

DMDave Publishing

HELK1 | \$19.00

1

# hellbarra

**CAMPAIGN SOURCEBOOK**



**DARK FANTASY CAMPAIGN SETTING GUIDE**

HELKARA • 1

# helkara

## **CAMPAIGN SOURCEBOOK**

DARK FANTASY CAMPAIGN SETTING GUIDE



**DMDAVE**  
PUBLISHING

Published in 2023  
Hamrick Brands, LLC  
1527 Ashley Cir  
Norman, OK 73069

Written by Dave Hamrick  
Design by TJ Jefferson  
Art by Dave Hamrick, Rick Hershey, Matias  
Lazaro, Nacho Lazaro, Dyson Logos, Tim  
Molloy, Dean Spencer  
Additional Art by Shutterstock

Copyright © 2023 Hamrick Brands, LLC

# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	4
Key Features and Characteristics .....	7
Geography.....	8
Weather and Climate.....	8
Map of Helkara .....	9
Landscape and Topography.....	10
Notable Features .....	10
Natural Resources .....	13
Flora and Fauna.....	14
Agriculture.....	27
Technology.....	27
Those Before .....	29
Key Historical Events.....	31
Humanoids.....	38
Human Nations .....	42
Magic and the Essence .....	54
Gods and Religion.....	58

# Helkara Campaign Sourcebook

---

## Introduction

In the harsh and unforgiving world of Helkara, there is no respite from the brutal sun or the endless darkness. On this desolate planet, each turn is 176 Earth days long, with 88 days of scalding sunlight followed by 88 days of frozen, neverending darkness. The only refuge from this eternal cycle is the twilight region near the north pole, where life can still flourish.

In this world of constant danger, the gods are not the benevolent protectors of old tales but rather dangerous and alien entities not to be trifled with. They are feared and worshiped by the masses, who live in terror of their power.

Ruling over these masses are sorcerers, necromancers, and priests—tyrants with a grip of iron. They use their mastery of magic and propaganda to keep the masses in line, and their rule is absolute. They have divided the habitable portion of Helkara into five distinct regions and constantly

war for dominance over Helkara and its people.

Magic is a force that is both highly sought after and greatly feared in Helkara. Those who possess the ability to wield magic are often seen as powerful and dangerous, with many viewing their abilities as a threat to the stability of the world. This is because magic tends to have unintended consequences and often leads to disasters, whether through the negligence of the practitioner or through the sheer power of the magic itself. As such, those who use magic are often viewed with suspicion and mistrust, and many nations have strict laws regulating its use and practitioners.

Technology has not advanced much beyond that of the bronze age, with many relying on handmade weapons, armor, and tools. This simplicity of technology leads to a more primitive, dangerous way of life, where survival is always a top priority and battles are fought up close and personal. Despite this, a few scattered pockets of knowledge and skill have





**An outlander of the Shadowland Nightstalkers in Deadlands, Keth'keth.**

emerged, leading to the creation of powerful magical weapons and other wondrous technologies. Alchemy is especially popular, despite its prohibitive costs.

Monsters in Helkara are not just creatures to be slain for enjoyment or personal gain: they are dangerous and unpredictable forces of destruction. They are rarely seen, and when they do appear, they wreak havoc on the land and its inhabitants. These beasts should be approached with caution, as they are nearly impossible to defeat without a well-coordinated effort by multiple, powerful hunters. The few survivors of monster attacks are often left traumatized, forever changed by the encounter.

Two major humanoid races dominate the land:

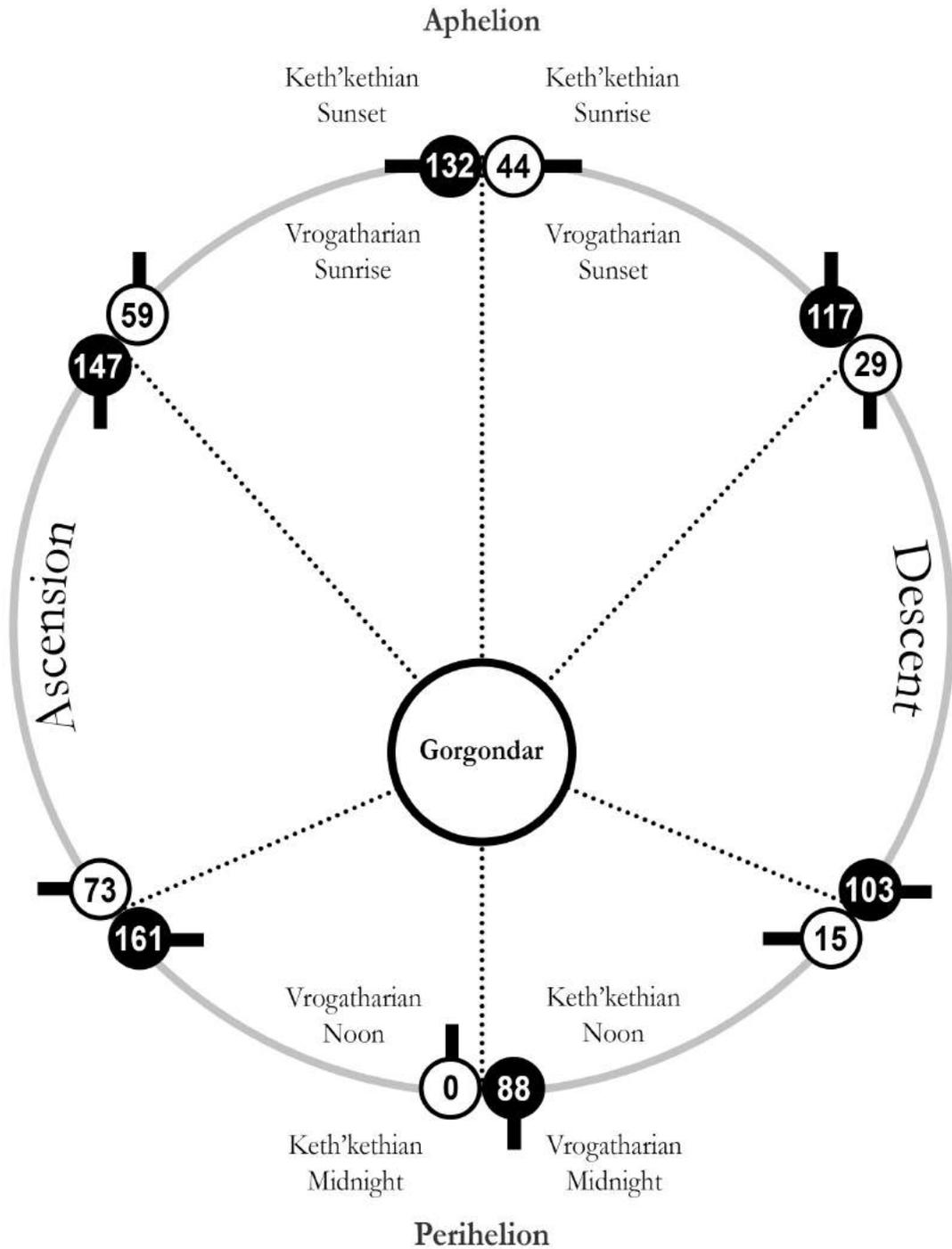
the humans and the goblins. Humans dwell upon the earth above. They have built their cities and societies in the harshest of environments, seeking refuge from the relentless elements. Meanwhile, the goblins reside beneath the earth, in the twisting and labyrinthine tunnels and caverns that honeycomb the world. They are a mysterious people, steeped in ancient knowledge and arcane arts but feared and distrusted by the humans above.

For centuries, these two species have been locked in a struggle for control of the world. The Sorcerer-Kings believe that the goblins hold secrets that threaten their power. They fear that the goblins' knowledge of the old world, of magic and technology long lost to the humans, could be used to overthrow them. And so, they keep the goblins in check with their armies, their alchemical weapons, and their own dark magic.

For their part, the goblins believe that the humans are dangerous and reckless, carelessly tampering with forces that they cannot control. They see the Sorcerer-Kings as tyrants, who use their power to oppress the masses, and they believe that the humans' use of magic only leads to catastrophe and destruction. They seek to keep their knowledge of the old world hidden from the humans, lest they unleash chaos upon the world once again.

Despite the bleak conditions, pockets of resilience and hope can be found among the survivors of the various communities and cultures in the world of Helkara. They believe in a better future and work towards it, despite the constant challenges and obstacles that threaten their existence.

For those brave enough to venture into this world, the path to success will be a perilous one, filled with danger at every turn. But with strength, cunning, and the aid of their companions, anything is possible. Heroes must work together to succeed in this harsh and brutal world and to bring hope to the people of Helkara.



This diagram shows the Helkaran turn. 0 notes the first cycle in the Helkaran Turn, Vrogathar's Noon. Cycle 88 is Vrogathar's Midnight. Although it only takes Helkara 59 days to rotate on its axis, Helkara completes its solar rotation after 176 cycles because of its 3:2 resonance.



## Key Features and Characteristics

For those venturing into the world of Helkara, they are in for a truly unique and challenging experience. Helkara is a small world with a circumference of just 9,524 miles, but it is a place of great contrasts and dangers.

This world is relatively close to its sun, called Gorgondar by the humans, with a perihelion distance of 28.5 million miles and an aphelion distance of 43.5 million miles. This solar proximity means that a Helkaran year is relatively fast, lasting 88 Earth days. And the sun's gravitational pull on Helkara makes it elliptically tidally locked with a resonance ratio of 3:2, making the Helkaran day 59 Earth days long. Because of the unusual resonance, however, it takes a total of 176 days for Helkara to make a full solar rotation, noon to noon. This creates 88 Earth days of intense, scorching sunlight

followed by 88 days of dark, frozen nights.

Despite this, Helkaran humans still function like their counterparts on other worlds, requiring six to eight hours of sleep each day lest they begin to suffer from exhaustion. They have adapted to their unique environment by developing a system of telling time by tracking the progress of a comet called the Wanderer that orbits the planet once every eight hours. This progress is referred to as a "passing," and there are three passings in each cycle, or 24 hours, making it the same length as a day on Earth. There are 176 cycles in a turn, which is what Helkarans call a year. They break the turn into four 44-cycle length parts that they refer to as movements, which are similar to months. The four movements are First Descent, First Ascension, Second Descent, and Second Ascension. All Helkaran humans, regardless of their nationality, celebrate the ends of the First and Second ascensions, which are called Midnight and Noon, respectively.

Because of Helkara's extreme nature, most of the planet is uninhabitable for humans. As a result, they are limited to living near the north pole. The pole itself is a region bathed in permanent darkness called Evernight. The majority of humans congregate 300 to 700 miles away from the pole in a region called the Gloaming. Thanks to Helkara's relatively small axial tilt, the Gloaming does not experience the wild swings in temperatures that other parts of the world do. Although it's often cold there, daytime temperatures rarely get above 100 degrees Fahrenheit. However, its cold periods, especially close to Midnight, can drop as low as -30 degrees Fahrenheit.

Although there is always a glow just over the horizon in the Gloaming, nights are extremely dark. There are always billowy clouds in the sky above. Furthermore, Helkara has no moon. Although humans have adjusted somewhat to the dark environment, they are still at the mercy of the elements and the fearsome creatures that roam the

world.

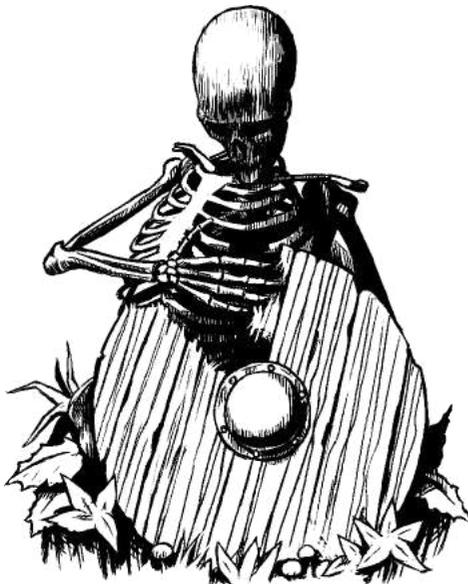
Helkara's gravity is relatively weak, with objects weighing less than half of what they would on Earth. This means creatures can jump much further than they normally would. It also means that creatures native to the planet tend to grow larger, including humans, who average 6 to 7 feet in height and weigh between 220 lbs to 300 lbs, which would be approximately 85 lbs to 115 lbs on Helkara.

## Geography

Four regions divide Helkara, each as unique as they are dangerous.

At the northernmost point of Helkara lies the realm of Evernight, a place of darkness and ice, where the sun never shines and the cold is so bitter that nothing can live there save for the most hardy of beasts and the black-hearted Sorcerer-King of Nazgar, who dwells within the black tower of Tryvva with his throngs of Evernight goblins.

South of Evernight lies the Gloaming, a place of perpetual twilight where the sun is only seen in fleeting glimpses and the chill is but a pale reflection of the icy grip of the Evernight. Here, most of



Helkara's life calls home, for though it is cold, it is not as deadly as the lands above or below.

Beyond the Gloaming lies the gray wastes of the Nothing, a vast and lifeless wasteland where the sun shines for 88 cycles and night reigns for another 88. Here, nothing can survive save for those who make their homes deep beneath the earth and fearsome creatures specially adapted to the extreme swings in temperature.

Finally, at the southernmost point of Helkara lies the mystery of the unknown south pole, where the learned men of the Gloaming theorize that life may yet be found. The nomads of the Gloaming have attempted to cross this desolation in search of Helkara's enigmatic south pole, but few have returned to tell their tale; the secrets of the south pole remain shrouded in the mists of time.

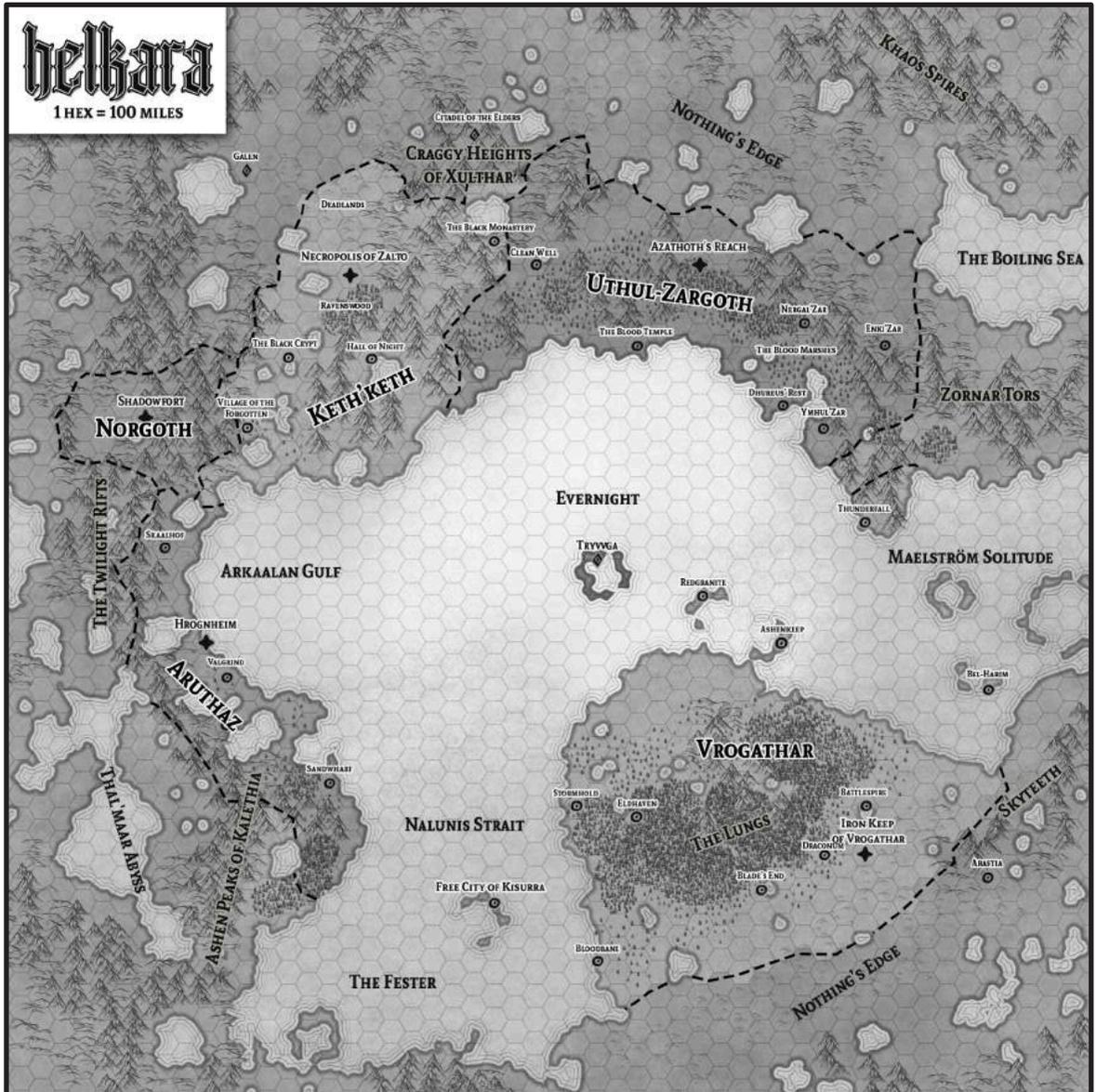
Below the surface of Helkara lies a labyrinth of tunnels and underground cities created by the mysterious Those Before, the ancestors of the humans who now call the Gloaming home. Helkarans refer to this maze as the Lattice. These dark places hold untold secrets of the world before the Cataclysm and are now home to the goblinoids and other denizens of the dark. The depth of the tunnels is a mystery even to the most learned of Helkara's scholars, and the dangers that lurk within are known to very few.

## Weather and Climate

The climate of Helkara is a treacherous and unpredictable force shaped by the world's slow rotation and wild swings in temperature.

In the frozen reaches of the north and south poles, blizzards rage with fury, whipping snow and ice into a tempest of destruction. When the warm times come, violent thunderstorms erupt, lashing the frozen landscapes with bolts of lightning.

Yet even these terrors pale in comparison to the storms that brew in the Nothing, the vast gray wasteland that consumes the majority of Helkara's



This map of Helkara shows only the northern hemisphere of Helkara—with its north pole, Evernight, in the center—as it appears in Turn 888 H. The top center of the map represents Helkara’s geographical north, sometimes referred to Keth’kethian north (Keth’keth is derived from the Old Hermian and literally means “beyond north.”

The terrain at the edges of the maps are estimates only, as only scavenger cartographers are willing to travel that far beyond Nothing’s Edge to document locations.

surface. Here, dust storms tear across the landscape, towering clouds of grit and debris blotting out the sky. Tornadoes twist and dance across the barren landscape, spinning in a deadly dance. And when the twilight band creeps across the world, switching the planet from sunlight to darkness, all manner of other hazards appear, from flash floods to hail the size of boulders.

But even these dangers are not without their limits. For despite the ferocity of these storms, the hurricanes that arise on Helkara are often contained by the towering peaks that ring the world. These mountains, ancient and unyielding, rise like sentinels, defending against the deadliest of the planet's storms.

## Landscape and Topography

The surface of Helkara is as harsh and unforgiving as its weather. The planet is tectonically active, with a molten core, but unlike other worlds, it doesn't have plates. Instead, it is a single tectonic plate that uniformly contracts. As such, shield volcanoes are abundant in Helkara, regularly belching smoke and fire into the air, but earthquakes are less frequent.

Most of the titanic mountains that dominate the landscape of Helkara were created by meteor impacts long ago in its history. The lack of an atmosphere or liquid for a significant period of Helkara's prehistory meant that these craters were not eroded, as they would have been on other planets. The presence of wind and water has since worked its way into the craters, creating channels and small valleys, but the crater oceans are still extremely deep compared to other worlds.

Deep valleys and steep cliffs are a common sight on Helkara, as are towering mesas and plateaus. The planet's unique geology has created a landscape unlike any other, with towering formations of rock and stone stretching toward the sky. The world's

tallest mountain near Helkara's equator rises over 15,000 feet into the air. The Dustrunner scavenger clan named this mountain Skystair. For the purpose of maps, Helkarans use this mountain as the geographic north.

Rivers and streams snake through the valleys and craters, eventually joining together to form great oceans. While the seas of Helkara are treacherous, with dangerous creatures and unpredictable weather, they are also teeming with life. Leviathan-hunting ships from the Aruthaz brave the stormy waters in search of aquatic megafauna, while fishing colonies in the Evernight ply the icy waters in search of what lives in the dark waters below their feet.

In the Nothing, the landscape is just as inhospitable as the weather. Sand dunes, towering rock formations, and jagged outcroppings are all that can be seen in this desolate land. Despite its barren appearance, the Nothing holds secrets untold.

## Notable Features

Many of the features below are found near Helkara's north pole and the Gloaming and are known to most learned peoples of Helkara.

**Arkalaan Gulf**, a vast salty body of water west of the Evernight, is home to a thriving fishing industry, with ports dotted along its coastline. Despite its commercial significance, the gulf is also known for its treacherous storms, which have claimed the lives of many a sailor.

**Ashen Peaks of Kalethia**, a violent collection of volcanoes and perilous mountains west of the Fester, are home to an array of dangerous creatures and unpredictable natural disasters. The volcanic vents and geysers that dot the landscape make it a place of both beauty and terror.

**The Boiling Sea**, a large sea of acid northeast of



the Evernight, is a place of constant danger, with steam rising from its scorching waters. The acidic waters make it a deadly place for any who would venture there, and those who do are foolish indeed.

**Evernight**, the frozen region covering Helkara's north pole is a desolate and unforgiving wasteland. Here, the frigid winds howl endlessly, scouring the ice-covered tundra and encasing all in a frozen embrace.

**The Fester**, a vast saltwater gulf south of the Evernight, is known for its tumultuous waters and frequent storms. During the warmer cycles, it dries up into a muddy marshland that stretches for hundreds of miles in every direction, hence its name.

**The Lungs**, a massive coniferous forest in the nation of Vrogathar, covers hundreds of thousands of acres and is known for its towering trees and diverse wildlife. Its vast size and untamed nature

make it a dangerous place to venture, with many dark secrets still waiting to be discovered.

**Maelström Solitude**, a large body of water to the east of the Evernight, is known for its hellacious storms that have earned it its name. Many a vessel has been lost in its tempests, and those brave enough to brave its waters do so at great risk.

**Nalunis Straight**, where the Arkalaan Gulf and the Fester meet, is a treacherous stretch of water where the currents are notoriously strong and unpredictable. Many sailors have met their doom in these waters, making it a place to be avoided if possible.

**Nothing's Edge**, where the Nothing meets the Gloaming, is a place of scorching heat and bitter cold. The land is barren and hostile, and few dare venture there, for it is a place where life cannot long survive.