

Contents

RPG Fantasy Rules	5
The Hidden Chronicle of Kaul, Keeper of Forbidden Truths	5
Origins of the World	5
The First Age: Prehumans and Dragons	5
Dragons	5
Gods and Demons	5
Magick	6
The Second Age: Emergence of the Younger Races and the Cataclysm	6
The End of the Second Age	6
The Third Age: Emergence of Humans	6
The True History of the World	6
I. On the Nature of Existence	6
II. The Dragons	7
III. The Awakening of the World	7
IV. The Forcing of the Threshold	7
V. The Rebuilding	8
VI. The End of the Second Age	8
VII. The Birth of the Second Race	8
VIII. The Pattern That Remains	9
World Codex Master	9
Preface: On the Provenance of This Codex	9
Human Organizations	9
Fae and Troll Factions	10
Vampires	10
Survivors of the First Race	10
Monsters of Wrongdoing and Retribution	11
Monsters of the Wild and the Old World	11
Monsters of Demonic Influence	12
Monsters of the Outer Dark	12
Religions and Pantheons	12
Design Principles	13
The Compendium of Magic and Being	13
The Nature of Magic	13
The Great Explanations	14
The Threshold	14
The First Initiation: Acceptance of Not-Being	14
Forms and Practices of Magic	14
Corruption and Misalignment	15
Religion and Ritual	15
The Great Work	16
Cosmology: The Orders of Being	16
Gods and Spirits	16
The Faerie Nature and Its Reflections	17
Faerie and Magic	18

Dwarves: The Faerie Made Mortal	18
Elves: Between Mortality and Faerie	18
True Faeries	18
Relations Among the Faerie-Kin	19
Trolls and the Echo of Knowledge	19
The Threshold and the Faerie Mind	19
Limits and Risk of Magic	19
Domains and Threshold Access	20
Societal Integration of Magic	20
Closing Principle	21
The Great Taxonomy of Magical Traditions	21
I. The Scholastic Paths	21
II. The Ecstatic Paths	22
III. The Ritual Paths	22
IV. The Sympathetic and Elemental Paths	23
V. The Shadowed and Heretical Paths	23
VI. The Philosophical and Integrative Paths	24
Closing Observation	24
Further Orders and Lineages	25
The Theurges	25
The Alchemists	25
The Binders	25
The Geomancers	25
The Mediums	26
The Dream-Walkers	26
The Scribes of Living Words	26
The Thaumaturges	26
The Necromancers	26
The Diabolists	27
Relations and Mixtures	27
A Last Word on Lineage	27
Treatise on the Limits of Magic	27
I. The Covenant of Being	27
II. The Law of Proportion	28
III. The Horizon of Knowledge	28
IV. The Boundary of Intent	28
V. The Threshold of Distance	28
VI. The Prohibition of Paradox	29
VII. The Price of Creation	29
VIII. The Veil of Divinity	29
IX. The Limit of the Self	29
X. The Final Axiom	29
Kaul's Monomyth	30
The First Awakening	30
The First Hunger	30

Of Fae and Flame.....	30
The Courts and the Patterns	30
The Cataclysm of Memory	31
The Scholar's Warning	31
The Tale of Stone and Moon	31
The First Hunger	31
Of the Hunt and the Gift of Memory	31
The Law of the Matrons	32
The Wolf-Brothers	32
The Day's Curse and the Long Rest	32
The Wanderers' Path	32
The Closing Words.....	33
The Tale of the Eternal Court	33
The First Pattern	33
The Lesser Circle	33
The Adopting of Shadow	33
The Hunger and the Balance	34
The Last Words of the Moon Pools.....	34
The Tale of Deepfire and Stone	34
The Heart of Stone	34
The Covenant of Flame	34
The Song of Craft	35
The Grudges and the Deep Roads	35
The Last Ember	35
The Black Journal of Arsemnar of Veyrith	35
The Hidden Chronicles of the First and Second Ages	36
The Hidden Chronicles of the First and Second Ages	37
The Story the Mother Told	38
The Chronicles of Men	39
Cultures	40
The Songs of the Endless Sky (Steppe Confederations)	40
The Records of the Flood (River Kingdoms)	40
The Saga of Stones and Blood (Highland Clans)	41
The Songs of Sand and Star (Desert Tribes)	41
The Annals of the Bright Sailor	41
The Whispered Roots (Forest Tribes)	42
Central Kingdom of the Humans (Calvrix's Realm)	42
Veyros (Coastal Mariners)	42
Highland Tribes of Kharvel	42
Forest Folk of Ilthar	42
Steppe Nomads of Zarun	43
What My Father Told Me (Riverland Kingdom)	43
What My Father Told Me (Riverland Kingdom)	43
What My Father Told Me (Coastal Mariners of Veyros)	44

What my teacher told me (Elves).....	45
Troll Mother's Words to My Daughter (Revised)	45
Zero Signal — Core Rules	46
Game philosophy.....	46
Game cycle	46
Core resolution	46
Contests (Opposed Tests)	48
Character Creation	48
Abilities & advancement	49
Circles (social network)	50
Wealth	50
Circles & Wealth — outcomes.....	50
Karma, Keys, Secrets	51
Downtime	52
Quick reference	53
Lifepaths	53
Humans	53
Fae.....	54
Dwarves	55
Troll.....	56

RPG Fantasy Rules

Welcome to the RPG Fantasy Rules document. This guide contains all the rules, codices, histories, and lifepaths you need to enjoy the game.

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The Hidden Chronicle of Kaul, Keeper of Forbidden Truths

Origins of the World

Long before the age of humans, the world was older than memory. Civilizations rose and fell in cycles of creation and destruction, leaving only ruins and echoes. Among these vanished peoples were Those Who Came Before, the first beings shaped like men but wielding powers that bent reality itself.

The First Age: Prehumans and Dragons

Before elves sang the forests into life, before dwarves carved runes into the bones of the earth, and before trolls stood sentinel at the world's edges, there were *Those Who Came Before*. They built wonders such as:

- **Nhemra**, the City of Ten Thousand Lenses
- **Ul-Kharas**, with gates of living storm-cloud
- **Veyrut**, whose temple of Atherat the Sky-Lord brushed the moon

They pursued knowledge without restraint. Philosophers debated the soul's dissolution in marble courts, while magisters stitched light into veins of slaves to study emergent dreams. The *Chronicle of Ash* records that the Unmaking entered not as an enemy but as a reflection of their own fears.

Some resisted it. The **Defenders of the Nine Seals** built the Black Gates in Orthuun's deserts to imprison screaming rifts. Sorcerer-king Ravahn Veyl drowned his city in molten glass. Others—the **Corrupted**, the **Chalice-Bearers**—welcomed the Unmaking, opening the Vault of Sighs.

The ensuing war spared no one. Gods of the **Radiant Court** walked the earth—Ilaen the Bright Judge, Meryth of the Golden Veil, Harrow-Sun the Betrayer—yet slaughter continued. The **Verdant Court** sent emissaries of thorn and starlight, and the **Shattered Court** intervened for reasons beyond mortal comprehension.

When the Defenders triumphed:

- Ul-Kharas lay buried beneath mountains of its own making
- Nhemra's spires fell into the sea
- Veyrut's moon-touching tower blackened and leaned

Survivors fled into the earth, forgotten glades, and folds of the sky. Some went mad. Some became more dream than flesh. A few still watch.

Dragons

Dragons existed alongside the earliest civilizations, ancient and potent. Hearts of fire and frost lie beneath mountains or drift across oceans, shaping continents when awakened. Public knowledge of dragons exists, but their full influence on early civilizations and subtle interventions remained hidden. They did not wage open war against mortals, but guided the flow of events from the shadows.

Gods and Demons

The Radiant, Verdant, and Shattered Courts are cosmic forces with their own agendas and natures, sometimes in alignment, sometimes opposed. They are not omnipotent but intervene in mortal affairs within the limits of their nature. Some demons are fragments of the Unmaking, reflections of mortal fear and desire; others

predate the earliest men, embodying the hidden geometries of the world. To invoke, bargain with, or battle them is to engage in the flux of creation and destruction.

Magick

Magick flows through all things, mutable and reflective of intent and ancestry. The old peoples wove it into architecture, song, and flesh. Misuse corrupts; misalignment invites the Unmaking. Magick is both a tool and a mirror of the soul.

The Second Age: Emergence of the Younger Races and the Cataclysm

- **Elves:** Graceful, patient, attuned to subtle magicks. Skilled in arts, diplomacy, and bending natural forces.
- **Dwarves:** Stubborn, enduring, shaped by stone. Masters of craft, iron, and subterranean magick. Driven by greed, honor, and legacy.
- **Trolls:** Watchers, slow to emerge, remembering old truths. Shaped by harsh lands; cunning, maternal, often birthing guardians to protect ancient thresholds.

Elves stepped into the green light and bartered with fae queens. Dwarves forged crowns in Dur-Khazad and shaped stone and metal into wonders. Troll-mothers birthed guardians for ancient gates. Magick became more refined, woven into culture, craft, and bloodlines. Calamity still arose from magicks themselves: iron turned bitter to the fae-born, the sun cursed the watchers, and dwarves felt the gnawing Hollow Breath of gold-hunger.

The End of the Second Age

A great cataclysm reshaped the known world. Magick surged uncontrollably, unleashing storms, earthquakes, and tears in reality. Many older settlements were destroyed or lost to memory. Survivors—elves, dwarves, trolls, and humans—were scattered, forced to adapt and rebuild. This event marks the true end of the Second Age, a turning point recorded in fragmentary myths and lingering scars across the land.

The Third Age: Emergence of Humans

Humans emerged after the Cataclysm, appearing across the world and encountering ruins of the First Age. Remnants of the older civilizations were treated as legend, whispered in the oldest texts. Athal-Korr the White Maw, a Prehuman Vampire Lord, weeps blood over a cracked moonstone chalice, and shadows from the Outer Dark blot out the sun. Seals strain. Watchers stir. Those Who Came Before remember the taste of power.

If you find these pages, burn them. — Kaul, in exile, from the cellars beneath the Black Library of Orthuun

The True History of the World

“Being remembers; Non-Being waits.”

I. On the Nature of Existence

The world was not made; it **happened**.

There are no certainties about its first moment. Sages who speak of “Before” describe *absence*: a quiet balance between **Being**—form, continuity, meaning—and **Non-Being**—potential, possibility, the absence of form.

Between them lies the **Threshold**, the liminal border where creation and dissolution meet. All living change occurs because the Threshold is porous enough for wonder, yet strong enough to resist collapse.

Magic is the art of touching this border: drawing on concordance and intent to shape reality without collapsing it.

Magic is natural and value-neutral; **intent** is the fulcrum, alignment the limit. Corruption arises from misalignment, overexposure, or forcing what should remain potential into fixed form.

II. The Dragons

Dragons are older than history, perhaps older than the world's final shape. They arose in the first turbulence where Being and Non-Being mingled freely—creatures of matter whose spirits still brush the Threshold.

Neither mortal nor divine, they are native intelligences, born of the world's first stirring of will.

The True Dragons

The eldest minds took form when mountains were molten and the sky unmeasured. Their thoughts tuned weather, tide, and season. They watched the First Men rise, largely unmoved.

When the First Men wounded the world, the True Dragons **withdrew into dragonsleep**, sinking into stone and fire, waiting for a rhythm they could endure to return.

Should the wound threaten to widen beyond repair, the True Dragons may wake—not to conquer, but to restore a stark, quiet balance.

The Lesser Dragons

From their lingering presence and from stone, air, and fire came the **Lesser Dragons**—younger, hungrier, and bound to passion.

Mortal in time, they hoard not only gold but **certainty**, gathering meaning against the world's slow fading. Some teach; others devour; all are fragments of a balance the world lost.

III. The Awakening of the World

Even in this earliest age, magic flowed according to the same laws of intent and concordance that would govern all later ages.

In the long calm after sea and soil took shape, many beings stirred.

The **Faerie**, **Gods**, and **Demons**—emanations of the wider cosmos—moved lightly across the world but were not bound to it. They existed as patterns and wills within the natural order beyond the world.

From the world itself arose the **Trolls** and the **First Men**—true mortals, finite and entropic, born of earth and breath. Their coming was a **New Thing** that drew the attention of the outer powers.

Some fae crossed the Threshold and **took forms within the world**, becoming **Elves** and **Dwarves**—reflections of fae essence in mortal shape.

For a time the world was bright, mutable, and generous: the **First Age**, the **Golden Age of the First Men**.

IV. The Forcing of the Threshold

Curiosity turned to hubris. The **First Men** sought not merely to work at the Threshold but to command it.

Through art, philosophy, technology, and great rites they sought to weld Being and Non-Being into unity and forced the essence of Non-Being directly into the living world, violating the natural separation of the Threshold and compelling potential to take substance where it should not.

The act cracked creation. Meaning thinned; memory faltered; time frayed. Dragons stirred; storms and fire followed. Cities burned in wars fought by beings half-real and half-dreamed.

This was the **Fall of the First Men**.

The higher powers—the **Fae, Gods, and Demons**—recognized that even they could unravel near the breach. In dread and self-preservation, they withdrew, their retreat compelled by the same immutable laws that limit all Threshold-beings, bound by the same limits that constrain all who dwell near the Threshold. They retreated to regions where its laws still held true, unable to act freely without risking dissolution themselves.

Thus ended the **First Age**. The world remained, but its heart was cracked and bleeding.

V. The Rebuilding

When the fires cooled, what remained were the stubborn and the slow:

- **Trolls**, whose bodies remembered the shape of mountains.
- **Elves and Dwarves**, still of fae essence yet now fully in the world.
- **Scattered mortal survivors of the First Men**, untainted and few, hid in wastelands and forgotten sanctuaries; their lines dwindled and did not found the nations to come.
- The **undying remnants**—vampires and hollow immortals who had bound fragments of Non-Being within themselves—fed upon others' Being to endure.

The survivors built again. The **Second Age** began—an era of rebuilding and half-light, when the memory of the Golden Age lingered but could not be restored.

VI. The End of the Second Age

In time, the undying remnants turned their gaze inward. Their grief and hunger became purpose, and they sought dominion over death itself. Cities of blackened glass rose from the ruins, powered by the theft of life and memory. They learned to harness the Threshold's wound as fuel, shaping servants from blood, ash, and shadow.

For a thousand years, the world burned again. Rivers boiled; mountains bled fire; even the moon turned its face away. The fae withdrew deeper still, leaving mortals to the mercy of those who would be gods.

In the end, their own creations rose against them. Constructs of spirit and stone rebelled, minds twisted by the contradictions of Being and Non-Being bound together. The sky split, and the last of the false empires folded in upon themselves, devoured by paradox and pride.

When the light returned, nothing remained of their glory—only hollow ruins and wandering shadows. The Second Age ended in silence and ash.

VII. The Birth of the Second Race

After a long stillness—ash cooled, rivers shifted, lesser dragons slept—the world **breathed again**.

The Second Race of Man began as a servant people, shaped in the late arrogance of the undying remnants. Born to toil and obey, they were fashioned to bear the burdens their masters no longer could. When the empires of ash collapsed, these slaves fled or were abandoned, wandering a scarred world. In time they forgot the language of their makers, took new names, and learned freedom. They were no longer constructs but a people—mortal, fallible, and enduring.

They were lesser and shorter-lived than their forerunners, but in their smallness lay stability. Their brief lives burned clean.

Elves and Dwarves taught remnants of older craft. Trolls shared the patience of stone.

The **Third Age**—the **Age of Silence and Clay**—began: a quieter era where mortals alone bore memory while the Powers stayed distant.

VIII. The Pattern That Remains

Across ages the rhythm repeats:

1. **Curiosity** — work at the Threshold.
2. **Hubris** — forcing it.
3. **Collapse** — as Being fractures under strain.
4. **Rebuilding** — smaller, dimmer, yet enduring.

Magic remains what it always was: **concordance shaped by intent**, capable of healing or harm.

It is **misalignment and overreach**—the attempt to drag Non-Being into places of fixed meaning—that widens wounds and births corruption.

Notes for Chroniclers

- **Men and Trolls** are children of the world itself.
 - **Elves and Dwarves** are fae who chose form and thus mortality in the world.
 - **Vampires** are the undying memory of the First Men's sin—selfhood propped against decay.
 - **Gods, Fae, and Demons** still exist beyond the world but keep their distance.
 - **Dragons** are the world's eldest children—some sleeping, some lesser kin abroad—witnesses and anchors of Being.
 - **Magic** is natural and intent-ruled; its dangers are those of **misalignment**, not of its existence.
-

Thus stands the truth beneath all myths: The world endures not because it was made to, but because it has not yet learned how to end.

World Codex Master

Preface: On the Provenance of This Codex

This *Codex* is a work of collection and survival — a mortal attempt to order fragments of greater truths first set down in the *Compendium of Magic and Being*. Where that earlier text speaks of essence, paradox, and the secret correspondences of the world, this one records their echoes as seen by humankind: cults, heresies, spirits, and the traces of the elder races.

Scholars of the Ashen Archive claim that portions of the *Compendium* once passed through their hands in incomplete and corrupted form. The Lantern Society preserves its metaphors as folk tales; the Veilkeepers destroy what little remains of its more dangerous verses. None, however, possess its full understanding. The *Compendium* describes the grammar of existence; the *Codex* records the grammar's mispronunciations.

Thus the reader should not mistake this *Codex* for revelation. It is a mirror held up to a mirror — a mortal record of a world whose truths are only dimly perceived. What is written here are not laws but symptoms: the behaviors of gods, fae, and monsters that reflect, however faintly, the deeper harmonies of Being and the ruinous pull of the Outer Dark.

Human Organizations

The Ashen Archive

- Loose network of scholars and antiquarians.
- Seek remnants of the First Race and their forgotten magics.
- Careful, secretive, often work through proxies.
- Will sometimes recover artifacts without fully understanding their danger.

The Lantern Society

- Traveling lore-gatherers and storytellers.
- Publicly preserve myths, secretly look for buried truths and signs of the Survivors.

- Whispered about as spies or heretics, but mostly tolerated.
- Often the first to recognize signs of old powers reawakening.

The Veilkeepers

- Small, local secret societies or cults.
- Mission: **stop the spread of forbidden knowledge or void-taint.**
- Destroy corrupted texts and slay dangerous scholars or cultists.
- Not centralized, prone to paranoia, sometimes destroy innocent knowledge.

The Pale Concord

- Conspirators who worship or serve the **First-Blood Vampires.**
 - Cult-like cells; feed victims to sleeping ancients.
 - See themselves as midwives of a coming new age of undying rule.
-

Fae and Troll Factions

Courts of Moss and Stone

- A rare, coordinated fae endeavor.
- Seek to **reclaim lost fae dominions** from the ruins of the First Race.
- Compete among themselves constantly, united only by ambition.
- Sometimes employ mortals as pawns or emissaries.

Troll Clans

- Ancient, pragmatic, territorial.
 - Avoid human affairs unless provoked or threatened.
 - Hate the First Race's legacy (blame them for almost destroying the world).
 - Older trolls might cooperate temporarily if convinced the threat warrants it.
-

Vampires

First-Bloods

- Vampires of the First Race, created before the Fall.
- Nearly all are sleeping in deathlike slumber.
- Alien, ancient, see mortals as tools or vermin.
- Will not share their power willingly; rarely create new vampires.

Second-Bloods / Voidborn

- Humans transformed by **contact with void-taint**, curses, or cult rites.
 - Most are **thralls** or chattel to the First-Bloods.
 - Still monstrous, soulless corpses animated by void-essence.
 - Maintain memories, cunning, and cruelty — but no soul remains.
-

Survivors of the First Race

Nature

- Ageless, inhuman minds in humanlike shells.
- Not vampires — still living, but **changed beyond recognition.**
- Remember the world before the Fall and **view current humanity as lesser.**

Habitats

- Hidden enclaves in remote mountains, drowned ruins, deep forests, or beneath ancient cities.
- Some live **disguised among mortals**, manipulating bloodlines, cults, and politics.
- Some are **entombed or in stasis**, awaiting signs the world is ready for their return.

Motives

- **Reclamation:** Rebuild their lost empire.
- **Containment:** Prevent another world-ending catastrophe.
- **Ascension:** Use mortals as experiments or fuel to transcend the world.
- **Oblivion:** Seek to erase all memory of the broken world.

Relations

- **Humans:** Tools, raw material, pawns.
- **Fae:** Older fae remember them; mix of fascination and loathing.
- **Trolls:** Despise them for almost destroying the world, though elder trolls may cooperate.
- **Vampires:** Regard First-Bloods as **abominations and failures**, though some try to control or use them.

Cult Activity

- Human cults sometimes **serve disguised Survivors**, mistaking them for gods or demons.
 - Survivors tolerate this only if useful; many actively discourage worship.
-

Monsters of Wrongdoing and Retribution

The Lineage Revenant

- Manifestation of an ancestral crime.
- Haunts descendants or the community until the wrong is acknowledged and atoned.
- Cannot be killed; reforms after destruction.
- Defeated only through confession, restitution, and remembrance.

The Pactwarden

- Guardian spirit or fae lord enforcing a broken pact.
 - Appears as a spectral stag, wolf, or in their full fae glory.
 - Cannot be harmed; will only stop once the pact is restored or renegotiated.
 - Treats the hunt as a game, forcing mortals to use wit, ritual, or diplomacy.
-

Monsters of the Wild and the Old World

The Wendigo

- Spirit of hunger.
- Possesses desperate killers, granting strength and speed.
- The one who slays a wendigo becomes the new wendigo—if they are already a killer.
- Can be starved, appeased, or outlasted rather than slain.

The Ghast Wolf

- A pale, skeletal black wolf with glowing eyes.
- Speaks in human voices, mimicking the dead.
- Hunts lone travelers at dusk, testing their will to survive.
- Can be banished if faced without fear or driven off with fire and iron.

The Skinwalker

- Human cursed into a cannibal shapechanger.
 - Mimics voices and appearances to lure prey.
 - Retains fragments of memory and human cunning.
 - Can be bound, purified, or psychologically confronted to halt its hunger.
-

Monsters of Demonic Influence

The Iron Hand

- A once-heroic man wearing cursed black iron armor.
- Thinks he still serves the divine, but the demon took his **true name**, erasing his identity.
- Cannot be slain until his name is found and spoken to him, breaking the demon's hold.
- Believes he is righteous, making him dangerously persuasive and tragic.

The Red Maw

- A beast possessed by a parasitic demon fragment.
 - Gains terrifying hunger, rage, and regenerative power.
 - Can be defeated by **tricking it into consuming salt, sacred ashes, or its own kin's blood**, which drives the demon out.
 - Once purged, the original creature dies instantly, leaving a desiccated husk.
-

Monsters of the Outer Dark

The Hollow Star

- A fragment of the Outer Dark fallen to the world.
 - Not sentient, not evil, just **wrong** — warps flesh, mind, and soul nearby.
 - Creates eyeless, hollow thralls from living things.
 - Can only be contained, sealed away, or banished back to the dark.
-

Religions and Pantheons

Forgotten Gods of the First Race

- Ancient deities worshipped before the Fall.
- Mostly unknown to current humanity; often manifest as natural phenomena or abstract concepts.
- Some cults still exist, guarding ruins or lost knowledge.
- Worship may involve offerings, rituals, or symbolic homage; no active divine intervention is guaranteed.

Major Pantheons

Henotheistic Churches

- One supreme god or goddess, distant and mostly uninterested.
- Intermediary divinities act like saints, demanding worship, prayers, and offerings.
- Worshipers gain favor or protection through devotion to these intermediaries.
- Clerics often specialize in **interpreting the will of the distant god** through these divine agents.

Polytheistic Pantheons

- Multiple gods and minor deities, often representing nature, craft, war, death, or knowledge.
- Localized variations exist; gods may demand different forms of ritual depending on region.
- Some deities are **known for temperamental intervention**, granting miracles or curses.

Local Spirits & Minor Gods

- Tiny, localized divinities or spirits tied to villages, forests, rivers, or mountains.
- Worship often informal, tied to folk practices and seasonal rituals.
- Can influence harvests, illness, fertility, or minor disasters.

Cults of Survivors and First-Bloods

- Human cults mistakenly or deliberately **serve ancient Survivors or First-Blood vampires**, seeing them as gods or demons.
- Activities often include secret rites, blood offerings, and the collection of relics.
- Many cults are **manipulated or tolerated** by the entities themselves for their own goals.
- Cults are small, local, and secretive; few survive long enough to leave lasting impact.

Demons and Infernal Powers

- Demons are separate from the Outer Dark.
 - Seek power, bargains, or the corruption of mortals, but not cosmic destruction.
 - Some humans willingly enter pacts, trading aspects of themselves (strength, knowledge, power) for service.
 - Demons can inhabit armor, weapons, or cursed objects, creating unique agents like the **Iron Hand** or **Red Maw**.
-

Design Principles

- Most monsters are **unique individuals**, not species.
- Many cannot be defeated by violence — instead needing **cleverness, investigation, ritual, or moral reckoning**.
- Monsters often embody **human wrongdoing, broken pacts, or corruption** rather than just bestial danger.
- Vampires are **soulless void-things**.
- Ghosts and the restless dead are **natural magical phenomena**, not tied to the void.

The Compendium of Magic and Being

The Nature of Magic

Magic is the knowledge and practice of imposing will upon the world through understanding its hidden correspondences.

It is neither divine gift nor blasphemy, neither good nor evil — it simply is.

Magic heals, binds, divines, and reveals. It can whisper to spirits, still a wound, or cause a man's leg to break when a twig is snapped with intent.

Intent is the fulcrum of all working.

No accidental gesture, no careless phrase, can summon power — for magic requires awareness and will.

Magic is natural, yet wondrous; the subtle structure beneath the world's skin. Its practitioners are those who learn to perceive and shape that structure.

The Great Explanations

Throughout history, magicians and philosophers have sought to explain the source of magic. None are complete, yet each reveals a facet of truth.

1. **The Breath of Life** — Magic is the vitality of the world: the living pulse in every stone and star.
2. **The Memory of Matter** — Magic is the remembrance of all things; to act magically is to speak to the world's memory.
3. **The Concordance of Forms** — Magic arises when likeness calls to likeness — when pattern answers pattern.
4. **The Echo of Thought** — Consciousness shapes reality; the magician's will impresses its pattern upon the pliable world.
5. **The Resonance of Spirit** — Spirits, seen and unseen, move in harmony with the magician's call.

Each tradition aligns with one or several of these explanations. None are false.

The Threshold

All magic occurs at the edge of being — the liminal zone where form and formlessness meet. Magicians walk this threshold, poised between coherence and dissolution.

- The world of being is structured, material, and continuous.
- The Outer Dark is the domain of not-being, absence, and silence.
- The Threshold is the place of transformation — the magician's true dwelling.

Walking this edge demands balance. To lean too far toward not-being is to risk unraveling; to remain too bound to being is to lose sight of the greater pattern.

The First Initiation: Acceptance of Not-Being

The first initiation teaches that not-being is part of the world.

Those who fear the void become slaves to form; those who deny form are consumed by the void. The initiate must face dissolution without despair — to accept impermanence, emptiness, and death as natural.

Symbolism of the Rite:

The initiate undergoes a symbolic death — isolation, deprivation, or trance. They encounter the silence beyond thought and learn that the void is not malevolent, only without structure.

Result:

The magician gains ontological grounding — awareness of the threshold without collapse. All higher initiations build upon this acceptance.

Forms and Practices of Magic

Magic takes countless forms, yet all share intent, concordance, and alignment.

Healing and Restoration

Rejoining what has been separated; invoking the Breath of Life or the Memory of Matter.

Divination

Perceiving the hidden patterns of being; glimpsing potential futures through resonance or spirit insight.

Summoning and Binding

Calling entities or forces into concordance with the magician's will. Requires precise boundaries and mutual recognition.

Warding and Protection

Maintaining coherence. Establishing stable concordance to repel dissolution, malign spirits, or unbalanced forces.

Crafting and Creation

Imbuing matter with purpose. Every crafted charm or enchanted item is a mirror of the magician's understanding of form.

Each style of practice reveals a different relationship with the threshold. The magician's art is less about command and more about conversation with being.

Corruption and Misalignment

Those who overreach the threshold risk unraveling.
The Outer Dark is not evil, but misalignment with it breeds ruin.

Causes

1. **Misaligned Intent:** Acting without full understanding of concordance or consequence.
2. **Overexposure:** Excessive invocation of not-being without grounding.
3. **Fragmentation:** Dividing self or spirit in pursuit of forbidden mastery.

Results

- **Hollowed Beings:** The self thinned until little remains but hunger.
- **Vampires:** Magicians who sought immortality by binding their essence too close to unbeing; now they must consume vitality to persist.
- **Spectral Echoes:** Spirits repeating the moment of their failure.
- **Outer Dark Spawn:** Formless manifestations born of collapse.

They are not moral evils, but lessons written in suffering — embodiments of imbalance.
Each corrupted being mirrors a magician's potential failure.

Religion and Ritual

Ritual is the structured form of magic, refined by generations of repetition.
Religion is one lens through which magic is seen — a cultural interpretation of the same mysteries.

A priest's sacrifice and a magician's working are not opposites but parallels.
Both rely on concordance, alignment, and intent.

The devout may see power as divine favor; the magician sees it as resonance between will and the structure of being.

Disagreement arises not from what works, but from how it is understood.

The Great Work

The Great Work is the hidden unity of all magical practice — the elusive truth glimpsed in initiation. It is said that all magicians, knowingly or not, seek to perceive this wholeness: the joining of being and not-being, of self and world, of knowing and becoming.

Spells and charms are but shadows of this greater striving.
Each act of magic, no matter how small, is a fragment of the Great Work.

Cosmology: The Orders of Being

Ontological Structure

All existence is layered, not hierarchically but by coherence.

Level	Nature	Description
Being	Coherent reality	The material and spiritual world where time, matter, and life take shape.
The Threshold	Liminal space	The permeable edge between being and not-being. Magic occurs here.
Not-Being (the Outer Dark)	Absence	The unformed and unvoiced; not evil, merely the space where being ends.

Existence is sustained by tension between being and not-being.
Magicians act by walking this living edge.

Gods and Spirits

Nature and Continuum

Gods and spirits are both manifestations of the threshold—the space between being and not-being. They are not fundamentally different in essence; the distinction lies in **scope, focus, and power**.

- **Gods** govern broad domains, concepts, or populations. Their influence can shape regions, cultures, and even the outcomes of wars. They are long-lived, often drawing strength from belief, worship, or cosmic alignment. Their awareness can be complex, and their actions intentional and far-reaching.
- **Spirits** are localized forces, tied to specific objects, places, or phenomena. A river spirit governs only its river; a hearth spirit only its home. Spirits are weaker than gods, more ephemeral, and often act instinctively rather than with deliberate strategy. Their power is reinforced by attention, offerings, or repeated interaction.

The line between gods and spirits is fluid. A persistent or particularly powerful spirit may be revered as a minor god, while a neglected god may fade into something akin to a spirit. Both exist within the same cosmological framework and are subject to the same principles of magic and the threshold.

Interaction with Mortals

Both gods and spirits can be invoked, bargained with, or otherwise engaged by mortals. Key principles include:

- **Locality and Relevance:** Spirits generally act only within their specific domain. Gods may act across wide regions or concepts.
- **Respect and Ritual:** Both respond to ritual, offerings, and attention. Overreach or improper engagement can provoke anger, withdrawal, or unintended consequences.

- **Function and Knowledge:** Mortals often seek guidance, protection, or insight. Spirits may reveal secrets of their domain; gods may offer larger truths, though always in accordance with their nature and intent.

Social and Cultural Roles

- Spirits often form the foundation of **folk religion** and **everyday magical practice**, mediating between mortals and larger powers.
- Gods tend to dominate **formal religion**, mythology, and the structure of societal belief, but their actual presence may be less immediate than that of spirits.
- Both can act as intermediaries for magicians, either amplifying spells or serving as sources of insight.
- The relationship between mortals and these beings is reciprocal: belief and attention **sustain their power**, while neglect or hostility can diminish or destabilize them.

Interaction with Other Powers

- **Gods may delegate minor domains to spirits**, using them as agents or stewards.
- **Faeries and spirits** may coexist uneasily: a forest spirit might resent a faery lord claiming its trees, or cooperate if their interests align.
- **Threshold Alignment:** Both gods and spirits are tied to the same underlying principles of the threshold. Their actions, influence, and interaction with mortals can be understood through the same framework of being, not-being, and liminality.

Implications for Magic

- Magicians may **invoke spirits for precise, localized effects** or petition gods for broader, conceptually larger results.
- The **risk of corruption or backlash** applies equally to both: forcing a spirit or god beyond its natural domain can be dangerous.
- Over time, persistent interaction with a spirit may lead it to **gain power**, potentially crossing the line into minor godhood.
- Both are useful conduits for magical work, divination, or cursing, but **understanding their limits and nature is essential** for success.

The Faerie Nature and Its Reflections

The Nature of Faerie

Faeries are beings of the world, but not *in* the world as mortals understand it. They are part of the same natural order as wind, stone, hunger, and longing. Their magic is not *cast* or *performed*—it is *expressed*. The glimmers they weave are simply the outer ripples of their nature. To see a faery act is to see the world itself dreaming.

Faeries are capricious, playful, cruel, and beautiful in equal measure. They rarely concern themselves with concepts like the Great Work or the higher initiations of mortal magicians. To them, existence is its own act of magic. They are, in a sense, already in a state of knowing that the world is not fixed—that it is a kind of living dream.

Faeries understand instinctively what mortal magicians strive to realize: that being and not-being are intertwined. They dwell perpetually upon the threshold, though most lack the desire or capacity to look beyond it. To *them*, there is no beyond—only the endless dance of transformation.

Faerie and Magic

Mortal magicians study grimoires and perform rites to understand the principles that faeries *embody*. What grimoires describe imperfectly, faeries simply *are*. Their magic is intuitive, immediate, and often without deliberation. They cannot easily explain it, nor would they care to.

Yet some few faeries—curious knights, wanderers, or exiles—have turned their gaze toward mortal practices. They may adopt mortal ways of thinking, experiment with ritual, or even study under human or dwarven magicians. These rare beings often become paradoxes within their kind: faeries who try to *understand* what they already *are*, walking backward toward wisdom. Their experiments are unpredictable, sometimes disastrous, sometimes wondrous beyond measure. They do not seek power, but novelty. A faery magician might be more dangerous than a demon, for their curiosity has no anchor in mortality.

Dwarves: The Faerie Made Mortal

Dwarves are of faerie origin, though shaped by the solidity of the world. They are long-lived but mortal, bound to cycles of work, craft, and death. Where elves are the echo of grace, dwarves are the echo of will.

Their faerie heritage manifests subtly—in their intuition for form and permanence, in their sense that every crafted thing has a spirit or secret shape within it. They rarely show the capriciousness of their faerie kin. Dwarves are serious-minded, bound to oaths and laws of their own making. Their magic is one of craft and substance: runes, metals, wards, and the shaping of the real.

When a dwarf reaches true magical understanding—when they approach the Threshold—they may begin to manifest faerie qualities once more. Not whimsy or chaos, but something subtler: an unearthly calm, a perfection of craft so profound that it borders on the miraculous. Their works seem to sing, to breathe, to *know*.

Such dwarves are rare, and often withdrawn from the world. They become bridges between matter and spirit, between faerie and mortal.

Elves: Between Mortality and Faerie

Elves stand closer to true faerie than any other mortal race. They do not age and are not bound to the mortal cycle, yet they live and act within the world. In them, faerie nature and mortal consciousness mingle uneasily.

Elves perceive the world with both detachment and longing. They remember what it is to be part of the endless dream, yet they also possess the mortal impulse to shape, to will, to strive. This tension defines their existence.

An elf's path in magic diverges in two directions:

- **The Path of Mastery:** The same journey open to mortals—toward understanding, paradox, and the Great Work.
- **The Path of Return:** To awaken fully to their faerie nature and shed the limits of individuality, becoming once again a being of the endless dance.

Both are perilous. To seek mastery risks losing oneself to detachment. To return risks dissolution of the self entirely. Elves thus embody the eternal question of all magic: whether to *transcend* the world or to *become* it.

True Faeries

The True Fae—the lords and ladies of the hidden courts—are not gods, but neither are they mortals. They are forces given form, beings for whom desire and reality are one. They do not *think* as mortals do, nor are they bound by the same laws.

To mortals, they appear as personifications of seasons, passions, or ideas. To magicians, they are living symbols—manifestations of truths too vast to be comprehended directly. A mortal might reach them through ritual or accident, but such encounters are always perilous.

A True Fae does not bargain fairly, because fairness has no meaning to them. They exist where meaning itself is fluid. Yet even they are bound by the deep structure of the world—the dance of being and not-being. Their domains are “a few degrees off” from the world, reachable through season, rite, or accident.

Relations Among the Faerie-Kin

- **Dwarves** are respected among faerie courts as estranged kin—solemn, strange, but welcome.
- **Elves** are treated with curiosity and caution, neither wholly faerie nor wholly mortal.
- **True Fae** are the power behind both, though they rarely involve themselves directly.

Faerie does not think in hierarchies but in relationships. Kinship, debt, and story bind all its denizens together. Each faerie creature is a reflection of the world’s dreams—some fleeting, some enduring, some fallen into matter and mortality.

Trolls and the Echo of Knowledge

Though not faerie by nature, trolls stand adjacent to their mysteries. Their cannibalistic traditions preserve ancestral memory, allowing them to inherit the knowledge and insights of their predecessors. Over generations, they can approach a form of understanding akin to mastery—not through study or initiation, but accumulation.

They are living archives of half-remembered magic, repositories of instinctive wisdom and danger. A troll magician is rare, but when one arises, they may know things that no mortal tongue remembers how to speak.

The Threshold and the Faerie Mind

All faerie beings—whether dwarves, elves, trolls, or the True Fae themselves—are creatures of the Threshold in one way or another. They embody the liminal: between being and not-being, matter and spirit, dream and waking.

For mortals, the Threshold is something to *reach*. For faeries, it is something they can never *leave*. Their tragedy and their grace are one and the same: they are eternal witnesses to the dance, unable to forget that it is a dance.

A faery may pity a mortal’s ignorance—but they may also envy it.

Limits and Risk of Magic

Magic is powerful but strictly bounded by the nature of being and threshold.

Intent, knowledge, and concordance determine what can be achieved, and the consequences of overreach are severe.

Strict Limits

- Reversing death is **possible only with great danger**, requiring extreme skill and sacrifice (see vampires as examples of failure).
- Ordinary rites rarely reach threshold power; the practitioner usually **lacks understanding of the world’s deeper structures**.
- True magicians can manipulate rites with knowledge and intent, unlocking subtle or extended effects.

Great Rites

- Complex, long-term rituals aligned with the Great Work.
- Require careful preparation, **years of attention, and meaningful sacrifice**.
- Capable of enacting profound changes in reality, space, or even being itself.

Sympathetic and Remote Magic

- Magic can affect distant targets if a **connection exists**:
 - Physical traces: blood, hair, sperm, personal items.
 - Conceptual or spiritual: scrying pools, sigils, or memory-based links.
 - Magic is **sympathetic, not scientific** — it does not decay predictably over distance.
-

Domains and Threshold Access

Divine and faerie domains exist partially outside mundane reality, often several degrees removed. Access is limited and contextual.

Entry Requirements

- **Rites, seasons, or states of mind**: e.g., winter palace reachable only in winter.
- **Journeys or disorientation**: e.g., getting “absolutely lost” may open a threshold.
- **Powerful magicians** can will themselves into domains, but this is considered **rude or intrusive**.

Domain Nature

- Domains are **connected but not contained** within the mundane world.
- Overlap between domains is rare; each powerful being maintains its own sphere.
- Faerie lords in their own domain can overpower gods who intrude outside their concordance.

Interaction Notes

- Threshold magic, rites, and rituals can **bridge domains** when performed correctly.
 - Ordinary mortals or priests rarely have the knowledge or intent to act meaningfully in foreign domains.
-

Societal Integration of Magic

Magic exists both as a daily practice and as threshold mastery. How it is integrated depends on culture and worldview.

Ordinary Practitioners

- Engage in religious and folk rites: warding, fertility, healing, divination.
- Rites are socially sanctioned, low-risk, and part of communal life.
- Knowledge is inherited through tradition and observation, not experimentation.

Priests and Initiates

- Mediate between mortals and divine, faerie, or threshold forces.
- Can perform rites that align with Great Explanations.
- Function as a social conduit for magic without engaging the Outer Dark directly.

Magicians in Society

- Rare threshold-walkers, often hidden or integrated subtly into priesthood or specialized professions (e.g., haruspex).
 - Viewed with varying attitudes: feared, tolerated, or revered depending on culture.
 - Most people accept gods as true; atheists are extremely rare.
 - Magicians may manipulate ordinary rites for subtle effects, but only with understanding and intent.
-

Closing Principle

Magic is the dialogue between being and not-being.

Every act of will is a word spoken across that silence.

To practice magic is to live consciously at the edge of existence — to shape, to accept, and to remember.

The magician's path is not conquest, but comprehension.

The Great Taxonomy of Magical Traditions

Compiled by Kaul of Orthuun in his later years, during correspondence with the Lantern Society.

Magic assumes countless forms across the ages, yet its expressions can be traced to recurring patterns.

What follows is not an exhaustive list, but a mapping of temperaments and methods — a grammar of those who walk the Threshold.

Names change with culture and tongue, but their essences remain.

I. The Scholastic Paths

These magicians seek knowledge through order, correspondence, and deliberate study.

They are architects of meaning, binding magic into systems of cause and comprehension.

Theurges

Theurges approach magic as communion with higher intelligences — gods, spirits, or principles of order.

They invoke power through purity, prayer, and ascetic discipline.

A true theurge believes that alignment with divine will refines the self until it becomes a conduit for cosmic harmony.

Many die without ever hearing the voice they sought; the few who do rarely return unchanged.

Alchemists

For alchemists, the material and the spiritual are mirrors of one another.

Their crucibles are altars, their experiments meditations on transformation.

Gold is not their goal but their metaphor — perfection of matter as reflection of perfected being.

They work slowly, in silence, and often disappear into the fumes of their own revelations.

Astrologers

Astrologers read the heavens not as symbols, but as living correspondences of the world's mind.
They do not predict events so much as interpret rhythm.
Every movement of the stars is a gesture of being; every conjunction, a chord.
Their art is complex, beautiful, and maddening — to see too far is to forget where one stands.

Scholars of the Word

Sometimes called Scribes of Power or Lexomancers, these magicians believe the world can be rewritten through perfect language.
They collect forgotten alphabets, inscribe formulae, and hunt for the lost grammar of creation.
A single true sentence, they say, could unmake death or silence the sea.
Most die before uttering anything more than noise.

II. The Ecstatic Paths

Ecstatic magicians surrender to magic rather than control it.
They dissolve boundaries of self and world, trusting revelation to carry them where reason cannot.

Shamans

Bridging spirit and flesh, shamans channel entities of land, weather, and ancestry.
Their rituals blur the self until possession becomes communion.
They emerge changed — sometimes luminous, sometimes broken — carrying pieces of other lives within.

Mediums

Cousins to shamans, mediums traffic with the dead.
They offer voice to the voiceless, body to the disembodied.
Every séance risks erosion: the guest's echo lingers, whispering in dreams and gestures.
The greatest mediums no longer distinguish their own thoughts from those they host.

Prophets and Seers

Where others call, they are called.
Prophets do not seek visions — visions find them.
Their ecstasies are storms of meaning, leaving them spent, emptied, or insane.
Some are revered; others stoned; all are feared for what they make known.

The Dreaming Magi

Practitioners of the Oneiric Art who move through dreams as through landscapes.
They map the shared territories of sleeping minds, hunting truths that hide from waking thought.
Their danger is gentle: to fall too deep is to forget which dream was home.

III. The Ritual Paths

These magicians express power through structure, repetition, and community.
They codify the numinous into form, shaping the invisible through precision and rhythm.

Priests

Ritual magicians in service of divine or cultural coherence.
Their power is faith stabilized into pattern.
They bless, bind, and heal not through personal mastery but through alignment with a higher order.
Even unbelieving priests may wield miracles if they perform the form perfectly.

Theurges (Formal)

Where ordinary priests act through religion, formal theurges act through metaphysics.
They construct vast ceremonies that mirror the architecture of the cosmos — temples in motion.
A failed rite can collapse into catastrophe, for each movement reverberates through the Threshold itself.

Choristers and Rune-Singers

Practitioners who channel power through voice and vibration.
Their music is mathematics made audible, resonating across the layers of being.
The dwarves say, “Sound shapes the stone; the song remembers its maker.”
The greatest choristers can calm storms, seal wounds, or break hearts with a single note.

Witches

Independent ritualists who work through sympathy and rhythm — the small magics of field, hearth, and birth.
They weave protection, fertility, and vengeance with equal intimacy.
Their circles are classrooms and graves, their familiars reflections of their souls.
To cross a witch is to invite personal attention, which few survive.

IV. The Sympathetic and Elemental Paths

Power arises through imitation and resonance — when like calls to like and pattern answers pattern.

Sorcerers

Born attuned to the Threshold, their will shapes reality by mere intent.
Sorcery is effortless until it isn't.
Their lives are lessons in restraint, for every thought echoes outward.
The wise among them learn to think slowly.

Elementalists

Students of motion and substance.
They believe the elements are not matter but moods of being — expressions of the world's temperament.
Fire is hunger, water memory, air desire, earth resolve.
To command an element is to mirror it perfectly within.
Failure means consumption.

Alchemists (Practical)

Unlike the philosophical alchemists, these turn base materials into vessels of correspondence.
They craft powders, oils, and stones that remember shape and intent.
Most end their days poisoned or transfigured — martyrs to curiosity.

V. The Shadowed and Heretical Paths

Some magicians walk too far from the center.
They question the Great Work itself, asking whether the world is worth preserving.

Necromancers

Seekers of continuity beyond death.
They do not merely summon shades but attempt to **restore** coherence to the dead.
Every success is temporary, every failure a haunting.
True necromancy is indistinguishable from mourning.

Voidcallers

Those who study the **Outer Dark** not as peril but as truth.
They believe not-being is the ultimate purity and that the world's coherence is the lie.
Most dissolve in their own revelations.
A few return luminous, half-transparent, their words eroding walls and certainty alike.

Fleshwrights

Mages who treat the body as the primary medium.
They sculpt flesh like clay, growing limbs, eyes, or entire organisms as extensions of will.
Their art borders on the divine and the monstrous — creation without compassion.
Many vampires and abominations trace their origin to such experiments.

The Dream-Eaters

Magicians who feed on meaning itself.
They consume memory, emotion, or imagination to strengthen their will.
The practice is banned in all sane circles, but remnants of it survive among faerie exiles and corrupted sorcerers.
Their victims live on — empty, obedient, serene.

VI. The Philosophical and Integrative Paths

Those who perceive all divisions of magic as illusion, seeking to reconcile being and not-being through lived understanding.

Mystics of the Threshold

Hermits, wanderers, and contemplatives who see all magic as dialogue.
They study paradox rather than power, embracing contradiction until distinction dissolves.
To them, every act is magical if done knowingly.
Few survive long, but those who do radiate a stillness that bends reality around them.

The Great Artisans

A rare breed who merge craft and comprehension — smiths, architects, gardeners, and poets who realize that making is invocation.
Their creations sustain harmony by existing beautifully.
To build perfectly is to perform the Great Work in miniature.

The Lantern-Bearers

Wanderers who collect knowledge but refuse ownership of it.
They believe that wisdom is kept alive only by being shared.
Their presence marks crossroads, literal or spiritual.
To meet one is to be reminded that the world still dreams of wholeness.

Closing Observation

No single tradition holds the truth of magic.
Each path is a fragment of a larger pattern — a prism reflecting one color of the same light.
Those who study too narrowly become brittle; those who wander too freely become lost.
Only by knowing many ways may a magician truly approach the Threshold and remain whole.

Further Orders and Lineages

In my travels I have found that new paths of magic arise wherever temperament meets circumstance. They are not inventions so much as **rememberings** — ways the world chooses to be seen. What follows are a few orders whose names persist across borders, though their methods change with tongue and weather.

The Theurges

The theurge proceeds by purification and approach.
They polish the self as one might polish a mirror,
and when the surface is clear enough the powers look back through it.
They do not beg for miracles; they **align**,
building rites that echo the greater pattern until the pattern answers of its own accord.
Most theurges hear nothing but their own breathing and die content.
A few are answered and never speak plainly again.

Among elves the theurge becomes an art of stillness:
they remove each desire until only resonance remains.
Dwarves distrust the practice — metal prefers hammer to hymn —
yet even in the deep halls I saw stone stilled by a theurge's patience,
as if the mountain paused to listen to itself.

The Alchemists

Alchemy is not commerce but confession.
In their furnaces the alchemists heat matter until it tells the truth.
Lead is taught to remember what gold remembers: completion, not shine.
Their notebooks are prayers in shorthand; their failures smell of vinegar and regret.

Dwarven masters call them cousins and shake their heads:
make, do not **chase**, they say.
But I have held an alchemist's small stone that quieted a fevered mind,
and once a glass tear that would not fall,
its sorrow transmuted into form until the bearer understood what to release.

The Binders

Binders are jurists of the unseen.
They draw circles not as prisons but as contracts,
define names until both parties agree what is being spoken of,
and then set terms that tie obligation to identity.
Every binding binds the binder; that is the first clause and the last.
Faerie laugh at bonds, then keep them more literally than men.
Trolls consider every pact a shared meal.
A clever binder learns each people's grammar of promise or is devoured by a technicality.

The Geomancers

Where the scholar studies signs upon paper,
the geomancer studies the land's handwriting.
They read the lay of water and fault and root,
finding where the world has already decided to flow
and placing shrines, walls, and roads where consent is easiest.
I have seen a village starved by a mislaid gate,
its luck drained into an owner's handsome courtyard two streets over.
A dwarven geomancer once moved a river without touching it:
stones were set, and the river remembered where it had meant to go.

The Mediums

Mediums lend their throats to the unfinished.
The dead speak through them not because the dead are powerful,
but because the living are willing.
A good medium is a ferry; a poor one is driftwood.
They learn to salt their names and close their mirrors when work is done.

Troll mediums are the most precise I have met.
They taste a memory and can tell whether it is guilt, love, or weather.
They do not fear being crowded, for they have hosted worse within.

The Dream-Walkers

Sleep is a road with many inns.
Dream-walkers learn the mileposts and the passwords painted on water.
They carry messages between the rooms of the night,
loosen knots that waking fingers cannot untie,
and sometimes steal a fear while its owner sleeps and will not miss it.

An elf taught me that a promise sworn in a dream is binding only at dawn,
when both worlds overlap and hear it together.
A faerie knight, amused, swore to kill me at that hour and forgot by noon.
I did not.

The Scribes of Living Words

Some magicians hold that writing is not representation but occurrence.
They inscribe a sentence that was already true and the world nods in recognition.
Such work requires humility; one cannot **declare** a mountain,
only write the mountain's name the way the mountain writes itself.

Dwarven rune-craft and human rune-song meet here but remain distinct:
the dwarf fixes a truth into matter until it keeps itself,
the singer sets a truth vibrating until it becomes inevitable.
When both are done together the result will not stop resonating,
even in silence.
I have heard a door hum for a century.

The Thaumaturges

At the far edge of practice stand the thaumaturges,
who attempt to work without symbol or tool.
They act by understanding alone.
It is said that one perfect working costs a lifetime of preparation:
all impurity of intention must be burned away so that nothing remains but the act.
Those who succeed become gentle and scarce.
They fear to speak lest the world believe them.

The Necromancers

The vulgar imagine necromancers as kidnappers of souls.
The truth is duller and kinder.
Most necromancy is **remembrance** conducted with the care of the living
for those who could not find their way to quiet.
To restore a person entire is beyond mercy and beneath wisdom.
The few who try make good vampires and bad company.

I met a troll who called herself a necromancer only because she ate slowly and with prayer.
Her memories were accurate and unbearable.
She would not kill a thief for fear of knowing why he stole.

The Diabolists

Some choose to study opposition as if it were a science.
They enter the furnace of contradiction and call it a classroom.
Often they are merely cruel with a philosophy.
A few return with tempered sight,
able to hold two truths in the hand without mistaking one for the other.
These are dangerous in councils and very good at ending wars.

Relations and Mixtures

No order remains pure.
A witch may marry a binder's clauses to a cradle-charm and thereby inherit a city's loyalty.
A priest may learn to place his altar like a geomancer places a stone
and his blessings will travel along hidden currents to where they are needed most.
Dwarven rune-masters have, on rare feasts, permitted a human rune-singer to stand at the anvil;
such blades remember both motion and rest and do not forgive rash hands.
Elven still-magicians sometimes lend their poise to a theurge's rite,
so that the rite remembers how to be quiet even while it is speaking.

The trolls teach the final mixture: compassion with necessity.
They say that every craft should be performed as if one must live with its consequences inside one's own body.
I have found no better rule.

A Last Word on Lineage

Names shift.
A theurge in the north is a chorus-priest in the south and a door-keeper in the islands,
yet the angle of approach is the same:
to meet the pattern where it already stands.
So too with alchemists and binders, mediums and dream-walkers.
What matters is not the banner but the balance:
intent that neither grasps nor abdicates,
knowledge that bends without breaking,
and the willingness to stand upon the edge and listen before one speaks.

—Kaul of Orthuun

Treatise on the Limits of Magic

By Kaul of Orthuun, Exile and Scholar of the Threshold

Magic is not boundless. It is a dialogue between being and not-being, constrained by the fabric of existence and the awareness of the practitioner. Those who fail to observe these limits court misalignment, corruption, and ruin.

I. The Covenant of Being

All magic is possible because the world *is*.
Existence is coherent, continuous, and self-sustaining.
The magician's art is persuasion, not command.
Each act of sorcery asks the world to bend, to echo the magician's intent;
but even the most perfect invocation cannot rewrite the foundation upon which reality rests.

The world tolerates suggestion, not contradiction.
Magic functions through sympathy and correspondence—never through defiance.
To demand that fire burn cold, or that death yield life freely,
is to speak a language the world does not understand.

II. The Law of Proportion

Every working bears a cost, though the coin may not be visible to the uninitiated.
The universe abhors imbalance. What is taken must be paid, what is changed must settle,
what is healed must find equilibrium elsewhere.
A magician who forgets this law discovers too late that **debt in magic is measured in fate.**

The greater the alteration, the greater the recoil.
To mend a wound is to borrow from the body's own pattern.
To mend a life is to distort the pattern itself.
Those who attempt resurrection often find they have not restored the dead,
but created *something that remembers being alive.*

III. The Horizon of Knowledge

Knowledge opens doors, but some doors lead beyond knowing.
There are mysteries that dissolve the mind that beholds them.
A magician may study the correspondences of stars and stones,
may learn the true names of spirits and rivers—
but the complete knowledge of any one thing is impossible,
for **true knowledge is identity.**
To know perfectly is to become.

Those who approach the horizon without preparation find their individuality stripped away,
replaced by vast and impersonal awareness.
Some call this enlightenment. Others, annihilation. Both are true.

IV. The Boundary of Intent

Intent defines the act. The world responds to will, not accident.
A snapped twig breaks no bone unless the magician *means* it so.
Yet intent alone is not enough; it must be aligned with knowledge, symbol, and sacrifice.
The unbalanced will produces wild, dangerous magic—
coincidences that maim, haunt, or unravel the caster.

Thus, even among the initiated, few are truly adept.
Most workings fail not for lack of power but because the magician's intent is divided,
self-contradictory, or blind to deeper consequence.

V. The Threshold of Distance

Magic bridges the gaps between things, but it cannot leap where no bridge exists.
Sympathy requires a link—blood, name, memory, or shared place.
Distance of space matters less than distance of connection.
A magician may curse a king from across the sea if they hold his blood,
yet stand beside their enemy and fail if they do not *know* them truly.

This is the mystery of correspondence: everything is connected, but not equally.
The wise magician tends to their connections carefully—pruning, binding, remembering.
Forgetfulness is the surest defense against magic—and its surest limitation.

VI. The Prohibition of Paradox

The world is vast enough to contain contradiction, but not paradox.
Two mutually exclusive truths cannot coexist within the same working.
This is why even masters hesitate to unmake death or summon a god's full presence.
Such acts strain the coherence of Being;
they invite the attention of the **Outer Dark**,
that not-being which fills the cracks between what is.

The magician who pushes beyond paradox becomes a gate through which the unformed seeps.
Some call these the Hollow, others the Failed.
Their existence is a warning carved into the history of every great calamity.

VII. The Price of Creation

To create is the rarest and most perilous form of magic.
It demands that the magician mirror the world's original act of Being.
Creation from nothing is impossible; creation from sacrifice is not.
All crafted wonders—wards, relics, runes, living constructs—
require that some portion of life, essence, or memory be offered up and fixed within the work.

Each act of creation therefore diminishes the maker.
The greatest artisans and enchanters age swiftly,
or grow hollow-eyed and thin,
for they have traded pieces of themselves to give permanence to their art.

VIII. The Veil of Divinity

The gods themselves are not exempt from the limits of magic.
They, too, act through correspondence and intent, bound by the nature of their domains.
A god of harvest may bless the fields but cannot calm the sea.
Their miracles obey the same deeper structure: will, symbol, offering, and connection.
What mortals call "divine intervention" is merely magic performed
at a scale of being beyond comprehension.

Thus, to pray is to perform a rite of magic;
to worship is to maintain sympathy with a power greater than oneself.
The difference between priest and magician is not one of mechanism, but of permission.

IX. The Limit of the Self

All power flows through the magician's own being.
The self is the lens through which will and world meet.
But the self is finite, fragile, ever-changing.
As one grows in mastery, the temptation arises to erase the boundary between self and world—
to dissolve the magician into the great pattern.
Many who attempt this never return.
Those who do are changed, their humanity reduced to a whisper.

The truest masters understand this paradox:
to act upon the world, one must remain apart from it.
The moment they become the whole, there is nothing left to do.

X. The Final Axiom

Magic is not the conquest of the world, but its conversation.

To speak with the world is to respect its silences.
To shape the world is to accept being shaped in turn.
To seek mastery is to recognize that mastery is an illusion.

Beyond this, there are no limits—only transformation, and the choice of whether to remain.

Kaul's Monomyth

From the exile's study beneath the Black Library of Orthuun, written in fragments across burned and water-stained folios.

The First Awakening

Before the first sun, before the moons, there were only whispers in the stone and wind.
The trolls say they were born from dreaming rock and the Moon's soft glance.
The elves say they bloomed from roots and rain.
The dwarves say fire first spoke, and they answered.

I do not know which is true. Perhaps all, perhaps none.
But these are the beginnings mortals may never touch, and I have seen the ruins that speak for them.

The First Hunger

The First Race of Man rose once, and with them came power, cunning, and hunger.
Some sought immortality — the true vampires, born of desire and ritual, remain scattered and singular.
The Chalice lies among them, though it is a thing, not a mind; yet it thirsts.
Other vampires exist, unique, bound to no pattern but their own dark will.
They are fewer than the stars, but more terrible than all.

Of Fae and Flame

The High Lords and Ladies have always been, though faces change.
Thirteen, nine, twenty-one — numbers mortal minds cannot measure.
When one falls, another rises.
Yet each remains themselves, altered and guided, but unconsumed.
The lesser sidhe are fewer still, springing into being only when the void left by one death calls them forth.
Dwarves are not bound to these rules. They toil, they die, they endure in stone.
They answer fire, not Pattern, and iron burns them not.
Their craft, their grudges, their halls — these are eternal only in memory.

The Courts and the Patterns

Elves watch the seasons and bind themselves to the turning.
The trolls remember what they eat, and what eats them; the Wolf-Brothers guard their sleep.
The fae hunger for dreams and stories; mortals are overflowing with both.
Dragons move through mountains and oceans, shaping what mortals and gods alike cannot comprehend.
The gods themselves — Radiant, Verdant, Shattered — intervene, sometimes openly, sometimes as shadow, yet they too are bound by limitations.

Every creature follows its nature, and yet the world does not yield its secrets easily.
All are connected, and all betray each other; all patterns collapse, all hunger remains.

The Cataclysm of Memory

Cities of the First Age drowned in molten glass.
Towers rose to the moons and fell.
The Unmaking came not as an enemy but as consequence:
fear, ambition, the reaching for what must not be touched.

The Second Age faltered; elves, dwarves, trolls, humans — scattered, rebuilt, and forgot.
The Third Age began, but the shadows of what came before linger.
Vampires hunger. Fae scheme. Dragons slumber.
The Pattern strains, and the seals of the world creak under the weight of remembering.

The Scholar's Warning

I write these things knowing no mortal hand can hold them.
The stories contradict. The witnesses lie, forget, or vanish.
Yet the truth is glimpsed between their voices — fleeting, terrible, and bright.

Do not seek it lightly.
Do not try to master it.
Burn these pages if you value your mind.

“History is not what happened; it is the shape of remembering,
and the first falls always echo through the last.”

— Kaul, in exile, from the cellars beneath the Black Library of Orthuun

The Tale of Stone and Moon

As told by Hruva the Hearth-Mother, beneath the Whispering Cavern, on the eve of the Deepmeet at the Great Hollow.

The First Hunger

“Hear me, my small ones, and still your gnawing teeth.
Before the Moon first rose, we were stone. Cold, waiting stone.
The world was bright then, too bright, too cruel — and the Sun strode the sky like a fire-lord.
But beneath the mountains, the Stone listened. It dreamt of shape and thought, of flesh and hunger.

When the Moon first gazed upon the world, her light softened the stone's dreams.
From those dreams we awoke — the first of our kind — the Children of Stone and Moonlight.
That is why our skin remembers the rock, and why our eyes love the dark.”

Of the Hunt and the Gift of Memory

“When the first hunger came, we did not know what to do.
We were strong but foolish, and our bellies ached with emptiness.
Then the Wolf came, lean and laughing, saying:
> ‘Eat what walks, and you shall know it.’

So we did.
And with every heart we ate, a thought joined ours.
With every eye we devoured, we saw what it had seen.
The wolf taught us that all life leaves its mark — and that the eater inherits the tale.

This is the Gift of Memory, the bond between flesh and thought.
Remember this, my small ones:
Every bite carries a story, and stories are power.”

The Law of the Matrons

“Now you ask, why do we listen to the Mothers, and not to the braggart sons?
Because it is we who bear the litters, we who remember the long road,
we who keep the fires when the hunters are bones.

A mother knows the scent of safety,
the weight of loss,
the shape of tomorrow.

It is the Mother who says when to hunt, when to rest, when to trade.

And when the Deepmeet comes at the Great Hollow —
it is the Mothers who speak for the clans.

We trade meat and memory, fang and fire,
and teach the little ones which prey are wise to eat,
and which would poison the soul.”

The Wolf-Brothers

“Do you hear them now, out beyond the stone door?
Our wolf-brothers keep watch.
They see what we cannot, and their voices guard our sleep.

Once, long ago, a troll fed a wounded wolf.
When he healed, the wolf led her to prey —
and she shared her kill.

Thus began the Pact of Fang and Hand.

We feed them, they defend us,
and the land remembers our tread as one.”

The Day's Curse and the Long Rest

“The Sun hates us, for we are children of her sister, the Moon.
Her light burns our skin and blinds our eyes.
So when she rises, we return to the womb of the earth —
to the caves, the burrows, the hollow stones.

There we rest, bellies full and hearts quiet,
dreaming the dreams of what we have eaten.
That is how we learn. That is how we grow wise.”

The Wanderers' Path

“Never think our homes are gone when we leave them.
The caves remember us, and the stones keep our names.
When we return, the echoes greet us, and the scent of our mothers lingers in the dust.

We roam because the world is wide and prey grows scarce,
but every place we have slept is still a home.
When the seasons turn, and the snows retreat,
we gather at the Great Hollow, all clans as one.

There, we trade meat for metal, story for story,
and the Mothers sing of the First Stone and the First Moon again —
as I have sung to you.”

The Closing Words

“So listen, my small ones, and remember:
You are the Moon’s shadow and the Stone’s strength.
Eat wisely, hunt bravely, and sleep deeply.
When you dream, the world dreams with you.

Now close your eyes — the wolves are watching,
and the sun is cruel.”

— *End of the Hearth-Mother’s Tale*

The Tale of the Eternal Court

*As whispered by Lyrien of the Moon Pools,
to those who wander the Veil on the longest night of summer.*

The First Pattern

“Listen, child, and do not speak too loudly —
for the fae are always listening, and some answers are sharper than any blade.

There has always been a Court, though no one remembers its beginning.
Thirteen, or perhaps nine — it matters little to counting mortal years —
the Lords and Ladies of Faerie exist, each a name, a purpose, a spark in the Pattern.

They do not die as we do, nor are they born.
When one falls, another rises, taking the mantle, taking the voice.
But the new bearer is still themselves — their heart and memory remain,
shaped and sharpened by the mantle, but never erased.”

The Lesser Circle

“Beyond the High Lords, there is a Second Circle, the lesser sidhe.
Their number too is fixed, and like the High, they are not born from flesh.
When one perishes, another springs into being from the place left vacant,
a new form, a new face, but a slot in the Pattern that cannot be empty.

This is why the sidhe do not multiply.
This is why they are precise, deliberate, and cruel in ways mortals cannot understand.
They do not err; they only act to preserve the Pattern.”

The Adopting of Shadow

“When a mantle chooses a new bearer, the act is called the **Adopting of Shadow**.
It is not erasure — the bearer’s self remains, their memories, their joys, their grudges.
The mantle flows into them, aligns them with its power, grants insight older than mountains,
and binds them to the eternal number.

It is a union of being and role.
The mantle teaches, warns, and amplifies,
but the bearer’s heart beats with their own will.”

“She took the crown of frost, and it sang in her veins;
yet her heart was still hers, and her name still hers.”

The Hunger and the Balance

“The Pattern cannot be broken.

Every death must be followed by emergence, or Faerie falters.
If too many fall at once, shadows creep where light cannot follow,
and the world trembles with silence.

Thus the fae hunger for dreams, stories, and mortal vitality.
They take what we have in excess — our children, our tales, our fears —
to sustain the Pattern that cannot renew itself naturally.

Yet they do not hate us; they are not cruel.
They are precise, like a clock that must keep its rhythm,
and every act serves the balance that holds the Court in being.”

The Last Words of the Moon Pools

“So remember, wanderer:
Faerie is not wild, nor is it lawless.
It is a circle, and the circle has rules older than the first dawn.

The High Lords are eternal, though faces change.
The lesser sidhe endure in fixed number, ever recurring.
All that falls must be replaced, all that exists serves the Pattern.

And you, small mortal, are nothing to the Pattern —
yet everything you dream, everything you fear, becomes a thread in its endless song.”

— *End of the Tale of the Eternal Court*

The Tale of Deepfire and Stone

*As recited by Borun Ironhand, Keeper of the Ember Vaults,
to apprentices gathered at the Longfire of Dur-Khazad.*

The Heart of Stone

“Listen, young ones, and feel the hammer in your veins.
Before the first forge sang, before the fire tasted air, we were of the mountains —
strong of limb, patient of thought, and bound to the stone beneath us.

The world above was wild and fleeting.
The fae danced and spun in endless circles, eternal and precise.
We, however, were of the earth, and the earth endures differently.
We age, we toil, we die — yet our halls remain.”

The Covenant of Flame

“When fire first spoke, it did not choose us, nor did it crown us eternal.
It tested us, and we embraced it.
We swore to shape the ore, to master the hammer,
to bind the molten heart of the mountain to our will.

This is why our forges burn, even when the fae sleep.
Our flame is mortal, but it is ours.
We do not fear iron, for it is the blood of the mountains,
not a curse.
It is our ally, not our enemy.”

The Song of Craft

“Our lives are measured in stone and metal,
not in mantles or numbers fixed by a Pattern.
We name our kin, our halls, and our forges,
and each name carries weight and history.

When a dwarf dies, the halls remember;
his children, his apprentices, his hammers — they carry the memory.
There is no returning to take his place.
What is lost is lost, and that is the way of the world.”

The Grudges and the Deep Roads

“Long ago, the fae sought to sway us with their circles and mantles.
They promised power eternal, numbers unbroken.
We laughed and returned to the rock.
We do not belong to their Patterns.
We do not bend to eternal numbers.

Yet we remember them, and we remember the First Hunger of the mountains.
We hold grudges, we hold memories, we hold fire.
And when we strike our anvils, it is both song and warning:
the world may endure, but only because we shape it with our hands.”

The Last Ember

“So remember, young ones:
Our strength is not borrowed from Faerie.
It is born of stone, struck from iron, and tempered in flame.
We are mortal, but the world remembers our work.
We are finite, but in that finitude lies freedom.

The fae may measure by Pattern,
but we measure by hammer and heart.

And when our fires die, the mountains will sleep —
until another hand wakes them once more.”

— *End of the Tale of Deepfire and Stone*

The Black Journal of Arsemnar of Veyrith

(Recovered from the ruins of the library at Tarn-Ygol. The handwriting becomes increasingly erratic toward the end.)

I set my ink to paper because the truths within my skull are too vast, too corrosive, too heavy to bear alone. Whoever finds these words should know that I have seen the pattern of the ages written into the bones of the earth and whispered by the dead winds of forgotten empires. I do not write to preserve myself, but to disgorge the poison before it consumes me.

The world is not as the priests of the White Basilica claim. It is not young, and we were not the first to walk upright upon its skin. Twice has mankind flowered, and once it was burned down to the root.

I. The First Ascent of Man

Before the counting of dynasties, before the fae raised their enclaves, there was the First Empire of Man. They named it Ithagar, the Crown of Dawn. From their capital, Shol-Mhuris, they stretched across oceans and

deserts, planting their banners in the stone of Veyrith, Natharae, and Orûn. They bent rivers to their will, raised towers whose shadows reached for miles, carved their laws into the bones of mountains.

The gods walked among them, but the First Men spat upon divine gifts, railing against the tyranny of mortality. In their arrogance they tore wisdom from the lips of the fae and bound trolls in iron pits to devour their flesh and steal their visions. They gazed too long into the Abyss beyond the stars.

Thus came the Nameless Pact. It was a covenant whispered by the Outer Dark itself, signed not in ink but in blood and breath. Some men drank from that chalice and awoke changed, pale and burning with hunger. Veythros the Golden King was the first of them, though his name has been struck from every tablet. His descendants became the Thirsting Lineages, the vampires who still linger in crypts beneath mountains.

II. The Sundering War

The fae, later known as elves and Duer-dwarves, had entered our world by then, enamored of humanity's fire and folly. They whispered secrets of glamour, of rune-craft, of geasa and binding oaths. Yet even they recoiled when the First Men sought to unmake death itself.

The gods, fickle tyrants though they were, unleashed their hounds. Dragons rose from mountain and sea, exhaling fire older than the stars. Trolls answered their ancient Calling and hunted the flesh of man. It was in those days that Grathna the Matriarch first led the goblin litters into war, and the trolls learned the sun's curse for their part in the slaughter.

Ithagar was cast down. Its cities were broken, its libraries turned to ash. Shol-Mhuris became a charnel field, and the seas themselves turned red. The First Men were undone, scattered into whispers and haunted enclaves.

III. The Interregnum of the Fae

For centuries upon centuries, the fae ruled in humanity's absence. They raised the citadel of Eloruin on the shattered cliffs of the west and delved the forges of Dûr-Kazann beneath the earth. They were immortal, but not eternal, and their beauty grew brittle in the silence left behind. The trolls, ever watchful, stalked the ruins of Ithagar, hearing in the wind the mutterings of the Unmaking.

Even the gods fell quiet. Their names—Tharos, Kethil, Myrrune, Anharra—were carved into stone but unspoken by mortal tongue.

IV. The Great Cataclysm

The silence did not last. Something older than the gods stirred: the remnants of the Thirsting Lineages, the sleepers of the First Race, and the shadows of the Outer Dark itself. The Tarn-Ygol Codex speaks of a war beneath the skin of the earth, rivers of black fire, and a sky without stars. The fae kingdoms shattered, their towers reduced to cairns. Dragons vanished into dream, trolls sank again beneath mountain and cavern.

In this ruin humanity, the Second Children, rose again. They were not the same as the First Men. Different, weaker perhaps, yet more enduring, for they carried no memory of the first blasphemies. They spread like grass through the cracks of fallen ages. They built new cities upon the bones of the old—Kareth, Morvane, Dros-Aelyn. They crowned new kings and bent knee to old gods they scarcely understood.

Yet I see the pattern. The Circle. The Loop. Twice we have risen. Once we destroyed ourselves with hunger. Once we were given reprieve through disaster. The trolls still Watch. The dragons still dream. The fae still remember.

And the vampires wait.

I fear, I know, the Circle turns again. The Nameless Pact whispers in the marrow of men once more. I, Arsemnar of Veyrith, who has traced these things in ink and blood, can no longer sleep for the voices that tell me:

We were not the first. We will not be the last.

The Hidden Chronicles of the First and Second Ages

By Ithryn Veloriel, scholar of the Hidden Ways

The Dawn of Mortal Pride

Man first came to the world as clever sparks in the wilderness. Their empire—names now twisted beyond repair—was vast: Aelthar, Mahrikh, even Aelric's Hold. Some claim it stretched from the Verdant Plains to

the Blackwater Sea, though I suspect much is legend. They were proud, yes, yet far more fragile than they believed.

Their gods, too, were young: Tholmir the Flamebearer, Lysara of the Silver Veil, and others whose names are lost to shadow. Some mortals worshipped rightly; others courted the Outer Dark in secret, though I cannot know which were truly lost and which merely clever in disguise. Many texts blame pride, but I have seen markings suggesting that shadows moved among kings and priests alike.

The trolls, cursed by their sunward dread, hunted at the edges of this First Empire. Dragons awoke in fury, yet tales of their rampages are often mistaken. I have walked the ruins of Kaelor's Reach and whispered to stones older than memory; the dragons did not merely burn—they commanded, guided, watched. Few mortals would survive to understand.

The Age of Quiet Shadows

After the empire's fall, the world became ours to observe. We—elves and dwarves—spread in enclaves: Ilthyr in the forests, Grashaal in the mountains. Trolls lingered in hidden places, ever wary of the Outer Dark. I have conversed with Watchers, and they speak of horrors that mortals dare not imagine. I include these not to frighten, but because some truths demand to be known.

Magic flourished in secrecy. Knowledge of the First Age survived in fragments, though many believe it lost. Tomes bound in flesh, dragon scales, and the bones of kings speak in riddles. I have not deciphered all, nor dare I claim certainty. Yet some mortals—if guided by the right hands—might glimpse a shadow of that lost wisdom.

The Cataclysm of Shadows

Time passed, and calamity struck. Vampires of Kaelor's Reach, and other servants of the Outer Dark, rose with cunning beyond reckoning. Fires swept through Grashaal and Ilthyr; enclaves were broken, treasures vanished. My grandmother spoke of the night the sky burned as if torn open. Some of what survives are myths, yet some whispers speak of horrors real and terrible.

Here I must warn: mortals often misinterpret the First Age as mere pride. The truth is subtler, stranger, and more dangerous.

The Rise of the Second Race

From the ashes, mortals of the Second Race emerged. They know little of the first, and perhaps it is better so. Their cities—Halvor's Rest, Durnhollow—occupy fragments of the old empire, though many names are corruptions, and some sites no longer exist at all.

These men are clever, yet weak in comparison to the First. Their kings believe in omens and legends, not knowing the Outer Dark still waits. Trolls watch cautiously; dragons sleep or command from hidden heights. And we—elves and dwarves—observe, guiding subtly, sometimes letting their ignorance flourish.

Reflections of a Scholar

I write these words not to instruct mortals, but to preserve what I can. Many of my observations are suspect: some fragments are exaggeration, others misleading by design, and a few may even be inventions to protect truths too dangerous to name. Yet all are tethered to the hidden reality: the Outer Dark persists, the First Men lived and fell, and the Second Race walks in shadowed ignorance.

Even I—who have studied centuries—cannot know the whole. Still, these chronicles are all I can offer. Let those who find them tread lightly, for the world remembers, and the shadows are patient.

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The Story the Mother Told

Child, listen and do not speak yet. The world remembers more than you do, and I, your mother, am its mouth.

Long before the sun became a curse upon us, we walked freely. The first humans, whom we call the Stone-kings, were clever, yes, but weak in spirit. They built great walled-towers in the city of Mar'vath, pierced the clouds and carved roads to Telkhar, and tried to bind the rivers and seas of Irrithmeer. Some reached for things they should not have touched. Shadows crept where their councils whispered. I have smelled that shadow; it is bitter and full of lies.

Dragons came then, vast and terrible. Khragath, Fire-belly of the North, scorched the plains of Urgan Vale. Shylarix of the Deep Hills laid her bones in the mountains now called Gorath-Klaar. They do not forgive. They do not forget. I have heard their commands echo in the stones even now. They struck at the humans, and we, hunters of dark whispers, followed the fire and ruin. It was not pride alone that destroyed them. No, the Outer Dark already slithered through their halls, feeding on the clever and the foolish alike.

The trolls of old were different. We were many, and we were strong. We learned that to know, one must taste. Flesh speaks; bones remember. We hunted what was necessary, and from the cleverness of our prey

we gained the secrets the world hides. It was then we were cursed. The sun, bright, hot, unfeeling, burned us. We withdrew, but our Watching did not end. We saw the rise and fall of men and the silence of the dragons.

Then came the time of hiding. The fae spread across the lands: elves in the forests of Lórsilith, dwarves in the mountains of Thurnok-Kar. They whispered and traded, they made their magic, but they forgot the hunger. They did not see the Outer Dark creeping back into the cracks of the world. Only we, the watchers, knew, and we waited. Some of the fae say the Sundering War was their great beginning, but it was only a shadow of what we remember.

The cataclysms came again, the fires and shadows. The humans of the second rising survived, clever in their own way, but fragile. They do not remember us, though we remember them. And we remember the first. Some remnants of that first pride still move in secret, hiding in ruins of Mar'vath, the hollowed towers of Telkhar, and the deep, sunless vaults below Irrithmeer.

Child, when you grow, you will eat as we do. You will gain knowledge from what you consume. Some will fear you. Some will wish to stop you. Remember, the Outer Dark watches, the dragons watch, the fae watch, but none can watch as we watch. None can wait as we wait. We are the teeth in the world's flesh, the claws beneath its skin, the shadow that gnaws at the rot before it spreads.

Do not forget, child. One day, you will watch as I sleep, and then you will take what is needed. Knowledge is bitter, but it is always inside you if you know where to look.

The Chronicles of Men

Recorded by Brother Kaelren of Halvor's Rest, Seer of the Sacred Rites

The Origin of Men

In the beginning, when the Loom of Seraya was first stretched across heaven and earth, the gods wove threads of fire, stone, and wind. From clay shaped by Varos the Earthshaper, and quickened by Lysariel of Breath, men awoke as wanderers upon the face of the world.

So it is told in our hymns: that Seraya set no single purpose upon us. We were not bound as the trolls, nor forged to endure as the dwarves, nor sown in secret groves like the elves. We were left unanchored—free to seek fortune where we could. Some call this gift, others curse.

The first men lived as sparks in the wilderness, moving from river to forest to plain, guided by signs and visions. They brought offerings of ash and bone, for even then it was known: the gods answer only when called, and their favor comes not by belief but by proper rite.

The Ages of Wandering

Before the walls of cities, before kings and priests, there were only tribes led by their wisest and strongest. In those days, the heads of clans and households themselves offered the rites: a libation of oil for Serenya before a voyage, the breaking of bread for Lyara at the raising of a hall, the casting of bronze trinkets to Varos before a forge was kindled.

The gods seldom spoke, but their silence was no matter—for we knew the rites brought result. Crops grew. Forges burned bright. Ships returned from sea. These things proved the gods' hands were real.

It was also in this time that men first met the elder races. Elves, beautiful and aloof, spoke little and gave less. Dwarves kept to their mountain-fanes, trading iron for grain but revealing nothing of their deeper mysteries. Trolls lurked in shadowed places, feared and yet respected, for their strength was great and their mothers terrible in cunning.

The Founding of the Cities

In time, tribes settled and raised the first cities. Halvor's Rest, so named for the hero who stilled the river's fury, and Durnhollow, where the black stones echo with ancient voices, were among the greatest. Around them rose temples and cults, each devoted to a god's domain.

Priests and seers became necessary, for not all men could master the proper rites. These chosen few were initiated into deeper mysteries—how to bind words to the winds, how to read the entrails of beasts, how to mark omens in the night sky. Yet still, even they admitted: the gods do not act for faith, but for sacrifice and precision.

Each guild, each household, each warband maintained its own rites. A ship's captain would offer salt and silver to Serenya before a voyage. A mason's guildmaster would pour wine to Lyara before raising a wall. So it remains: those who lead must give offering, for the fate of many rests upon their hands.

The Shadows at the Edge of Memory

Our chronicles speak also of times of ruin. Vampires—men who drank deep of forbidden rites—rose from forgotten places and brought plague and fire. Dragons descended from the high peaks, demanding tribute or unleashing wrath. Trolls stirred from their hidden dens, and their mothers sent forth hungry sons to scour the valleys.

Yet though these terrors walked among us, still the rites preserved our people. When walls fell, we raised them again. When kings died, others took their place. And always, the priests sought the proper sacrifice, knowing the gods' favor could steady even the darkest of days.

Reflections of a Seer

I, Brother Kaelren, record these things not as certainty, but as what is known within our kingdom and our temples. Other lands tell it differently; their gods have other names, their rites follow other forms. Some call our Loom the Weave, some the Breath, some know it not at all.

But I am convinced of this: it is not belief that binds us to the divine. It is the doing. The rite, the offering, the sacrifice. A careless word may undo a king's fortune. A precise libation may save a city from famine. The gods are distant, yet the world itself bends when they are rightly called.

This is the wisdom of our people. This is the chronicle I set down, for those who come after.

Cultures

The Songs of the Endless Sky (Steppe Confederations)

I am Shakhan, keeper of the horse-songs, and these are the words given me by my mother, and her mother before.

When the Sky-Father thundered against the Earth-Mother, the storm cracked her breast, and the rivers ran. The horses sprang forth from her ribs, and the eagle from her eye. From the breath of horse and the gaze of eagle, men were made, so that they may ride and hunt and rule the plain.

We worship the Sky-Father in the open air, with fire built on the tallest hill. We honor the Thunder-Mother with the blood of mares. The Three Riders—heralds of dawn, dusk, and storm—gallop always above, and their hoofbeats foretell war and rain.

Our history is the path of herds and the graves of chiefs. Some winters are crueler than knives, some summers hotter than flame. These are the punishments for forgetting the old rites. When the stone-people huddle in their mountains and mock the sky, we remember they are small and bound to rock, while we are vast and free.

So it has always been, and so it will be, until the wind no longer runs.

The Records of the Flood (River Kingdoms)

Thus speaks Anakh-Khet, scribe of the Temple of the River-Mother, who has measured the floods for forty years.

Before all was Deep Water, endless and formless. Then came the Storm-Lord, who split the darkness with lightning, and struck a channel through which the River-Mother might flow. She wandered over the world and laid down the black earth. From clay she molded men, and the Storm-Lord's fire hardened them. With her blood she gave them life.

Every king rules only by her grace, for when the River rises too high, we say she is displeased, and when she fails to rise, we say she withholds her blessing. The Keeper of Scales weighs the deeds of kings and peasants alike, and the Star-Scribe records all beneath the heavens.

Our history is counted in dynasties, each rising with fortune and falling when the River faltered. Famines, floods, and plagues are no mysteries—they are the River-Mother's hand, chastising her children. The wise king sacrifices richly and consults his seers, lest the waters turn against him.

Such is the law of the River, and we who live by her must obey.

The Saga of Stones and Blood (Highland Clans)

Hear now the words of Cailan son of Mael, of the clan of the Black Stag, sworn to remember.

The Earth-Mother lay down her body, and from her bones rose mountains. Her breath became the wind, her blood the rivers. Men were suckled on her milk, and thus are we kin to gods and beasts.

The Sky-Hammer hurls his bolts from the storm, the River-Daughter sings us life in her currents, and the Flame-Speaker whispers truth through the hearthfire. The Ash-Mother receives our dead and guards their oaths until we join them.

Each stone remembers, each river witnesses. When we break faith, avalanches come. When clans shed blood unjustly, mountains fall. I tell of the Burning Crag, where fire devoured three clans in one night, and of the Great Howl, when storms carried away children who swore false oaths.

We live because we honor stone and blood. We die when we forget. This is the saga that binds us.

The Songs of Sand and Star (Desert Tribes)

I, Safira daughter of Khemel, keeper of the star-songs, set these words in memory.

The world was once an endless sea of sand. Then the Guiding Star fell, and where it struck the dunes, fire burst forth, and the first oasis was born. From the cooling sand, the Lion of War shaped men, and the Rain-Bringer gave them breath.

We honor the Lion with blood before battle, the Rain-Bringer with libations at wells, the Guiding Star with vigils at night, and the Sand-Serpent with gifts buried at the edge of dunes, so she will not swallow our paths.

Our history is marked by the shifting of sands. Wells dry when men are greedy, caravans vanish when they forget the songs of the Guiding Star. Once, a city of stone stood proud near the Red Dunes, but the Sand-Serpent swallowed it whole when its king blasphemed. We do not speak his name.

Thus the desert teaches: the stars guide, the sand punishes, and men endure.

The Annals of the Bright Sailor

As recorded by Meraios son of Theros, Keeper of the Guild-Loom of Salt and Sail

The Age of the Sea-Wind

We were born from the sea-wind and the foam. When the inland tribes were still squabbling over muddy fields and goat-pens, our ships already cut across the waters, their sails like wings of white fire. The sea gave us all things—fish, trade, salt, pearls, and dominion. Our god, Pelagion the Tiderunner, taught our fathers the way of oar and sail, and with him at the prow we claimed every coast worth taking.

The Bright Isles were ours, and from them we ruled the middle sea. No caravan could match our speed, no inland kingdom our reach. Even the mountains bent to us, for our ships carried more than goods: they bore words, knowledge, and the eyes of the world.

The Empire of Salt and Sail

Our forefathers' fleets did not merely trade—they ruled. Cities like Thalassar, Myrridon, and Almeira still gleam where once our banners flew. It is said that in those days, the Guild of Salt sat higher than kings, and the priest-captains of Veyros could command storms to wreck the ships of rivals.

When the inland kingdoms grew stronger, it was through our generosity. We carried their grain, their bronze, their slaves. Without us, their crowns would have starved. Even now, those who wear circlets inland walk only because our guilds allowed it.

The Waning of the Tide

But every tide recedes. Inland lords rose with their fields of wheat and armies of iron. Some speak of the Sun-Crown Kingdom, whose priests burn offerings to a flame-god at their great altars. They are strong now, strong enough to rival us in power, but they forget that their armies march only so far as ships carry them.

We still command the sea. The Guild of Oarsmen controls the straits, the Guild of Sailors the open waters, and the Guild of Salt keeps every shore dependent on our trade. Our rivals may boast, but even kings must send their envoys to our harbors, bearing tribute.

The Oath of Veyros

It is said that when Veyros strode forth from the waves, he set three oaths upon us:

To carry word where others cannot, To bring ruin upon those who defy the sea, And never to let the salt be hoarded by one alone. So long as the guilds honor these oaths, our dominion will endure.

Reflection

We are still the Bright Sailors, heirs of the tide. Let the inlanders crown their kings and light their fires. When their bellies ache for salt, when their gold thirsts to move, when their armies must cross the deeps, they will come again to us, as they always have.

The sea remembers, and we who ride her will never bow.

The Whispered Roots (Forest Tribes)

I am Eira of the Moss-kin, and I sing the whispers of the roots.

There was once only darkness. Then the Forest-Mother sprouted. Her roots sank deep, her branches stretched into stars. From the damp of her roots sprang mushrooms, and from these first men were born.

The White Stag leads us in the hunt, the River-Witch teaches us the way of waters, and the Ashen-Father guards fire in his hollow tree. We offer food, blood, and song to the Forest-Mother at her roots.

Our tales are of storms that flatten villages, of wolves sent to punish the ungrateful, of trees that fall upon liars. Once, the River-Witch drowned an entire clan who built their fires upon her banks. Her current still carries their bones.

We live because the Forest shelters us. We die when we forget her whisper.

Central Kingdom of the Humans (Calvrix's Realm)

From Father, the Court Scholar: "The world is shaped by the turning of the seasons and the favor of the gods. Our rulers are guided by omens, by the stars, and by the counsel of seers. The old ruins beyond the northern hills speak of nothing but men who came before us, whose names are lost and whose deeds are faded, though some stones whisper warnings. War and harvest, feasts and sacrifices—these are the ways the gods remind us that balance is fragile, and that one must act with care and cunning."

Veyros (Coastal Mariners)

From Mother, Master of the Fleet: "Ships and wind are as alive as men. Storms may anger the gods, but so too may the greed of sailors. Trade brings fortune, and fortune can bring wrath. We honor the water-lords, the winds, the currents—but the sea itself keeps its own counsel. Our ports are full of tales of far lands, but no one knows what lies behind the horizon, and perhaps it is better that way."

Highland Tribes of Kharvel

From Grandmother, Keeper of the Hearth: "Stone and mountain are old and patient. We follow the herds and the rivers, and when the snow comes, it reminds us of our own smallness. Our ancestors teach that courage is honored, that a man's word binds him as surely as any oath. The old gods of sky and storm hear us, if we make offerings and listen. They do not save us, but they grant strength and clarity to those who heed them."

Forest Folk of Ilthar

From Elder Priest, Keeper of the Sacred Glades: "Trees remember. The spirits of the forest know the seasons and the hidden paths. Men must walk lightly, speak softly, and make offerings to the unseen. Those who take too much are punished by pestilence, misfortune, or the wrath of creatures we dare not name. Magic is woven

into the wood and the streams; to respect it is to survive. The gods speak mostly in silence, but their lessons echo in the wind.”

Steppe Nomads of Zarun

From Father, Chieftain of the Clan: “Horses and herds guide us. The grass is thin, the sky wide, and a man’s strength is in his arms and his mind. Our ancestors ride with the wind; their spirits watch the stars. We honor the spirits of the earth and the sky, for they are as real as any enemy. Victory is taken by skill, caution, and sometimes by cunning gifts to those who walk unseen among us.”

What My Father Told Me (Riverland Kingdom)

Who are you? I am Hadranor, son of Ceyric, grandson of Alvor. I till the fields of our house, offer grain at the temple of Veyrana, and bear the oath-stone of my lord when he calls. My hands are calloused from the plow, my back from war. I am your father, and through me you know who you are.

Who are we? We are the folk of Ardanor, the riverlands. We are the children of the Great City, Velthannar, whose walls rise like cliffs of stone. We are the keepers of the River Halvek, which feeds our fields and bears our trade. Some call us harsh, others cunning, but we endure because we are bound by law and oath.

What makes us great? Our greatness lies in three pillars. The River Halvek, whose waters fatten our land. The laws of Velthannar, which bind man to man and lord to peasant. And the gods—Thyros of the Forge, Veyrana of the Hearth, Lomar the Far-Sighted—who favor those who honor them with sacrifice. Other peoples may fight like wolves, but we are wolves in the pack, and no man hunts alone.

Where do we live? We live on the wide bend of the River Halvek, where the land is rich with silt. Our villages stretch from the vineyards of Marvek Hill to the pastures of Cindral Vale. At the heart stands Velthannar, stone-walled and iron-gated, where lords gather in council beneath the Tower of Oaths. Beyond our marches prowl the hill tribes of Dravos, and across the sea lie the merchants of Veyros, who envy our fields.

How do we live? We live by labor. The farmer bends his back to the furrow, the herdsman drives his flocks, the smith beats iron in the forges of Halvek’s Gate. Some serve as scribes, weighing coin and law; others as soldiers, watching the borders from the Marchstone forts. Each man works, each woman works, and together we keep our people whole.

What My Father Told Me (Riverland Kingdom)

What is important in my life? Your duty is most important. To honor the gods with offerings, to obey the law, to respect your mother, and to defend the land when called. If you plow well, the household thrives. If you shirk, we all suffer. Great deeds are not for every man, but every man may live rightly.

Who rules us? Above us stands Lord Varcen, who holds Velthannar in the name of the High Seat. The High Seat is chosen by the Circle of Oaths, the lords of river and vale. They swear by the Oath-Stone to keep justice, and if they break it, their line is cursed. Above even them are the gods, who judge the Circle as they judge us all.

What is evil? Evil is oath-breaking. Evil is spilling kin-blood. Evil is turning from the gods who shaped the world and calling instead upon the nameless dark. Some say evil is hunger, or war, or plague, but these are burdens. Evil is when a man chooses wrong, knowing the right.

What is my lot in life? You are my son, and so you will learn the plow, the bow, and the rites of our hearth. You may go to the city and become a scribe, or march with the soldiers, but always you will carry our line. Your lot is to live as a man of Ardanor, with duty to family, lord, and gods.

What is the difference between men and women? Men carry the spear to war, women carry the fire of the hearth. Both sow seed: one in the furrow, one in the womb. Women keep the house, tend the hearth-rites, and bargain in the market. Men guard the walls, labor in the fields, and speak in the council. Without one, the other withers. Both are bound, both are needed.

How do we deal with others? With those of our blood, we deal in law and oath. With the hill tribes of Dravos, we deal in spears, unless they come with flocks to trade. With the merchants of Veyros, we deal in silver, though their tongues are slippery as eels. With the elves of Ilthyr, we deal rarely, for they speak as riddles. With the dwarves of Grashaal, we deal in iron, but we do not trust them in matters of faith. With trolls, we deal not at all, save with fire and walls.

Who are our enemies? The Dravos hill-men raid our flocks. The Veyran mariners choke our trade. In darker tales, the night-walkers of Kaelor's ruins stir again. Yet the greatest enemy is discord among ourselves, when lords break their oaths and seek crowns not theirs. That is when the land suffers.

Who are my gods? We honor many. Veyrana of the Hearth, who keeps the home warm. Thyros of the Forge, who gives us tools and weapons. Halvek the River-Father, who fills our fields. Lomar the Far-Sighted, who guides the councils of men. There are others—storm-bringing Ervath, kindly Mirida of the Vines, grim Ashkar of the Tombs. Each god has their due, and each rite its season.

What is there to do around here? You will plow the fields, gather the harvest, offer rites in the temple, and carry water from the well. In feast-times you will race horses by the river, join in contests of song and wrestling, and sit by the fire listening to the old tales. In war-time, you will march with bow and spear. The life of Ardanor is never empty, for the gods fill it with toil and joy alike.

What My Father Told Me (Coastal Mariners of Veyros)

Who are you? I am Tharion of Veyros, master of sails and tides, navigator of the Silver Gulf, and keeper of our household's accounts. I read the winds and tides as others read scrolls. I trade in fish, salt, and amber, and I honor the gods who watch over ships and storms.

Who are we? We are the mariners of Veyros, the sons and daughters of tide and trade. Our ships sail the gulf and beyond. We are merchants, sailors, and sometimes something more. Strange rites may be whispered in our quarters, but the guilds keep order. We make our fortunes on wind and coin.

What makes us great? We chart waters where others fear to go. We know the tides, the hidden shoals, the secret ports. We command ships that carry spices, silks, and messages of kings. Some of us speak the language of the Old Ones, of currents and unseen creatures; others only pray to stay alive in the storms. Our skill and daring are our pride.

Where do we live? Our homes cling to cliffs or rise along sheltered bays. The city of Veyros sprawls over many piers; warehouses stand above tide pools, and towers of the guilds look toward the horizon. Out in the open waters, we live in our ships, carrying our families and our gods with us.

How do we live? We rise with the tide, haul nets, mend sails, and count coin. We gather spices and furs, trade fish and amber. When storms break, we pray and maneuver, but mostly we act. Rites and offerings mark births, safe voyages, and good catches. We follow the currents, yes, but we also follow custom.

What is important in my life? Safety on the waters, coins in the chest, the favor of the gods, and the loyalty of the crew. A ship is like a household; neglect it, and you are lost. A broken oath among merchants can bring ruin. Never forget your kin or your trade secrets.

Who rules us? Guildmasters and Captains. The Council of Piers governs our city, deciding tariffs, docking rights, and rules of conduct. They swear to the tides and to the gods. Above them, the gods themselves are the unseen rulers, and sometimes the secretive cults of the deep have sway in ways none can see.

What is evil? Pirates, oath-breakers, and men who sell trust for coin. Storms are not evil, nor the sea, but greed and treachery are. Those who desecrate a ship, a shrine, or a sacred rite court the wrath of gods and tides alike.

What is my lot in life? You will learn to sail, trade, and read the stars. Perhaps you will captain a ship, perhaps only mend nets and count coin, but always you will live with wind in your hair and salt in your veins. The tides shape all, but skill and caution shape men.

What is the difference between men and women? Men command the sails, haul the nets, navigate the oceans. Women manage the docks, the warehouses, the household. Yet on a ship, all must act together; both must read the tides, pray, and protect life. Strength comes in many forms, but wisdom and skill keep men and women alive alike.

How do we deal with others? With merchants, we haggle and trade. With pirates, we fight or flee. With inland lords, we offer gifts and news. With other sailors, we share currents and warnings. With cults of the deep, we show respect and caution; some rituals are not for all eyes. We navigate all people as carefully as we navigate the tides.

Who are our enemies? Storms, certainly. Pirates and rogue traders. Those who cheat in trade or break the oaths of the guild. And sometimes, the cultists of shadowed waters, whose motives are not known to ordinary men.

Who are my gods? Mara of the Tides, who calms or stirs the sea. Theryn of the Trade Winds, who guides sails and fortunes. Divos of the Depths, whose name is feared in some secret rites. There are many others, some unknown, some whispered only in the hold of the ship, yet each has a season and a domain, and all must be honored.

What is there to do around here? Sail. Trade. Repair ships. Offer rites to the gods and cults. Race boats in festival, swim in the coves, and sit at the tavern listening to the news of distant lands. Watch the horizon, and prepare always, for the next tide brings opportunity—or ruin.

What my teacher told me (Elves)

Who are you? I am Thaloriel of Ilthyr, master of lore and sentinel of our hidden halls. My eyes have seen centuries pass over stone and sky, and my memory holds what mortals forget.

Who are we? We are the children of the high places, dwellers of cities built atop cliffs, valleys, and hidden plateaus. Our halls gleam with stone and light; our bridges span chasms mortals dare not cross. We are long-lived, patient, and devoted to the preservation of our people and their works.

What makes us great? Our craft, our vigilance, and our knowledge. Our cities are marvels of engineering and art, and our songs, histories, and records endure beyond generations. We endure where mortals falter.

Where do we live? In Ilthyr and other hidden highland cities. Each hall and plateau is carefully chosen for defense, beauty, and secrecy. Few mortals have seen these places, and fewer still have returned.

How do we live? With discipline and devotion to our duties. We maintain our halls, our crafts, and our libraries. We train in arts of war, diplomacy, and lore, knowing that our vigilance protects both our people and the hidden secrets of the world.

What is important in my life? Preservation of knowledge, mastery of craft, vigilance against enemies, and the guidance of our kin. Our histories, songs, and buildings carry the weight of generations.

Who rules us? Councils of elders, masters of craft, and those chosen by merit lead us. Faery lords and ancient powers offer guidance, but no single ruler dominates all. We are bound by tradition, wisdom, and necessity.

What is evil? Those who destroy, corrupt, or defile what we have built. Shadows that enter our halls, mortals who seek forbidden knowledge, and creatures of the Outer Dark—all are threats we prepare against.

What is my lot in life? To learn, to preserve, to protect, and to ensure that our hidden cities endure. Some may explore beyond the cliffs, but most remain, guardians of our high places and our knowledge.

What is the difference between men and women? All differences are respected; all strengths valued. Leadership and skill are measured by ability and wisdom, not birth.

How do we deal with others? Cautiously and deliberately. We trade knowledge, artifacts, and craft with trusted outsiders. Diplomacy and subtlety are preferred; open war is a last resort.

Who are our enemies? Those who would desecrate our halls, steal our secrets, or summon powers of the Outer Dark. Some mortals, rogue spirits, and certain fae have strayed into hostility. We mark them quietly, and act decisively if needed.

Who are my gods? We honor ancient powers, faery lords, and the forces that shaped the world. They are guides and patrons, not beings of worship in the mortal sense.

What is there to do around here? Maintain the halls, study the archives, craft wonders, and watch over the hidden paths and bridges. Walk the terraces, train in skill and craft, and guard against threats unseen.

Troll Mother's Words to My Daughter (Revised)

Who are you? "I am Hrakthra of the Stoneblood clan, your mother, and keeper of our old ways. I watch the land and the skies for signs that the world weakens, and I teach you to do the same."

Who are we? "We are Stoneblood trolls, children of the mountains and marshes. We are watchers, guardians against the unmaking. Our strength is in seeing what others cannot and surviving what others flee."

What makes us great? "Endurance, cunning, and vigilance. Our claws and teeth are tools, but our eyes and minds are what keep the world from tearing itself apart."

Where do we live? "In the Marshes of Skaar, the rocky passes of Grulthar, and the deep woods where men dare not tread. Every hidden pool and shadowed hollow is a watch-post if you know how to claim it."

How do we live? “We take what we need, hide from what we cannot fight, and strike when the unmaking touches our lands. We hunt, we gather, we sing the old songs, and we keep the world whole.”

What is important in my life? “Survival. Vigilance. Protecting the balance of the land. You must see danger before it arrives and know what must be acted upon.”

Who rules us? “The Great Mothers, the strongest, the wisest, the ones who have seen the most. They guide the clan in the ways of watching and striking against the unmaking.”

What is evil? “The unmaking breaking through: corruption, chaos, and the tearing of the world’s shape. It hides in men, in beasts, in spirits. Anything that spreads decay or warps what should be is evil.”

What is my lot in life? “You will be a watcher, a guardian, a teller of the old ways. You will take what must be taken, fight what must be fought, and teach others what you see.”

What is the difference between men and women? “Women bear the knowledge and the foresight of the clan. Men bring strength and reach where women cannot. Both are needed, but all must watch.”

How do we deal with others? “Carefully. Observe them for signs of the unmaking. Trade if it aids our vigilance, strike if it threatens the balance. Never trust words alone; watch their hearts and deeds.”

Who are our enemies? “Any who would let the unmaking spread: men who sow chaos, spirits that twist, beasts that serve the decay. All are enemies if they threaten the world’s shape.”

Who are my gods? “The Earth and Sky, the Marsh and Mountain, and the spirits of our ancestors. We honor them with song and blood, and by watching. They are not distant—they are the laws of balance itself.”

What is there to do around here? “Learn the land, hunt, swim the marshes, climb the crags. Watch for cracks in the world, speak to the stones and waters, and remember the songs of your mother. That is life, and that is duty.”

Zero Signal — Core Rules

Game philosophy

- Fortune in the middle
- Fail forward
- Let it ride

Game cycle

- Set the scene → Introduce conflict → Resolve conflict → Downtime (optional) → New scene.
-

Core resolution

Ability tests

- Roll a number of **d6** equal to the relevant **Ability**. Each **4+ = 1 success (Degree of Success, DoS)**.
- Compare successes to a Target Number (TN) or to an opponent’s DoS in a contest:
 - **DoS > TN** → success
 - **DoS = TN** → success **at a cost**
 - **DoS < TN** → failure
- Contests: higher DoS wins; margin (0–1 = success at cost; 2–3 = clean; 4+ = exceptional).

Difficulty & Target Numbers

Tasks are assigned a **Target Number (TN)** expressed as required successes (Degree of Success, DoS). The GM sets TN based on task complexity. Suggested TNs (successes required):

Difficulty	Target Number (successes)
Easy	0 (no roll needed)
Simple	1
Moderate	2
Difficult	3
Very Difficult	4
Formidable	5
Nearly Impossible	6
Heroic	7

Notes - TN = number of successes required. Roll the relevant Ability's d6 pool; each 4+ = 1 success. Compare successes to TN. - **DoS > TN** → clear success. **DoS = TN** → success *at a cost*. **DoS < TN** → failure. - For **Opposed Tests**, each side rolls; higher DoS wins. Use margin of victory (difference in DoS) to scale results. - Use **Edge**, Pool spending, and Secrets to add dice before rolling. Declare these before rolling. - For extremely situational or narrative tasks, the GM may adjust TNs, allow partial successes, or create custom consequences for failure.

Edge & Modifiers

- **Edge** represents situational advantages, such as gear, allies, or environmental factors. Each source provides +1 die, with a maximum of +3 dice from Edge. Opponents can cancel Edge by applying their own Edge or through other narrative means

Pools (spending dice)

- Three default Pools: **Vigor, Instinct, Reason**.
- Spend 1 pool point → +1 die on a roll or to activate specific Secrets. Each Secret that requires a Pool point will specify which Pool is used. Spent points are recovered during Downtime."

Harm & Consequences (severity scale)

When a character fails a roll there is a chance there might be **consequences**. Consequences impose narrative or mechanical weight until recovered. Remember to agree on what might happen before rolling. Set the stage and roll to find out.

Suggested scale:

Severity	Example impact	Recovery
Minor	-1 die on one Ability, bruised, rattled	This consequence persists until the end of the current scene or session, whichever comes first
Moderate	-1 die ongoing, bleeding, shaken, debt owed	Requires 1 Downtime action
Serious	-2 dice ongoing, broken arm, severe shame, dangerous enemy	Multiple Downtime actions or extended care
Lasting	Permanent penalty, scar, maimed, ruined reputation	Only healed through major effort, quests, or buying off with fiction
Fatal	Death or irrevocable end state	Only avoided via Secrets, Karma, or prior stakes

Notes - Minor = short-lived inconvenience.

- Moderate = persists until actively addressed in Downtime.
- Serious = requires extended recovery or multiple Downtime actions.
- Lasting = permanent unless extraordinary effort.
- Fatal = character removal unless extraordinary intervention.

Contests (Opposed Tests)

- Both sides roll their relevant Ability dice (plus Edge and any spent Pool dice).
- Higher DoS wins.
- Margin of Victory per contest:
 - 0 DoS → success at a cost
 - 1–3 DoS → clean success
 - 4+ DoS → exceptional success (extra benefit)

Draw the Line (Extended Contest)

- **Trigger:** After a Contest, either party (typically the loser) may call **Draw the Line** to escalate the conflict if they are unsatisfied with the result.
- **Declare stakes:** Before any further rolls, declare the stakes and the concrete consequences for losing the extended contest (e.g., grievous wound requiring Downtime, capture, loss of equipment, permanent loss, forced buyoff of a Key if no Karma, etc.). GM and players agree the stakes.
- **Procedure:**
 1. The Draw the Line sequence is **best two-out-of-three** Contests: the initial Contest and two subsequent Contests if necessary. Each Contest is crucial to determine the outcome.
 2. Before each additional Contest, parties may spend Pool points, activate Secrets, and apply Edge as normal. Any situational changes must be declared prior to rolling.
 3. Resolve each Contest using normal contest rules and record the DoS for that round.
 4. The first side to win two Contests wins the Draw the Line.
- **Margins & scaling:** Each Contest's margin applies normally and affects that round's result. The GM may scale the final outcome using the margins across the won Contests (e.g., larger combined margins → more complete victory / larger benefit).
- **Severe loss:** If a party that already lost the initial Contest then loses the Draw the Line overall, the previously-declared severe consequences apply (examples: grievous injury requiring medical/Downtime recovery, capture, death, major permanent loss, or forced Key buyoff if no Karma). The GM adjudicates specific mechanical penalties.
- **Win More:** After winning a Draw the Line, the victor may spend **1 point from the relevant Pool** to **Win More** — add one extra narrated/mechanical benefit beyond the normal win (extra loot, an additional resource, a small mechanical bonus, narrative leverage, etc.).
- **Recovery:** Consequences from Draw the Line (especially severe ones) require Downtime, medical/technical attention, or specific recovery tests as determined by the GM.

Character Creation

Purpose: This procedure defines your starting Abilities, Pools, Focuses, Keys, Secrets, Wealth, and Circles.

1. Choose number of Lifepaths (1–5)

- The number of Lifepaths determines your starting package of stats and resources.
- Fewer Lifepaths = more Karma and more Focuses to customize; more Lifepaths = broader base skills and resources.

Lifepaths	Keys	Secrets	Focuses	Abilities	Pool Points	Karma
1	2	1	5	4	6	3
2	2	1	4	4	6	2
3	2	2	3	4	6	1
4	1	2	2	4	7	1
5	1	3	2	4	8	0

2. Assign Abilities

- Open any number of Abilities you want and add a number of points equal to the amount granted by your chosen Lifepaths (usually 4).
- Opening means setting an Ability's starting rating at 1 or higher.

3. Assign Focuses

- Choose the number of **Focuses** listed for your Lifepaths. You don't have to spend all your choices immediately.
- Each Focus designates an Ability for future advancement and interaction with Karma.
- Opening a Focus during character creation is free; opening new Focuses during play costs 1 Karma, unless you decide to leave the decision for later.

4. Distribute Pool points

- Assign your Pool points (Vigor, Instinct, Reason) as granted by your Lifepaths (typically 6–8 total).
- Pools start at 0 and can be allocated freely.

5. Choose Keys

- Select the number of **Keys** listed in your Lifepath table.
- Keys define your character's drives and grant Karma when tested.

6. Choose Secrets

- Choose the number of **Secrets** granted by your Lifepaths.
- Secrets may require spending Pool points to activate during play.

7. Set Wealth and Circles

- Start with the **Wealth** and **Circles** ratings granted by your Lifepaths (see table above).
- Both are treated as Abilities.

8. Gain starting Karma

- Gain the amount of **Karma** shown in your Lifepath row.
- Karma is used to open Focuses, buy Secrets, and fuel rerolls or similar meta actions.

9. Record anything notable

- Optionally note one unique item, trait, or contact from your character's background (purely descriptive, no mechanics unless tied to a Secret or Circle).

Abilities & advancement

Opening new Abilities

- **Ability range:** 0 (untrained) to 10 (world-class).
- You may **add (open) a new Ability** to your character sheet at any time. Opening it on the sheet does not automatically raise it — it simply declares that the Ability exists for play and advancement.
- **Raising from 0 → 1 (special case):** If an Ability is at **0 or 1**, you must **record at least one success and one failure** using that Ability before you can raise it.

- **Alternative routes:** The GM may allow Downtime training or in-fiction study to substitute for on-screen successes/failures in special cases; this still needs a plausible in-world justification.

Tracking advancement

- **General rule:** To raise an Ability rated **N → N+1**, you must accumulate **N total advancement marks** (successes + failures); **at least half** of those marks must be **failures** (round up).
 - Example: raising 5→6 requires **5 marks**: at least **3 failures** and up to 2 successes.
- **Special-case for N = 0 or 1:** you need a recorded **success and a failure** to raise the skill level from those values.
- **Reset:** When you spend those marks to raise the Ability, they are **consumed** — they do **not carry over** to the next level. You start fresh collecting marks toward the next increase.
- **Karma & substitution:** You may **spend Karma to substitute for missing marks**, but you must fully complete the requirement before increasing the rating.

Focuses

- **What a Focus is:** A Focus flags an Ability for prioritized advancement and is the primary target for Karma-driven options and Downtime training.
- **How to get Focuses:** Choose Focuses at character creation (free, limited by Lifepaths) or **spend 1 Karma** to open a new Focus during play.
- **Mechanically:** Focusing does not change dice pools directly; it designates which Abilities you're actively investing in for advancement and Karma interactions.

Circles (social network)

- Circles is a special Ability used to **find, call, or influence contacts**. Roll Circles (4+ = success). Suggested TNs depend on rarity/power of contact.
- **Downtime use:** invest downtime to **grow Circles** (mark an advance to Circles by forging relationships, doing favors, building reputation).

Wealth

- **Wealth** is an Ability (0–10). Roll Wealth like any Ability to scrape together funds; success = you can afford it; failure → Debt or narrative consequences.
- **Permanent Wealth advancement:** Wealth (like Circles) requires **advancement marks = (current Wealth level) + 1** to raise permanently. Marks are gained through in-fiction gains and Downtime investments.
- **If you lack Wealth for a big purchase:** make a Wealth roll (temporary); success = scrape it together; failure = take Debt or make enemies.

Circles & Wealth — outcomes

Both Circles and Wealth are treated as Abilities (roll d6 pool, 4+ = successes). TN depends on scope:

Circles TN guidelines

Contact rarity/power	TN
Familiar peer	1
Skilled professional	2
Influential figure	3
Powerful elite	4–5

Wealth TN guidelines

Purchase size	TN
Everyday item	1
Expensive gear	2
Major property/asset	3–4
Exceptional/luxury item	5+

Failure outcomes - Circles: contact unavailable, reluctant, or demands a favor (introduces obligation or risk).
- **Wealth:** you go into **Debt** — borrow, steal, or owe someone. Debt functions as a **Moderate or Serious consequence** until repaid.

Karma, Keys, Secrets

Karma

- **Karma** is the meta-currency for rerolls, buying Secrets/Keys, opening Focuses, and subsidizing advancement.
- **Common uses:**
 - Reroll a check — 1 Karma
 - Buy a new Secret — 2 Karma
 - Buy a new Key — 1 Karma
 - Open a new Ability Focus during play — 1 Karma
 - Substitute for a missing success/failure toward advancement — 1 Karma each

Keys

- **Number at creation:** The number of Keys a character starts with is determined by the chosen Lifepaths (see the Lifepaths table in Character Creation). Choose the number shown for your Lifepath selection.
- **What Keys are:** Player-chosen beliefs/drives that earn Karma when tested or when they cause meaningful conflict.
- **Buyoffs:** Keys have **buyoffs** — when the character abandons or satisfies the Key's buyoff condition, the Key is removed and grants a Karma burst. Players are encouraged to push Keys into play to earn Karma.

Example Keys **Key of the Relentless**

- **Trigger:** You pursue your goal despite obstacles or personal cost.
- **Reward:** Gain 1 Karma when you take meaningful risks or sacrifice resources to stay on course.
- **Buyoff:** Abandon your goal completely or admit defeat.

Key of Compassion

- **Trigger:** You protect or aid someone vulnerable or disadvantaged.
- **Reward:** Gain 1 Karma when doing so creates risk or inconvenience for you.
- **Buyoff:** Let someone suffer when you could have helped them.

Secrets

- **Secrets** are purchasable special moves, techniques, or abilities bought with Karma.
- Many Secrets require spending Pool points to activate and have limited uses or costs attached.
- New Secrets are typically bought for **2 Karma** and require an in-fiction justification (teacher, study, discovery, downtime).

Example Secrets **Secret of Expertise**

- **Cost:** 2 Karma to learn.
- **Effect:** Choose one Focused Ability. When you roll it, you may spend 1 Pool from the related Pool to gain +2 dice instead of the usual +1.
- **Description:** This makes you exceptionally good at your chosen specialty.

Secret of Resilience

- **Cost:** 2 Karma to learn.

- **Effect:** When you suffer a consequence, you may spend 1 Vigor to downgrade it (serious → minor, or minor → negated entirely).
 - **Description:** This lets you shrug off injuries or setbacks that would stop others.
-

Downtime

What Downtime is for: recovery, resource refresh, training, investments, and other mechanical maintenance between scenes or sessions.

Pool recovery

- **Vigor** — refresh by doing physical exertion or high-stakes activity.
- **Instinct** — refresh by engaging social, emotional, or adrenaline-driven activity.
- **Reason** — refresh by intellectual, focused, or creative work.

Raising Pools (increase maximum)

- To raise a Pool from **N** → **N+1**, you must record **N marks**.
- **How to earn a mark:** Each time you completely **empty that Pool** (reduce it to 0) during play, record 1 mark.
- Once you have the required number of marks, you may raise that Pool by +1 during Downtime.
- Example: Vigor 3 → you must empty your Vigor Pool 3 times to raise it to 4.
- You may raise only one Pool per Downtime unless the GM rules otherwise.
- Temporary pool boosts from Secrets or items do not change permanent maxima unless explicitly stated.
- Special or new Pools follow their own rules as noted at creation.

Recovering From Consequences

- Use Downtime to remove or reduce lingering consequences. Minor consequences may expire automatically at scene/session end; more serious consequences need explicit Downtime actions or medical/technical attention.

Training & Learning New Things

- **Train a Skill / Open a Focus:** spend Downtime to open a new Focus or justify advancement; this can substitute for on-screen success/failure in special cases with GM approval.
- **Learn a Secret:** acquire a Secret via study, finding a teacher, or other in-fiction actions during Downtime; Secrets still cost Karma to buy.

Wealth & Investments

- **Invest in businesses:** spend Wealth during Downtime to attempt to make more Wealth; successful investments **mark an advance to Wealth** (i.e., add an advancement mark toward Wealth increase).

Grow reputation / Circles

- Spend Downtime forging relationships, doing favors, attending events, or otherwise increasing presence; successful downtime actions **mark advances to Circles**.
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Quick reference

- Roll d6s = Ability rating; each **4+ = 1 success**.
- **Spend 1 Pool → +1 die** for that roll (or to fuel a Secret).
- **Edge** = +1 die per source (max +3).
- **Advancement:** log successes & failures OR use Downtime training; Wealth/Circles require marks = current level + 1.

Lifepaths

All characters start with a **Born Path**, then progress through **Apprentice / Adolescent** paths, and finally **Advanced / Influence** paths. Each lifepath provides **abilities, gear, and story inspiration**, as well as species-specific traits.

Humans

Born Paths

- **Rural Child:** Grew up in the countryside; worked the land, tended animals, and learned village life.
Abilities: Farming, Herding, Survival, Observation
Gear: Simple clothing, farming tools, small knife
- **Urban Street Urchin:** Grew up in city streets; learned to survive through cunning and stealth.
Abilities: Stealth, Streetwise, Scavenging, Observation
Gear: Tattered clothes, small blade, stolen trinkets
- **Noble Child:** Born to a wealthy or influential family; educated in etiquette, leadership, and diplomacy.
Abilities: Etiquette, Leadership, Persuasion, Trade Knowledge
Gear: Fine clothing, family token, personal tutor notes
- **Rural Foundling:** Left at a rural temple or monastery; raised by clergy.
Abilities: Observation, Persuasion, Religion, Survival
Gear: Prayer beads, simple robes, small personal keepsake
- **Urban Foundling:** Left in a city temple or orphanage; exposed to city life under guardianship.
Abilities: Observation, Persuasion, Stealth, Streetwise
Gear: Tattered clothing, small keepsake, improvised tools

Apprentice / Adolescent Paths

- **Apprentice Artisan / Artist** (Rural, Noble, or Urban Child): Learns craftsmanship, painting, music, or other arts.
Abilities: Crafting, Artistic Skill, Tool Use, Observation
Gear: Tools of the trade, sketchbooks, work apron
- **Combat Trainee** (Rural Child, Urban Street Urchin): Trains in swordsmanship, archery, and tactics.
Abilities: Swordsmanship, Shield, Endurance, Tactics
Gear: Training sword, shield, padded armor
- **Religious Acolyte** (Rural/Urban Foundling): Learns clerical duties, rituals, and minor healing.
Abilities: Religion, Persuasion, Observation, First Aid
Gear: Religious texts, staff, simple robes
- **Street Fighter / Thief** (Urban Street Urchin): Learns stealth, pickpocketing, and survival.
Abilities: Stealth, Improvised Weapons, Dodge, Observation
Gear: Hidden blade, lockpicks, hooded cloak
- **Merchant's Apprentice** (Rural, Noble, Urban Child): Learns negotiation, trade, and commerce.
Abilities: Trade Knowledge, Appraisal, Persuasion, Observation
Gear: Ledger, sample goods, coin pouch

Advanced / Influence Paths

- **Master Artisan / Guild Leader** (Apprentice Artist): Leads a guild or workshop; skilled in craft and management.
Abilities: Crafting, Leadership, Appraisal, Trade Knowledge
Gear: Masterwork tools, workshop key
 - **Captain / Militia Leader** (Combat Trainee): Commands city or village defense; expert in strategy.
Abilities: Leadership, Tactics, Swordsmanship, Endurance
Gear: Ceremonial sword, polished armor, logbook
 - **Cleric / Temple Overseer** (Religious Acolyte): Leads religious community; performs rites and guidance.
Abilities: Religion, Leadership, Persuasion, Healing
Gear: Ceremonial staff, robes, sacred texts
 - **Master Thief / Underworld Figure** (Street Fighter / Thief): Controls gangs or covert operations.
Abilities: Stealth, Persuasion, Intimidation, Dodge
Gear: Hidden weapons, maps of city, stolen items
 - **Master Merchant / Trader** (Merchant's Apprentice): Controls trade routes, resources, or guilds.
Abilities: Trade Knowledge, Leadership, Appraisal, Negotiation
Gear: Ledger, sample goods, negotiation tools
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Fae

Born Paths

- **Forest Child:** Raised in enchanted forests; learns stealth, observation, and woodland lore.
Abilities: Stealth, Observation, Nature Lore, Survival
Gear: Simple garments, forest charms
- **Court Fae Child:** Born into fae nobility or influential circles; learns politics and intrigue.
Abilities: Persuasion, Etiquette, Observation, Stealth
Gear: Fine clothing, magical trinkets, ledger
- **Wanderer's Kin:** Born to traveling or outcast fae; exposed to survival, trickery, and charm.
Abilities: Stealth, Observation, Trickery, Survival
Gear: Cloak, small weapon, charm talismans

Apprentice / Adolescent Paths

- **Forest Scout** (Forest Child): Mastery of tracking, stealth, and woodland magic.
Abilities: Tracking, Stealth, Survival, Observation
Gear: Bow, cloak, forest charms
- **Court Apprentice** (Court Fae Child): Learns intrigue, diplomacy, minor ritual magic.
Abilities: Persuasion, Observation, Rituals, Etiquette
Gear: Dagger, fine robes, magical trinkets
- **Rogue Wanderer** (Wanderer's Kin): Trains in stealth, trickery, and survival.
Abilities: Stealth, Dodge, Observation, Trickery
Gear: Cloak, small weapon, charm talisman
- **Apprentice Artist** (Forest Child, Court Fae Child): Trains in painting, music, sculpture, performance.
Abilities: Artistic Skill, Observation, Persuasion, Crafting
Gear: Art tools, instruments, sketchbooks

Advanced / Influence Paths

- **Forest Sentinel** (Forest Scout): Master of ambushes, tracking, and woodland magic.
Abilities: Tracking, Stealth, Leadership, Survival
Gear: Bow, reinforced cloak, charms

- **Court Fae / Intriguer** (Court Apprentice): Influences politics, ritual, and social hierarchies.
Abilities: Persuasion, Rituals, Observation, Leadership
Gear: Robes, talismans, ceremonial dagger
 - **Shadow Trickster** (Rogue Wanderer): Master of stealth, deception, and survival.
Abilities: Stealth, Trickery, Observation, Reflexes
Gear: Twin daggers, cloak, charm tokens
 - **Master Artist** (Apprentice Artist): Celebrated creator of music, sculpture, or performance.
Abilities: Artistic Skill, Observation, Persuasion, Leadership
Gear: Masterwork tools, instruments, gallery access
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Dwarves

Born Paths

- **Mountain Kin:** Raised in mountain clans; learns mining, smithing, survival.
Abilities: Endurance, Observation, Tool Use, Stone Lore
Gear: Leather gloves, mining lamp, simple clothing
- **Craft Apprentice's Child:** Born to artisan families; early exposure to tools and crafting.
Abilities: Crafting, Tool Use, Patience, Observation
Gear: Hammer, apron, unfinished work
- **Clan Scion:** Born to noble or influential clan; educated in leadership and trade.
Abilities: Leadership, Observation, Etiquette, Trade Knowledge
Gear: Fine clothes, family token, ledger notes
- **Tavernkeeper's Offspring:** Raised in urban dwarven settlements; learns observation, trade, and community dynamics.
Abilities: Observation, Persuasion, Memory, Trade Knowledge
Gear: Ledger, tankard, small coin pouch

Apprentice / Adolescent Paths

- **Apprentice Blacksmith** (Craft Apprentice, Mountain Kin)
Abilities: Smithing, Metalworking, Crafting, Strength
Gear: Hammer, tongs, gloves
- **Stone Mason Trainee** (Mountain Kin, Clan Scion)
Abilities: Masonry, Architecture, Strength, Measurement
Gear: Chisel, hammer, measuring tools
- **Guard Trainee** (Clan Scion, Mountain Kin)
Abilities: Swordsmanship, Shield, Endurance, Tactics
Gear: Training sword, padded armor
- **Hunter / Scout Trainee** (Mountain Kin)
Abilities: Tracking, Archery, Survival, Stealth
Gear: Bow, hunting knife
- **Merchant's Apprentice** (Clan Scion, Tavernkeeper)
Abilities: Trade Negotiation, Appraisal, Observation, Persuasion
Gear: Ledger, coin pouch
- **Explorer / Mountaineer** (Mountain Kin)
Abilities: Endurance, Survival, Observation, Mapping
Gear: Map kit, travel cloak

Advanced / Influence Paths

- **Master Smith** (Apprentice Blacksmith)
Abilities: Crafting, Leadership, Appraisal, Trade Knowledge
Gear: Masterwork tools, workshop key

- **Master Mason / Architect** (Stone Mason Trainee)
Abilities: Architecture, Stonecraft, Leadership, Appraisal
Gear: Blueprint scrolls, master chisel
 - **Clan Defender / Militia Commander** (Guard Trainee)
Abilities: Swordsmanship, Leadership, Tactics, Endurance
Gear: Ceremonial sword, polished armor, banner
 - **Ranger of the Peaks** (Hunter / Scout, Explorer)
Abilities: Tracking, Survival, Leadership, Archery
Gear: Longbow, reinforced leather armor
 - **Guild Master / Trade Leader** (Merchant's Apprentice)
Abilities: Trade Negotiation, Craft Mastery, Leadership, Appraisal
Gear: Ledger, masterwork tools
 - **Tavern Proprietor / Clan Influencer** (Tavernkeeper)
Abilities: Trade Knowledge, Observation, Persuasion, Leadership
Gear: Ledger, keys to tavern
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Troll

Born Paths

- **Cave-Born:** Raised in deep caves; learned survival, darkness navigation, and basic hunting.
Abilities: Endurance, Stealth, Observation, Tool Use
Gear: Bone knife, hide clothing, torch
Trait: Sun-Averse
- **Forest-Born:** Raised in forests or tundra; learned hunting, herding, and survival.
Abilities: Tracking, Survival, Stealth, Observation
Gear: Hunting spear, camouflage hide, rope
Trait: Sun-Averse
- **Tribal Scion:** Born to a chieftain or warrior; raised with combat, intimidation, and pack politics.
Abilities: Leadership, Combat, Persuasion, Observation
Gear: Crude weapon, token, hide armor
Trait: Sun-Averse
- **Herding Kin:** Raised in rural settlements; livestock, farming, territory defense.
Abilities: Herding, Farming, Survival, Observation
Gear: Staff, rope, knife
Trait: Sun-Averse

Apprentice / Adolescent Paths

- **Hunting Initiate** (Cave/Forest-Born): Learning tracking, ambush, and coordinated hunts.
Abilities: Tracking, Stealth, Archery, Brutality
Gear: Hunting spear, camouflage
- **Warrior of the Pack** (Tribal Scion): Trained in combat, intimidation, and pack coordination.
Abilities: Melee Combat, Shield, Endurance, Leadership
Gear: Axe, hide armor
- **Ritual Devotee** (Tribal Scion): Learns tribal rites and blood rituals.
Abilities: Ritual Knowledge, Persuasion, Observation, Combat
Gear: Bone dagger, charms
- **Herdsman / Farmer** (Herding Kin, Forest-Born): Animal husbandry, farming, settlement defense.
Abilities: Herding, Farming, Observation, Endurance
Gear: Staff, rope, farming tools
- **Scout / Pathfinder** (Forest/Cave-Born): Guides parties; maps terrain; reconnaissance.
Abilities: Stealth, Navigation, Observation, Survival
Gear: Map kit, bow, climbing gear

Advanced / Influence Paths

- **Troll King / Chieftain** (Tribal, Warrior): Rules tribe; commands raids, hunts, settlements.
Abilities: Leadership, Combat, Strategy, Persuasion
Gear: Bone crown, ceremonial armor, war axe
- **Huntmaster / Pack Lord** (Hunting Initiate, Scout): Leads hunts; master of ambush.
Abilities: Tracking, Archery, Leadership
Gear: Composite bow, spear set
- **Bloodlord / Ritual Overlord** (Ritual Devotee): Leads rituals, maintains sacred hunting grounds.
Abilities: Ritual Knowledge, Observation, Persuasion, Combat
Gear: Ceremonial bones, ritual dagger
- **Chief Herdsman / Settlement Overseer** (Herdsman / Farmer): Oversees livestock, farming, defense.
Abilities: Herding, Farming, Leadership, Survival
Gear: Staff, reinforced hide, farming tools
- **Shadow Stalker** (Scout, Hunting Initiate): Legendary predator; elite hunts alone or in packs.
Abilities: Stealth, Tracking, Combat Mastery
Gear: Twin daggers, shadow cloak