned from the Ways, there is nobody who knows what happens to their soul afterwards.



## **WHEN WEAVERS RETIRE**

Though they have gone astray, Weavers are capable of returning to the Ways. By doing this, they can live out their remaining days in peace, in accordance with the Ways. Danger will no longer befall them, and they will be like anyone else. This is not an uncommon thing for Weavers to do after they grow exhausted from their duty.

However, even this will not stop them from being a Weaver. They will always possess powers that the others around them do not, even if they choose not to use them. Like a curse, this is something they can never escape.

Some Weavers believe the rumour that by journeying to the Right Land, one can surrender their free will to God and cease to be a Weaver. As with everything about the Right Land, no one knows the truth of this.

## **MALICIOUS WEAVERS**

Tragically, but perhaps inevitably, not all Weavers mean well for the world. Not all turn from the Ways because they wish to save people. Some merely have sinister ambitions and desires that cannot be accomplished within the Ways.

While many of these people become Strange or Hollow, there are those who remain Weavers, or are of the Hollow while possessing powers akin to those of Weavers.

They see the world as a thing to be twisted to their desires, and do not hesitate to use their powers to do this. Most would call this evil. That is a matter of opinion, but it is true that these selfish Weavers tend to deny those around them the happiness of fulfilling the Ways.



*Glittering, glittering, does the void shine bright  
As it splits the earth between left and right  
The left is here, and the right is there  
In the land of the Ways which guide us with care*

—A nursery rhyme from the Interior

In the center of this world lie the "Soft Waters," a gigantic void which consumes all that it touches. From the north pole to the south, it divides the land in two. The stuff of the waters are the stuff of mystery; in every age, a few brave souls will attempt to cross it through various methods, or research its nature via experiments.



Never have they succeeded, for the darkness simply absorbs all without complaint. This is why they it is known as the Soft Waters, or sometimes as the Edge of the World.

On the western side of the sea is the Left Land, where all known civilization exists. The land on the eastern side of the sea is known as the Right Land. No one who has attempted to travel there has ever returned, and it is traditionally believed to be the dwelling place of God.

Why these lands came to be known as the Left Land and the Right Land is unknown. Presumably, there is some kind of reason why those terms were chosen over East and West, but this reason has been long forgotten.

## **CLIMATE AND SEASONS**

In general, it becomes colder the further north one goes in the Left Land, and warmer as one goes south. However, there are cold places in the south and warm places in the north, so this is only true in a broad sense.

It is said that the world was born in the midst of a blizzard that covered all in blinding snow, and so the deepest part of winter is the traditional beginning of the year.

Each year is 12 months, and each month is 30 days. The days of the week are Earthday, Sunday, Moonday, Waterday, Fireday, Lifeday and Metalday, for it is said that God created the stuff of the world in that order. Four of these weeks take place between two special days of the month, the First Day and the Last Day.

Between the four seasons lie the Threshold Days, making the year 364 days long in total.

## **THE THRESHOLD DAYS**

The Threshold Days are the days on which the seasons change in more than merely name. On the Threshold of Spring, the land transforms from one blanketed into snow to one in which flowers bloom rampant.

Depending on the locale, these days have various regional names such as "The Interludes" and "The Days of Invitation," but calling them the Threshold Days is common and universally understood.

It is said that the hand of God touches the world on the Threshold Days, in order that the seasons might change so. In the North, tradition has it that since God is preoccupied with changing the seasons, any sins committed on the Threshold Days will be overlooked.

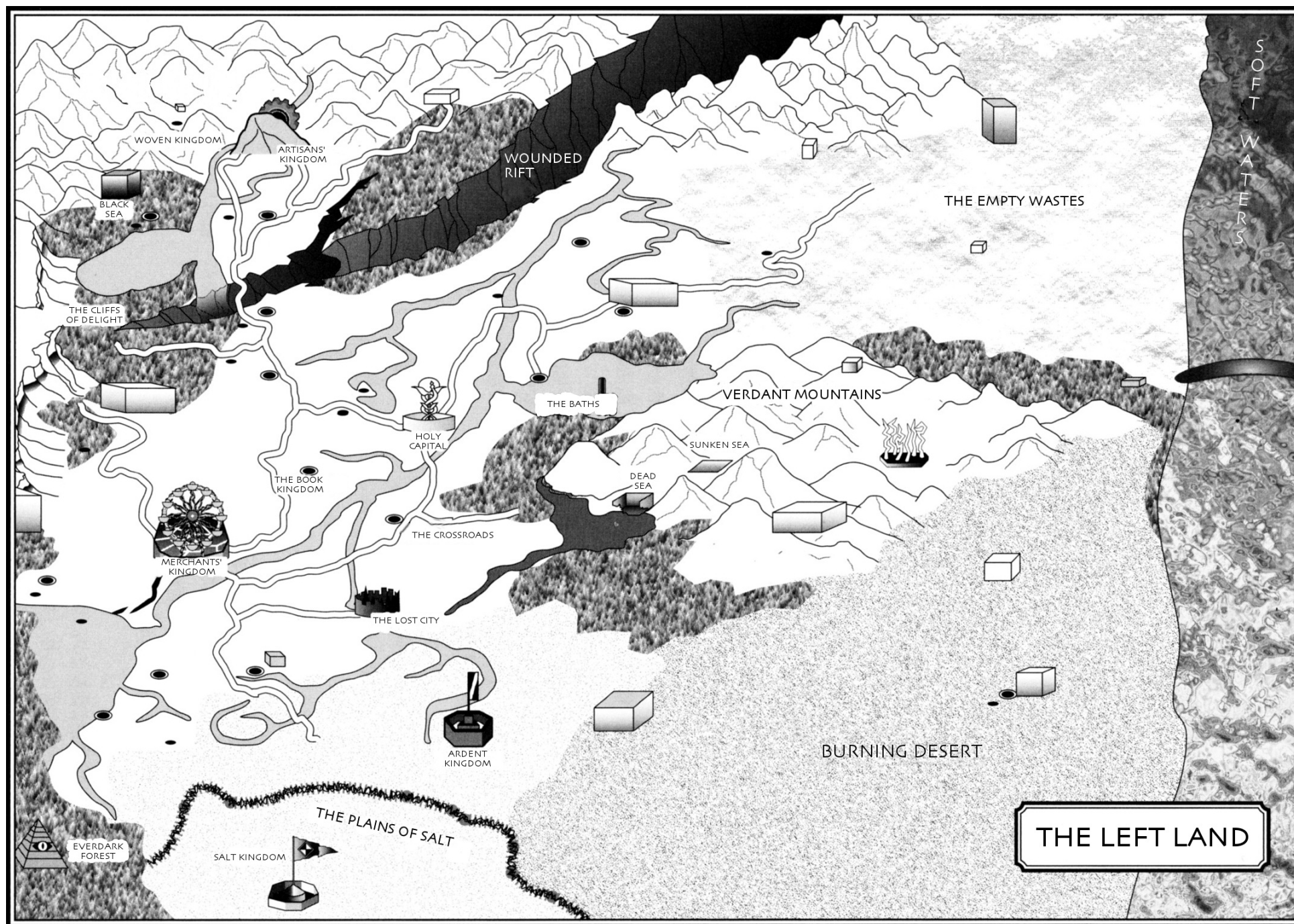
Customs upon the Threshold Days vary widely amongst kingdoms, but in many of them, people will cease working and, in contrast to other days, open their doors freely to any manner of being that wishes to wander inside—thus "The Days of Invitation."

## **GEOGRAPHY**

The heart of human civilization is the western part of the Left Land, known as the Interior, in which the Artisans' Kingdom, the Merchants' Kingdom, the Holy Land, and many of the most populous kingdoms are located. These kingdoms are linked by well-maintained roads, and this part of the world is generally free of the dangers that lurk elsewhere.

To the east, the mark of human civilization fades away and the land is reclaimed by nature. There are few roads and the kingdoms in these outlying regions tend to be isolationist, looking upon outsiders with distrust.





In the northeast of the Left Land are the Empty Wastes, a land inhospitable to the living. However, it is said that deep within, the King of the Wastes holds court over Undying apparitions, their combined powers defying the land's rejection of all life.

In the center of the land lies the Verdant Mountains, and to the south of it is the Burning Desert. East of those, the Soft Waters mark the eastern terminus of the Left Land.

## **THE NORTH**

The northern part of the Left Land is dominated by the mountain range known as the Silverpeaks. Much rain falls upon these mountains, covering them in a blanket of glittering silver snow in the winters.

The Silverpeaks themselves, harsh and untamed, are held by locals to be the dominion of lesser earth gods; strange phenomena are said to occur within the mountains. Only a few small kingdoms lie within the more hospitable valleys.

However, nestled among the southern foothills is one of the most affluent kingdoms in the Left Land, the Artisans' Kingdom. As one might expect given its name, the craftsmen of this kingdom are unparalleled elsewhere in the world.

To the east of the Artisans' Kingdom, a great chasm has been torn in the mountains, known as the Wounded Rift. It is not far east of that that the Empty Wastes mark the border civilization. The size of the Empty Wastes is unknown, as no one who has attempted to cross them has ever returned.



## **THE INTERIOR**

The interior of the Left Land is dominated by temperate, gently rolling plains. It is for this reason that its main kingdoms, such as the Holy Capital and the Merchants' Kingdom, are the most populous in the world.

When one envisions civilization, these affluent lands are the first place which come to mind. It is not unknown, however, that the Interior has been embroiled in war and devastation waged by these grand civilizations themselves.

## **THE EAST AND SOUTH**

As one ventures east in the Left Land, they reach the Verdant Mountains, blessed with the bounty of the earth and of nature. Though the deepest parts of these mountains remain unexplored, many small kingdoms and villages border the mountain range. The mountains themselves are sparsely inhabited, for many hidden dangers are said to lie within them.

To the south, the land is parched and no snow falls in the winter. Here lie the Burning Desert and the Plains of Salt. Within these inhospitable lands, small villages and kingdoms are to be found at each oasis, and nomads journey between them, making their living through trade. No one has ever journeyed far enough south to find the edge of the desert.

## **THE WEST**

To the west of the Interior, the huge forest known as the Everdark Woods covers much of the land. It is inhabited mainly by *Them*. Few humans have cause to venture within, and fewer still make their homes there.

Near the lakes northwest of the Plains of Salt, a fierce war has been fought for seven years between humans and the mermen who dwell nearby, known as the Sea Guardians.

Tensions between the Sea Guardians and other beings have been high ever since the Dark Age, but things reached a boiling point when the kingdom of the Sea Guardians, known as the Salt Kingdom, had its king—the Lord of the Roaring Sea—assassinated by the most powerful of the southern kingdoms, the Ardent Kingdom.

The Salt Kingdom declared war on the Ardent Kingdom, and most of the neighboring kingdoms have been dragged into the war as well. Despite gains and losses, the two sides have been at an impasse ever since.

The Merchants' Kingdom turns a tidy profit selling arms to both sides, and no end to the conflict is in sight. As a result, the southern kingdoms are all devastated to a degree, and there are many places in which even the Holy Church and the Tailors' Guild cannot bring succor to the people.

Some years previous, the cult of renegade Tailors known as the Shores of Dawn began operating in the area. They have taken advantage of the war to further destabilize the area and further their agenda of rebellion against the Ways.

In comparison to other regions, the Ways are particularly warped in the south, and the Strange are common. They have banded together into their own kingdoms and guilds, and some have taken up arms and joined in the warfare.



## **THE SEAS**

The Left Land is filled with shallow surface water such as rivers and lakes. However, only the Seas contain saltwater. They are bounded by transparent walls on each side, taller than even the mountains, giving them the appearance of huge water tanks.

On the edge of these walls, crystals of salt form from the evaporating water, which people mine extensively. They also take advantage of the other bounty of the Seas when possible, though the local Sea Guardians do not always permit them to do this.

There are seven Seas with a surface area exceeding a square mile, but a large number of smaller Seas exist as well.

## **INHABITANTS**

Though humans are the most prominent species in the Left Land, several others live amongst and alongside them.

## **HUMANS**

Human civilization has spread throughout the Left Land. In general, they envy the Undying, fear the Strange, and follow the Ways.

Though individual humans have little physical or magical prowess compared to some other beings, they are a prolific race, and through their devotion to the Ways they have risen to a place of prominence in the Left Land.

However, many a human is consumed by a curiosity that knows not fear, and this can lead them to their doom. They have the courage and the desire to do the forbidden, and therefore it is easy for them to become estranged.

## HUMAN LIFE

The majority of humans are pastoral. Some till fields and raise cattle and horses, while others hunt wild beasts.

Most humans live in large communities which they call 'kingdoms.' While the most advanced of them, the Artisans' Kingdom, possesses steam-powered vehicles and electric lighting, it is more common for a human kingdom to be traversed by those upon horseback and lit by oil lamps.

Humans are taught to believe in the righteousness of the Ways and obey the teachings of God from birth. Those who do not share these sentiments find it rather hard to live in most human societies.

Humans have a currency-based economy, and have reached a level of affluence previously unknown in the Left Land. Of course, much of this is acquired through war, exploitation and other underhanded means.

## TRANSPORTATION

Most transport between kingdoms is done by horse or horse-drawn carriage. Caravans of traveling merchants in horse-drawn wagons are a common sight throughout human lands.

About 15 years ago, in the Artisans' Kingdom, *They* built a line on which advanced steam engines run, known as the 'Seam Express.' Thus far, out of places in which humans dwell, the railroad stops only within that kingdom.

In the Salt Kingdom to the south, steam-powered ships have been developed which sail through the salt using paddle wheels. Similar vessels are used in other bodies of water as well, although not in the Seas.



The air remains an unconquered realm. Although a theory of powered flight has been developed and demonstrated in recent years, it is not yet a viable method of transportation.

However, some of *Them* can fly and are occasionally seen soaring through the sky with their human friends upon their backs.

## **MAGIC**

Some humans can make use of the mysterious technique known as magic.

Magic takes many forms, ranging from small charms—such as a spell to locate a lost trinket, or to keep a pot from boiling over—to those that can lay a deadly curse upon a person or conjure a ball of fire.

Much like art or music, there are some who possess a natural talent for magic, but with extensive practice anyone is capable of mastering it.

Those capable of using magic are known to the Holy Church as Adepts. Though the power of Adepts is said by them to be a gift bestowed by God upon the worthy, in some places, Adepts are distrusted and sometimes even held to be of the same breed as the Strange.

Conversely, there are other kingdoms where Adepts are held as the equal of any other human, or even superior to the common man.



## ***THEM***

*Chichichichi, chichichichi, They are dancing  
Dancing, dancing, dancing round and round  
Let's play with them, let's look for them  
They might be there, or might be here!*

—A nursery rhyme in the Happy Kingdom

*They* are many.

*They* are animal, plant, and everything in between. *They* include everything from small fairies that hide in the shade of leaves to dragons that soar through the sky.

The Academy in the Holy Capital has studied *Them* for many years and concluded that although the powers *They* possess resemble magic, are not the same manner of magic wielded by Adepts.

*They* are of this world, yet they are not. *They* are not estranged from this world as the Strange are, but they are unlike humans and mundane beasts. That is why the sages hold the most proper name for them is simply "*Them*."

*They* vary widely in intelligence, from great sages whose wisdom is beyond human comparison to those no more intelligent than beasts. Some can understand human speech, others cannot.

*They* do not live as humans and their closest companions would. Often, they live far from civilization, in places such as the deep mountains, below the ground, high in the sky and at the bottom of the Seas.

But among *Them*, there are also those who enjoy the company of humans in some way. Some delight in scaring or surprising them, some merely find it pleasant to live alongside them. Some are allies of civilization, some are enemies.

*They* exist in countless varieties, many of which humans are not even aware of; these kinds may have never seen humans or vice versa, except, perhaps, as a meal. Some types of *Them* are thought to be no more than the stuff of fairy tales... until they are witnessed once again.

*They* may or may not require sustenance depending on the individual. Some feed on meat and vegetables as other beings do, others consume raw energy, and a few even feed on emotions such as fear. Others merely live forever, unchanging.



*They* cannot become estranged; so it is believed by many. This is only partially true. Just like other beings, most of *Them* can go against the Ways, or be touched by the Void through other means. However, *They* tend not to display omens of estrangement in the same manner as humans.

Since *They* tend to live apart from civilization, their estrangement goes unnoticed more often than not. And there are indeed some of *Them* who cannot become estranged, for *They* are many.

There are also some of *Them* who are already estranged; they are touched by the Void just as the Strange are from the moment of their birth.

*They* have been known to become Weavers. Of course, those who become Weavers generally must have an intellect on par with that of humans; it takes a certain level of consciousness to willfully turn against the Ways.

The reasons why *They* become Weavers are generally similar to those of other beings. They may wish to protect something important to them, possess a conviction that will not yield to the Ways, or have their own ambitions that they cannot fulfill by following the Ways.

The only thing that can be stated with certainty about *Them* is that there is nothing that all of them have in common, for *They* are many.



# AUTOMATONS

*Your perfect God created humans, with all our flaws.*

*Why, then, should we not strive to create those as perfect as Her?*

—The dollmaker Zagaro, on the day before he was burned as a heretic

## WHAT ARE AUTOMATONS?

Automatons are a manmade race—inorganic objects imbued with life by magicians and specialized artisans. The term encompasses a wide variety of machines throughout the Left Land, their defining characteristic being that they all possess a will of their own.

Automaton research in its purest form refers to the imbuing of souls within artificial materials. However, it is not correct to call them merely machines. They are sentient and have a will of their own.

Generally speaking, Automatons are created in order to serve living beings. Most kingdoms use them to perform physical labor and other menial tasks, and they are seen by the average person as at best valuable tools rather than as thinking beings equal with other life forms. To break or steal an Automaton is a crime in most places, but the penalty is simply to reimburse the owner.

Though they may degrade as they age, Automatons live until they break down. If well crafted and maintained, it is possible for them to live over a hundred years.

A few kingdoms afford Automatons equal rights with humans. This is considered a highly eccentric notion by human civilization at large.

## **THE HISTORY OF AUTOMATONS**

The precise origin of Automatons is unknown. Some of the oldest books in existence, written before the Dark Age, make reference to magicians placing pincushions inside dolls as their 'hearts.' It is believed this may be a description of the crafting of Automatons. Humanity has still not recovered the knowledge lost during the Dark Age; legend has it that the people of the Old Races were able to craft Automatons more perfect than any created today.

220 years before the present, the legendary Automaton craftsman Coppelius discovered the technique of using Soulstones to imbue Automatons with motive force of their own, which made Automaton crafting possible on a wide scale.



This allowed brilliant Automaton craftsmen to spring up throughout the world, each of them pioneering new techniques. But since Coppelius' day up until the present, the Artisans' Kingdom in which he lived has always been held to be the leader in Automaton craftsmanship.

## **AUTOMATON CRAFTING**

Automatons are typically made of common metals and wood, and operate using systems of gears and pulleys. In the Salt Kingdom, in order that they do not corrode from the salt, Automatons have an expensive metal coating applied to their entire bodies. Cloth and fur decorations are also common.

There are rumoured to be Automatons crafted from the remains of living beings, but anyone who admitted to creating one would likely find themselves on trial for heresy.

Automatons can be equipped with steam engines in order to boost their power, but the most common of them are fully gear-operated, staying true to Coppelius's original invention, which are powered only by springs. These springs are granted energy by the Soulstone.

In recent years, there have been experiments with sealing lightning or magical energy within batteries and using them to power Automatons, but these are not considered ready for general use.

Automatons which are powered not by Soulstones but simply by direct magical control are also common. Once thought quaint and obsolete, they have become a fad amongst magicians as of late.

## **AUTOMATONS AS ART**

Automatons cost an amount of money far out of reach of the common person. As a result, they are typically used only in roles where an Automaton is absolutely necessary, such as for shock troops in armies, or when great profit stands to be made, such as in dangerous excavation work. In other words, they do only work that living beings cannot.

However, Automatons have also come to possess aesthetic value in the eyes of some. For this reason, many produced today are designed artistically and crafted out of rare materials. These are often status symbols for nobles, some of whom have become the patrons of skilled Automaton crafters.

## **SOULSTONES**

Soulstones are a beautiful rainbow-colored mineral found only in the northern Silverpeaks. Popular myth has it that Coppelius' dedication to his craft moved God Herself to shed tears, which fell upon the Silverpeaks and formed the veins of Soulstone located there.

After being extracted, the majority of Soulstones are taken to the Artisans' Kingdom, where they are then cut beautifully in preparation for use in Automaton crafting.

For a Soulstone to manifest an artificial soul, it must absorb the feelings of a living heart. This typically requires someone to carry it against their bare skin constantly for about 49 days. Absorbing enough of their feelings will inspire the Soulstone to manifest a heart of its own.

A Soulstone tends to reflect the personality and capabilities of the person who served as the basis for its soul. For this reason, automaton crafters will pay a generous sum to people whom they consider desirable role models.

However, like all works of art, Automaton have flaws. No matter how masterful the craftsmanship of the Automaton and superb the role model, if the Soulstone itself contains a hidden flaw, it may have unexpected effects upon the final result.



## SEA GUARDIANS

*White is magnificence, light is the black  
And yet the seas shall never be blue  
Till the end of the world, our treasure  
From the beginning of the world, our home*

—A traditional song among the Sea Guardians



Properly known as the Finne, one of the Old Races personally created by God during the Age of Creation, the Sea Guardians are mermen who dwell near large bodies of water, including both the Seas and freshwater lakes.

Most Sea Guardians have lower halves that resemble a fish's tail, but there are a few tribes with tentacles like a squid or octopus. They possess the powers to mentally manipulate water and to communicate with other sea creatures.

As they are marine creatures, true to their name, they consider themselves the protectors of the Left Land's bodies of water. Though they can leave the water, they cannot live apart from it for long, and will shrivel and die if prevented from immersing themselves regularly. They live about as long as humans do and are capable of interbreeding with them; the children are generally fully human in appearance.

They are prone to being covered with marine parasites such as barnacles. Water Guardians completely covered in barnacles are often mistaken for the Strange and attacked on sight by other races.

## **HISTORY OF THE SEA GUARDIANS**

According to legend, the history of the Sea Guardians is closely entwined with that of the Seas themselves.

In the region now known as the Plains of Salt, there once existed a huge body of water known as the "True Sea." It teemed with life and nature, and the Finne lived there, prospering off the bounty of the sea. However, at the bottom of the depths there existed an artifact known as the "Mirror of Death", placed under a magical seal by God Herself. Anything reflected in this mirror would cease to exist.

Many beings sought to acquire the mirror in the hopes of furthering their own ambitions, but none were able to break the seal upon it.

However, the seal itself absorbed the emotions and thoughts of those who approached it, and came to share their resentment of God. One day, it sought to take revenge against Her creation and willfully allowed the Mirror of Death to reflect the sea itself, and every last drop of the sea's waters vanished within an instant, leaving the Finne stranded and in dire risk of extinction.

God gave the Old Race of Diwott, master craftsmen of a like the world has never seen again, a Way; "The Diwott created new seas for the Finne, so that they might live happily ever after." Following this Way, the Diwott created the structures currently known as the Seas, and many of the Finne went to inhabit them; others struggled to live on in their ancestral lands, now a vast plain of salt. All of them swore an oath to protect the waters of the Left Land. That is when they became known as the Sea Guardians.

Once, Sea Guardians coexisted peacefully with all other beings, aside from those who sought to sully their waters. However, this changed with the coming of the Dark Age. Upon its onset, a kingdom in the South known as the "Kingdom of Still Water," in which many Sea Guardians lived alongside other races, had all of its inhabitants estranged in a single night—except for the Sea Guardians.

This spawned a false rumour that Sea Guardians could not become estranged. As terror spread throughout the world, the rumour became that Sea Guardians were themselves Strange, and many who lived in close proximity to humans were indiscriminately slaughtered.

The Holy Church attempted to intervene, declaring that the Sea Guardians had not become estranged because God favoured them and they had escaped Her wrath, and that it was a sin to kill them. However, they were by and large too late; only those Sea Guardians who lived in areas not within easy reach of land-dwellers were left alive.

As a result of the near-genocide of their race during the Dark Age, Sea Guardians distrust other beings to this day; many are overtly hostile to them.

## **CROSSERS**

The Crossers are creatures with amorphous bodies that resemble mud, except for their beautiful, green, bug-like eyes. They are physically frail and live for only about 20 to 30 years. Upon death, they dissolve into mud without any visible traces remaining.

They live in a place above the Soft Waters known as the Soft Bridge. As beings who have taken an entirely different evolutionary path, they are one of the world's oddest species.

Crossers who venture into lands inhabited by humans often take upon humanoid shapes. They possess an uncanny ability to empathize with others and understand their emotions. Many humans see them as uncivilized, and they are frequently targeted by slave traders as potential merchandise due to their strange beauty.



# THE UNDYING

The Undying are, as their name might suggest, those who do not age and die naturally. This is believed to be a gift from God and the greatest blessing that She can bestow upon a mortal. When someone becomes Undying, their body ceases to grow or change in any way, and they receive a marker of proof; the color of some part of their body changes to a shimmering rainbow.

As a result, the Undying are held in the highest of regard in pious countries, where they are considered to be living saints. Though strictly speaking, the Undying are a subspecies of humans, they are treated as their own class of being.

Most people believe that the Undying cannot die at all, just as they can no longer age, and need not fear death. This is incorrect. Though the Undying have unusual recuperative powers, it is still possible for them to be slain by sufficiently lethal wounds or poisons; their healing ability has its limits.

There is a story from a small kingdom in the east: once upon a time, an Undying Hollow consumed a hundred villagers. Though the Undying was defeated by a hero, it did not cease to move until it had been submerged in water for a day, stabbed with spears four hundred times, and burned for three days and three nights until finally reduced to ashes. Such is the constitution of the Undying.

In the Holy City, the Undying are known as Eternals. Believed to be the chosen of God, they live in luxury and want for nothing. They are the highest echelon of society. Even those who live elsewhere tend to be well treated, as they are widely held to be favoured by God, and others hope to share in their blessing by doing favours to them.

# OTHER LIFE FORMS

The world contains a multitude of life forms aside from humans and the other intelligent races.

## COWS

The most important livestock animal in the Left Land is the cow. They are raised for both meat and milk, and also used to pull plows and wagons.

## HORSES

Horses are also common in the Left Land. They pull carriages and are the preferred method of transportation for solitary travelers. Many kingdoms zealously breed warhorses, and knights view their steed as a status symbol.

## CAMELS

In the desert regions of the Left Land, camels are widely raised by the locals. This is because they are adapted for life in the desert, able to traverse it more easily than cows or horses while consuming less water. If need be, they can survive even on the alkaline waters found in the Seas and in the Kingdom of Salt.

## CHICKENS

Chickens are a common farm animal in the Left Land. They are raised for their meat, eggs, and down feathers, which are used to stuff winter clothes. The rooster's crow is also essential to timekeeping in kingdoms where clocks are not widespread.

One variety of *Them* that resembles a chicken is known as the "Time Crier Bird." They can be trained to signal the time with precision on par with any machine, and are a popular pet amongst the nobility.

## **OTHER BIRDS**

Various birds are kept as pets in the Left Land. Hawks and falcons are used for hunting, and falconry is a rare but prestigious occupation.

Urgent messages are sent from kingdom to kingdom, and internally within the larger kingdoms, by a network of stations that keep messenger birds.

## **FISH**

Lakes, rivers, and swamps all contain a variety of small freshwater fish which serve as a food source for the locals. The fish which live in the Seas are much larger, but due to the geometry of the Seas, catching them is an difficult task.

While the Sea Guardians ensure the lakes are well stocked with fish, due to the remoteness of these lakes from human population centers, large fish are considered a luxury item that few people can afford. Only the nobility can expect to regularly eat a variety of fresh fish.





# THE HISTORY OF THE LEFT LAND

*History is naught but the memory of a foolish charade.  
 The script of a play long since performed.  
 Or words of love for a love that has been lost.*

—She of the Evening Calm, before her disappearance

Long ago, God created a world in which nothing yet lived. It was a land veiled in a thick blizzard. She created the sun, the moon and the stars that shined above, then fire to free the land from endless winter. She created the seas and rivers. And in order that Her creations could one day foment civilization, She created forests and veins of metal upon the earth.

Then She created that which lives. Animals and plants, the Old Races, and *Them*. As Her grand acts of creation drew to an end, She divided the world in two with the Soft Waters, and withdrew to the Right Land.

But She still cared for her children, and gave us the Ways in order to guide us, as Her final act of creation. Living beings spread throughout the Left Land, their numbers increasing. They gathered into villages, then those villages gathered into kingdoms. Kingdoms rose, fell, and rose again. As people followed the Ways, and became accustomed to the happy endings that the Ways promised them, they gradually fell into a state of indolence.

The chronological order of the events that followed were lost in the Dark Age to come. and much is unknown about this period in history. That anything is known at all owes itself only to the fact that the Undying who witnessed these events personally have spoken to humankind of them. Even so, they are very nearly the stuff of myth.

## **THE OLD RACES**

Before the humans that populate the world today existed, there were seven humanoid races. Though they themselves were quite distinct from humans, traces of their blood flow in the veins of humans even today.

The soft and shapeless wanderers, the Affeti.

The skilled artists known as the Con Brio.

The Diwott of unparalleled wisdom.

The Eroica, who rode across the land in conquest.

The Finne, who protect the seas to this day.

The Grosteco, who straddled the gap between reality and the other worlds, between human and *Them*.

The Oa, who mingled with the other races and lead them on their path to become as gods.

## **THE OLD CAPITALS**

At this time, the world was divided into seven grand city-states known as the Old Capitals. These capitals were destroyed in the Dark Age that followed. Their names have all been lost; mysteriously, even the Undying that once lived there find themselves unable to remember what they were called. It is said that God Herself erased the names of the Old Capitals from the world, so that humankind would never again repeat their folly.

Currently, the Old Capitals are referred to by the sins their people were sad to exemplify.

The Old Capital of Sloth, which entrusted everything to God.

The Old Capital of Jealousy, where the rule of law had gone mad.

The Old Capital of Gluttony, where the world's delicacies were savored.

The Old Capital of Lust, filled with songs of love and prosperity.

The Old Capital of Wrath, where banditry and conflict were ever-present.

The Old Capital of Pride, where vanity reigned supreme.

The Old Capital of Greed, which desired all the world's riches.

These city-states reigned supreme over the world for aeons, but eventually the Strange arose and their Warped Ways promised their destruction, ushering in the Dark Age.

## **THE DARK AGE**

On a winter day approximately two hundred years before the present, in the "Old Capital of Pride" where all thought highly of themselves, an old man with bone-white eyes appeared.



The people of the Capital, finding his appearance revolting, shooed him away from their doorsteps and refused to touch him. Some began to throw rocks at him. But even so, the old man never exhibited any anger. Dispassionately, he declared that his name was Qualia, and told them of a single Way.

"Upon this evening, when the monotone light of the moon shines upon this city, not a single person who bears pride within their hearts shall be left alive. Happily ever after."

Upon hearing such a horrifying Way for the first time, the people of the city assumed the man was a charlatan pretending to be an agent of God's wrath and beat him to death. But just as he had promised, when the moon rose, it was bone white and covered in pitch-black spots.

This evening became known as the "White Night of Dark Eyes." Under the light of the monotone moon, the people of the Old Capital all became estranged, and in a single night the prideful city was destroyed.

The old man who gave rise to this calamity, "Bone-White Qualia," is thought to have been the very first of the Strange.

The countless Strange who infested the ruins of the city spread out to the other Old Capitals like a blizzard spreading over the land. One by one, they created Warped Ways that doomed the other Old Capitals to destruction. Some were swallowed by water, others by forests, others by Unravelings.

People believed that God had become enraged at their indolence. Overcome by fear and despair, they prayed for Her to save them. But the destruction and the Warped Ways did not slow or stop. Those who attempted to defy the Warped Ways and escape their fate of self-destruction only became estranged themselves.

Spurred to action by hearts full of despair, three Undying heroes resolved to do what they could.

Narcis, the embodiment of ultimate beauty.

Escha, the greatest of all lawgivers.

Socrates, the wisest man in the world.

In hopes of appeasing the wrath of God, these three Undying sages set off upon a journey to the Right Land in search of her. They never returned.

## **SHE OF THE EVENING CALM**

About 10 years after the Three Sages set off on their journey, another Undying appeared, calling herself only She of the Evening Calm.

She of the Evening Calm described herself as a Weaver—an existence who was not bound by the Ways. The Warped Ways woven by the Strange thus had no power over her, and she could fight against them. She set out to gather all those in the world capable of becoming Weavers like her, organizing them into a group known as "The Tailors' Guild."

These Weavers began to fight to stop and reverse the destruction caused by the Strange, as well as put an end to the Strange themselves, and restore the world to its original happy state.

Thanks to the efforts of the Weavers, the Strange slowly decreased in number and people celebrated the Weavers as heroes. After a hundred long years of battle, the Dark Age finally came to an end.

## THE NIGHT OF SCREAMS

However, the age of Weavers being extolled as heroes was not to last.

Her long years of fighting and setting the Warped Ways right had taken its toll upon She of the Evening Calm, and she had become more and more eccentric, not opening her heart to even her fellow Tailors.

She busied herself with bizarre pursuits such as sealing the windows of her home with wax and breaking all mirrors that she saw. Eventually, she would merely mutter "I want to see a beautiful world..." over and over again.

None realized it at the time, but these were the omens that She of the Evening Calm was becoming a Hollow.

On the last day of spring, 98 years ago, She of the Evening Calm and a portion of her fellow Tailors suddenly cursed the Undying who lived in the Holy Capital to become estranged. The Holy Capital was soon filled with screams as these Strange ran rampant, leading to the name "The Night of Screams" for this incident.

Upon the Night of Screams, all the goodwill that the Weavers had accumulated vanished in an instant. The power that the Weavers wielded in their noble struggle to protect the common people had in an instant been turned against those people to cause fear and suffering. With memories of the Dark Age fresh in their minds, the people at once rose up in anger against the Weavers.

The Holy Church declared it as a creed that Weavers, like Strange, were sinful existences who had defied God in turning against the Ways.



They further claimed that the fact that Weavers had put an end to the Dark Age was nothing but a fiction they had manufactured; the Dark Age had in fact been their very doing.

Thus did the Weaver Hunt begin.

Ever since the Night of Screams, most people have harbored a deep distrust for Weavers. The current Archpriest of the Holy Church, Zarastro, is said to not to bear ill will towards Weavers, but most of the clergy believe they are sinners who must all be purged in fire.

Yet even so, the Weavers continue to do battle with Strange and close Unravelings. As a result, those who have personally witnessed such events still have faith in Weavers to save them from the Strange.

## **THE DAY OF THE BLACK SPOT**

Thirteen years before the present, upon the high noon of a spring day, She of the Evening Calm appeared one again. The sun suddenly changed color to pitch black, yet it shined still, and she appeared in front of all the people of the Left Land no matter where they were. All saw her like a silhouette veiling the sky. All heard her voice inside their head.

She of the Evening Calm declared that she was Escha, one of the Three Undying Sages who had journeyed to the Right Land to meet with God. She then bestowed upon the land a single Way.

*"For one day it shall rain blue. For seven winters it shall night yellow. Yea, and six fires, and green sheep, tarata, ratata. Eight needles, budding eggs, rata. Rusted flowers and the girl in the box garden, upon the day of farewell. Black light, white night, rara, tarata. All the fools that stand upon this earth shall end, and then the world shall be beautiful."*

Though the black sun and She of the Evening Calm's appearance lasted for only a few moments, those few moments were sufficient to cause a huge number of Strange to appear. It was an incident that brought to mind the legendary "White Night of Dark Eyes" that had caused the onset of the Dark Age, and so terror was struck into the peoples' hearts.

Many destructive Warped Ways were woven upon that day, and people followed them for fear of what would happen otherwise, as if another Dark Age had truly arisen...