

The Heart of the World

This post contains the official origin story for my Warp Walkers campaign setting. Check out the main [Campaign Setting](#) page for more.



Image by [tableatny](#).

On Yxra, there's a secret buried deep beneath the ground. Our Earth and other planets may have cores of molten metal or rock, but Yxra's core is *alive*. In fact, it's a colossal, beating heart – the Heart of Ephre, the goddess who birthed the universe.

The Birth of Yxra

Eons ago, long before the mortal races were born, before the planet Yxra itself existed, before the Grand Material existed,

there was Ephre. Primordial Ephre. Eternal Ephre. The Allmother, the only mote of brightness in the endless dark of the Warp.

Ephre was not like the Warp. She was purity and goodness and joy. She was light and comfort and tenderness. She was care. She was love.

Ephre looked out upon the Warp, and was lonely. She was love, but had no child to love. She was care, but had no child to care for. She said to herself, "I must have a child. Something good. Something pure. I will name her Life."

She reached out into the Warp and gathered what material she could. Star stuff. Fire and water and earth and air, the little bits that filtered into the Warp from the Inner Planes. She shaped and molded those bits into a tiny egg, and impregnated herself with it.

The pregnant Ephre floated through the Warp for an eon, gestating, her belly swelling with the stirrings of a new universe. She grew so large she could not move, not even to defend herself when the horrors of the Warp, drawn to the new Life growing in Ephre's belly, began to nibble and claw at her. In pain and fear, she endured.

Finally, Life was ready; Ephre cried out and birthed the whole of the Grand Material.

But the Warp is the Warp.

The Warp does not create. The Warp only corrupts, and for all her goodness, Ephre was born in the Warp.

Ephre's child, the vast universe of the Grand Material, was stillborn.

A scattering of rocks floating in the blackness of space, little twinkling orbs of fire, clouds of dust and ash, icy comets, but nowhere in all its vastness was there any Life.

There was only a universe full of quiet, full of stillness, barren and empty.

Ephre sobbed when she saw what she had birthed. In her grief, she tore out her hair. She screamed into the Warp. In rage and sorrow, she clawed at it, she cursed it. But what does the Warp care for the dead child of a goddess? What does the Warp care for the wailing of a grieving mother?

The Warp is the Warp, cold and endless.

Grief gave way to numb calm. With hollow eyes, Ephre gazed upon the still quiet of the Grand Material, upon her lifeless child.

Ephre reached her fingers beneath her skin and tore open her breast, tore open her ribs, and plucked her own heart from her chest. Even as her own divinity withered and her body began to crumble to ash, she packed the heart with stone, with water, with fire and air, and she placed it in the center of the Grand Material, in orbit around a star.

Her lips were the last part of her body to disintegrate, and she breathed out a name: Yxra. *Elegy*.

A memorial to the child that would never be.

The Helix

Ephre was no more. In grief and sorrow, she extinguished herself.

She would never know the true effect of her final act. The encapsulated heart whirled around its sun for ages upon ages, spent millions of years just circling through black space. But the heart of a goddess does not stop beating just because it has been removed from its chest.

At first, there was only a single pulse. A weak, fluttery spasm deep under the rock. An age passed before the next.

But the Heart built new vessels, reaching out into the shell of earth and stone, infusing the planet with divine blood, strengthening itself. It began to beat more regularly, more rhythmically.

Deep beneath the rock, a mote of light began to shine in the center of Ephre's heart. Desperate to escape the cold pressure in the depths of the earth, the mote began to work its way to the surface. It grew and grew, spiraling around an axis like a corkscrew, until it broke the earth and reached up into the sky.

This coil of light, this Helix, shone down upon the eastern hemisphere of Yxra, upon the earth and the sea. Where the light shone, something began to stir. Tiny buds of tiny plants. Insects and small animals.

Over eons, more complex life came into being. Vast forests of huge trees. Intelligent creatures that began to use tools. First were the elves, born closest to the Helix, most like Ephre in appearance and being. Further away, the humans and halflings. Under mountain and hill, the dwarves and the gnomes. And on the furthest reaches, where the light barely shone, the orcs, half-cast in shadow, but still proud.

Through death and sorrow, Yxra became the only vessel of Life in all the Grand Material.

Y'hulohath



Image by [Judy Schmidt](#)

But Ephre was not the only ancient thing in the Warp.

When Ephre became pregnant with the Grand Material, something stirred in the Warp. Its size was immeasurable; so vast, so colossal. In comparison, Ephre was no more than a speck of dust on a man's wrist.

Slowly, laboriously, it opened a single eye. It took centuries. It had not moved in a multitude of forevers, but what is time to something ageless?

The lesser horrors swarmed to Ephre. They chewed at her, pestering her, but this Horror with its one watchful eye did nothing.

When Ephre birthed her stillborn universe, when she sobbed and lashed out at the Warp, it did nothing.

When she tore the Heart from her chest and flung it into the great void of the Grand Material, it did nothing.

When she whispered the Heart's name into being, it did nothing.

It had a name, once. It hadn't thought of it in several eternities. But it never forgot.

Y'hulohath. Yes, that was it.

Y'hulohath watched, and when Ephre was long gone, it still watched the tiny heart in its coffin of stone.

It didn't grow bored or tired. It didn't blink or look away.

And when the first weak pulse of Ephre's heart came fluttering through the Void, it *coveted*.

This was something new. Something unsettling.

Y'hulohath hadn't coveted anything in its whole existence. It had never wanted anything. It just existed; it just *was*. It always had been, and it always would be.

But it *wanted* what was within the tiny coffin planet, within the beating heart. It wanted Life.

The whole of the Warp shuddered and groaned when Y'hulohath moved. The lesser horrors scurried and fled; most were crushed beneath Y'hulohath's massive bulk, ground up and assimilated. It didn't even notice.

It reached out with all of its tendrils and tentacles and limbs, feeling the edge of the Warp. When she birthed the Grand Material, Ephre had managed to place it outside the Warp. Somewhere safe from the Warp's corruptive influence.

But Y'hulohath had time. While tiny life sprouted and grew on Yxra, Y'hulohath searched and tested. While civilizations sprung up and collapsed, Y'hulohath searched and tested.

And finally it found what it was looking for. A single thin spot in the barrier between the Warp and the Grand Material.

It flung itself against the thin spot. It smashed at it with tentacle and tooth and claw and flame, with blade and barb and horn and root, with everything it had ever consumed and made part of itself. The whole of the Warp trembled and quaked with

its raging. Even while it raged, its single eye never stopped watching Life flourish on Yxra.

An age passed, and still Y'hulohath raged against the thin spot.

Then, the thin spot cracked. Just a bit. A crack tinier than the tiniest crack imaginable by mortal minds. But enough for a horror of the Warp.

Y'hulohath felt something else that was new. It was tired. Exhausted. It had taken every bit of energy it had to make that one little crack in the Warp.

It might have retired to rest and recover before widening the crack. But it *wanted*. It *craved*. For once in its long existence, it did not want to wait.

Y'hulohath pressed its great eye against the crack. It pressed and pressed and pressed. It crushed itself against the hard edge of the crack, using all of its mass and all of its strength to shove itself through.

It tore itself apart trying. In agony and rage and fear, it screamed from ten thousand mouths, and it tore itself apart.

Only a single cell of the Horror that had been Y'hulohath survived and escaped into the Grand Material, but that was enough.

The cell found the spiral of the Helix, and it drifted slowly down and down.

Down to the Heart of Ephre. And there, it latched on. It buried under the muscle, a cancerous speck on the pure, strong muscle of Ephre's heart.

There it slept. There it began to grow.

This is the “official” origin story of Yxra. Most cultures within the world have their own origin myths, but the story above describes what actually happened.

Very few of Yxra’s inhabitants actually know this story in its entirety. Many know of Ephre and worship her as a progenitor deity or as a goddess of mothers, but few suspect that her actual physical heart beats within the core of their planet; instead, most believe the part of the story about her putting her heart in orbit around the sun to merely be a colorful metaphor.

Almost no one knows the name Y’hulohath, or the truth of the tumor it has become in the Heart of Ephre.

Incidentally, Y’hulohath is the reason magic exists in the Grand Material. The crack in the barrier between the Warp and the Grand Material allows a small trickle of the Warp to bleed through into the material plane. Through incantation and ritual, Yxran spellcasters can harness this trickle of the Warp to their bidding. This will be detailed in a future post.