



The Starfallen Sea

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“It is said that there were once thousands of stars in the sky, one for every island in the sea. But that was long ago. Now, it is the end of the Eighth Age. Only a few hundred stars shine above, and more fall every year. And each time that one does, an island is lost forever.”

The Starfallen Sea is a worldbuilding project detailing a world facing what may be its end. All lore in this documents was originally made available online, with each discrete update required to be under 280 characters. To follow our daily lore updates, comments, and to make suggestions, visit us at twitter.com/starfallensea

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People and Places

In this age, chaos-storms often beset formerly safe currents. Passage requires a compass blessed by your island's god, a good sorcerer to hold back the winds, and a bit of luck. Many ships invoke the Sailor, one of the ancient Incarnates, although they are not known to answer.

Kheiros, also known as Sailors' Cant, is the common language of the Starfallen Sea. A sign language that evolved over the course of the Third Age, it was originally used by sailors working in stormy weather before spreading to merchants, diplomats, and finally common travelers.

It is a Rathani tradition to give a newborn child's parents a golden poppy plant, to grow alongside the child. The Rathani believe that while the poppy lives, the child's dreams will be free of Grandfather's attention, allowing them to grow into the person they wish to become.

When Jankoli youth are ready to become adults, they gather feathers from local birds, declaring their genders with the feathers they choose and weaving them into headbands as part of their coming of age. Removing this headband with another is a sign of deepest trust or intimacy.

The Pious Gardens in Jankol hold the gods of thirty-two refugee groups that have settled on the island in the last 200 years. Here they recover, lending their strength to protect Jankol from storms. Some Jankoli officials worry that the Gardens will surpass the island's own god.

It is an insult in Barathan culture to look someone in the eyes, with the insult growing the longer the contact is made. To do so is to claim that your personhood is more than that of the one you are speaking to, to the point of denigrating your target as no more than an object.

The island of Zakynt is home to the Acanthos Ruins. Once the seat of modern sorcery, the Acanthos has become a shattered pit of broken time and nameless gods, which sometimes crawl out to assault the island's scavengers before rapidly ageing to whispers that vanish on the wind.

The great warships of the Korallium Empire still sail the seas, claiming tribute of food, lumber, and occasional volunteers from dozens of islands and fighting demons, pirates, and enemy nations, but their homeland has not been seen in decades, and no one knows where they dock.

Rylee Tallow is the unofficial leader of the dockworkers of Yoruth. Her growing frustration with tribute to Korallium has her considering denying the next warship to arrive docking rights, an action likely to lead to armed conflict with both the ship and the island's authorities.

Islands of the Adrannic Reach make use of rain-gutters to gather water and channel it to municipal water-towers. These towers each contain a few ocean pearls to purify the water against chaos-contagion; they must be changed out yearly, as the contagion blights and mutates them.

During the Festival of Joining on Ruthan, the island's population competes in physical and mental trials. The winner is brought to become one with the island's god forever. Once held every decade, it has grown more frequent; it is now seasonal, and challengers try to subtly fail.

It has been four years since the death of the Speaker of Tehfreh, with no clear successor. With the island's Voices divided between three rivals, governmental duties are gradually breaking down, and the island's god refuses to grant new blessings until a new Speaker is chosen.

A great pine tree in the capital of Taregard is said to hold the last governor of the Illuminated Empire. He slew the island's god, and a splinter lodged in his thumb; overnight, he erupted into a tree whose roots grew through the Imperial garrison, becoming the island's new god.

The people of Travertino have spent centuries digging caverns beneath their island, even as its surface has been ravaged by storms and worn to rock. The entire population now lives far beneath the sea-line, emerging only to meet with ships that make port within their tidal caves.

The entire population of Frennech has vanished five times since the island was found abandoned in the Fifth Age. Each time, they leave no clues or signs of violence. The most recent was sixty years ago, and the current population is made up of refugees with nowhere else to turn.

Rolanth was the seat of the Redfern Archipelago until it sank eight years ago. The archipelago's surviving islands are desperately trying to raise funds for a second expedition to save their gods, the first having ended with most of its members killed or lost in the labyrinth.

Every year, hunters gather on the island of Embrist to hunt the blazehawks that gather there after mating, in a week-long competition that absolutely infuriates the locals. Avoiding harassment and sabotage by local farmers and officials is considered to be just part of the hunt.

Ships that sail the Crested Sea paint a long green line along each side of their hull, just at the waterline. Sailors believe that this warns the Apkallu who dwell beneath those waves that the souls of those aboard have been claimed by their gods, and are not to be annexed.

The Curator of the Museum Fleet lives in a collection of broken ships that somehow still sails safely across the sea. They trade for ancient lore, and have taken in so many grimoires that their own past has been lost to them amidst the thousands of lives sharing their thoughts.

Tamaka Marr, Grand Astrologer of Sukar, claims her ability to find sunken islands comes from using astrology to map the gaps between stars. She sends mercenaries to explore the labyrinths of such places, bringing the remains of their gods back to Sukar to empower its pantheon.

Yusuf Jarras is the Fifth Prophet of the Revivalist branch of the Ashen Church, and awakened to his destiny ten years ago at the age of 27. Jarras continues to search for the Axiom Vestige, lost with the Fourth Prophet 287 years ago, with which he plans to reunite the church.

The alchemist Zarrus Iljani burned through their fortune searching for immortality. They now believe the secret lies with star jelly, and chase falling stars from island to island to further their research, which they fund by selling poisons and tinctures to political patrons.

Dapifer Oleander Kent fancies himself the true leader of the Storm-Chasers, but is well aware that the order's other two leaders consider him a reckless figurehead. He is always racing against their machinations, seeking treasure and renown to shore up his status and win allies.

Legends and History

The Second Age, the Age of Gods, began roughly 1300 years before First Sailing. For 600 years after the fall of Chaos, the gods and Incarnates spread across the seas, founding new islands and cultures, but its true history was lost during the Imperial era and only myths remain.

Several islands lay claim to being the home of the First City, from which the Incarnates planned their war against Chaos. Some traditions believe that the First City will also be the Last, when everything else has sunken beneath the waves, and from there a new world will be born.

The Third Age, the Age of Light, began when the island of Rosanna fought against their neighbour, Lorimaud, and stole the god of Lorimaud as a hostage. Rosanna grew to become the seat of the first empire, the Illuminated Empire, which at its height ruled more than 10,000 islands.

Arich Shand and the Historians fought the Illuminated Empire by rescuing texts and relics from destruction on charges of heresy. Their legacy lives on via the Museum Fleet and the Archive of Pavell, but some caches were lost with their protectors, and are hidden to this day.

The metre, the standard unit of distance measurement across most of the Seas, was first instituted by His Illuminated Majesty Soren II and is named after the tones of a metronome. One metre is the exact distance covered by a dancer during one bar of a formal Imperial waltz.

The Fourth Age marked the return of Chaos and the fall of the Illuminated Empire. Over three hundred years, Chaos storms cut the seas off from each other, splitting them into hundreds of isolated archipelagoes. Many traditions blame the Empire's greed for the fall of the seas.

The common calendar used across the Starfallen Sea dates back 1344 years, to when Orithean priests first used their divine compasses to successfully sail through a chaos-storm to the Sheruvan Archipelago. This First Sailing was the dawn of the Fifth Age, the Age of Sails.

The Sixth Age, the Age of Wonders, lasted for 446 years. It began with the founding of the Acanthos by Osei Shu Taye, saw the growth of sorceries lost since the days of the Illuminated Empire, and ended with the failure of the Horizon Crusade and the devastating Tourmaline Storm.

The Seven-School War (617-628 FS) was fought between three alliances of sorcerous academies and archipelagos. Bitter and vicious, it resulted in the death and failed rebirth of Grandfather, the razing of Rathanos, and the end of the development of new magical forms and branches.

The Pyrian Academy fell to treachery early in the Seventh Age. In 823 FS, a political coup led to a third of the faculty being slain and the Academy coming under the sway of the Horaltic League. After fading for centuries, the Academy now solely trains the League's Pyrian Armada.

The Incarnates were the first humans; some say they were created by the gods, others that they sprang full-formed from Chaos. There were either six or seven of them, although the many traditions across the sea do not agree on their titles or whether they still exist in some form.

First of the Incarnates, the Gardener is the patron of tacticians, farmers, and animal breeders. She is recognized as an Incarnate almost universally across the seas, and it is agreed that she gave the other Incarnates their titles and directed them in the war against Chaos.

The Poet is an Incarnate whose stories are said to reshape the world. They are the patron of storytellers, priests, and craftsmen. In one aspect they tell truths that bring despair, and in another they tell lies that inspire great deeds, but it is impossible to tell them apart.

The Scavenger is the Incarnate patron of inventors, butchers, and the destitute. During the war against Chaos, it is said that he transformed the broken weapons of the Incarnates into tools for the next wave of battles, while reminding them not to be seduced by hubris and power.

The Nurse is the Incarnate patron of medicine, family, and death. It is said that she forged the divine spells that allow dead souls to become one with their gods. She is the only Incarnate known to have died, and pilgrims flocked to her grave until it was lost in the Fourth Age.

An old myth states that the Moon is home to a sorcerer, who flew there to escape the clutches of the Illuminated Empire, only to find that it was scoured and without magic. The stories state he is up there still, his powerful magic enough to keep him alive but not to return home.

Aber is a folk hero of the Nurathic tradition, a clever child or teen who is mistaken for a person of import, and who manipulates those misunderstandings to overthrow tyrants and shame the arrogant or cruel. Because of this, Aber is one of the most common names across the sea.



Magic and Monsters

Gods are embodied through a star that connects them to the universe, and a natural object that connects them to their island. This object is usually a massive tree or stone, although some gods are embodied in crystal caves, fungal networks, or in one case, an immortal lobster.

Sinking is the last defense of an island besieged by Chaos. As its god's star flares and falls from the sky, they may use the last of their power to pull their land beneath the waves. Chaos surrounds such islands with labyrinths of broken spacetime, struggling to dissolve them.

Sorcery is the most common magic practiced across the seas; it draws on the energy of the world, through ritual and reagent, to enact specific effects. Most villages have a few rituals passed down to make life easier, but only a few sorcerers study or create more powerful spells.

The lost art of grimorie allowed spellcasters to implant stories, memories, or even skills in tomes that would press them into the minds of readers. With each reading, the quality of the grimoire fades, and it is now very rare to find one that is more than fragments of thoughts.

Malefaction is the power of Chaos. It summons and binds demons, commands the Storm, and cuts paths through the Borders. So distrusted that the word itself has become a synonym for ill-intent, malefaction is not evil, merely very dangerous to the caster and everyone around them.

Commonly believed to be divine magic, storm towers are in fact a work of malefaction. Malefactors craft these ritual towers of ivory and brass on isolated peaks to ensure that demons emerging from a Chaos storm will be drawn to them first, buying time for nearby towns to prepare.

When summoning demons, precision is a virtue. In particular, having a name greatly improves your chance of reaching them. However, few demons live long enough for their names to be recorded, and those that do are usually so powerful that summoning them would be a deadly mistake.

The sorcerers of the Acanthos spent centuries suppressing the art of necromancy, and spreading tales of its evils. They claimed it was malefaction that allowed the wielder to sacrifice souls, using other lives to heal, animate the dead, and turn suffering into raw magical force.

The art of theurgy allows priests to channel their god, reshaping the land, providing blessings and inflicting curses. Most believe that gods will remove theurgy from sinful priests, but in fact the magic is sustained by similarities between priest and god, not by a god's will.

Catharites learn sacred rituals undertaken with willing supplicants, permanently sacrificing a part of them in exchange for empowering another facet of their being. Catharsis can purge personality traits, skills, or even physical traits, but its effects can never be reversed.

Water is the element most balanced between stasis and chaos; fire can be corrupted, and stone broken, but water flows around Chaos, sealing its power in ocean pearls. These pearls can be used as magical reagents, but doing so risks the blight within mutating the spell's effects.

Omen shrikes make their nests within the boiling clouds of chaos storms, assembled from the shattered remains of dissolved reality. Their feathers are coated in blue dust that protects them from dissolution, and they appear ahead of the storm, hunting terrified fish and insects.

The shells of salt-turtles are in high demand for their powers of filtration, but acquiring them is a dangerous task. The turtles are eight feet across and hunt by breathing out chlorine gas, turning the water around them to acid and killing anything foolish enough to come close.

Baleen whales are sacred to sailors. As they swim through the waters, the whales' bristles draw in the souls of those who have died at sea, keeping them safe from being corrupted by the Chaos-winds and carrying them back to their homes to become one with their gods once again.

Siphon pitchers are large pitcher plants which use imitation souls to lure and trap magic beings, extracting their power for sustenance. They are often kept by sorcerers who feed them captured demons and spirits, harvesting their juices for sorcerous reagents and binding rituals.

Starshot beasts form from those creatures who survive star-jelly exposure, marked with bioluminescent patches of scales or fur in constellation-patterns. Colonized by bacterial gods, they seek to remake islands in bizarre and frightening ways, commanding stone and plants alike.

The mudshell toad, as large as a horse, can loosen the long flaps of skin on its back and legs to glide down from trees before dropping on prey and lashing the flaps around them; pressure and force causes the flaps to harden, tighten, and crush their victims into easily-eaten paste.

Dern Baltharus, greatest of the Exorcists, consumed so many demons during the Tourmaline Storm that he was transformed into a demonic form himself. He has survived for centuries by roaming the edges of the world and devouring demons, malefactors, and the victims of Chaos alike.

Vampires are made of black smoke; they inhabit corpses, and then drain others of blood to keep their puppeted bodies intact, while using the memories of their victims to go unnoticed. Fire and sunlight can drive them out, but they can only be destroyed by the full winds of Chaos.

In the heart of each Great Storm lies a Leviathan, a demon of terrible power and calculating hate. Driving it away will cause the storm to dissipate. Some scholars claim there is only one Leviathan, who crafts all such storms, but surely no demon could be so ancient or focused.

