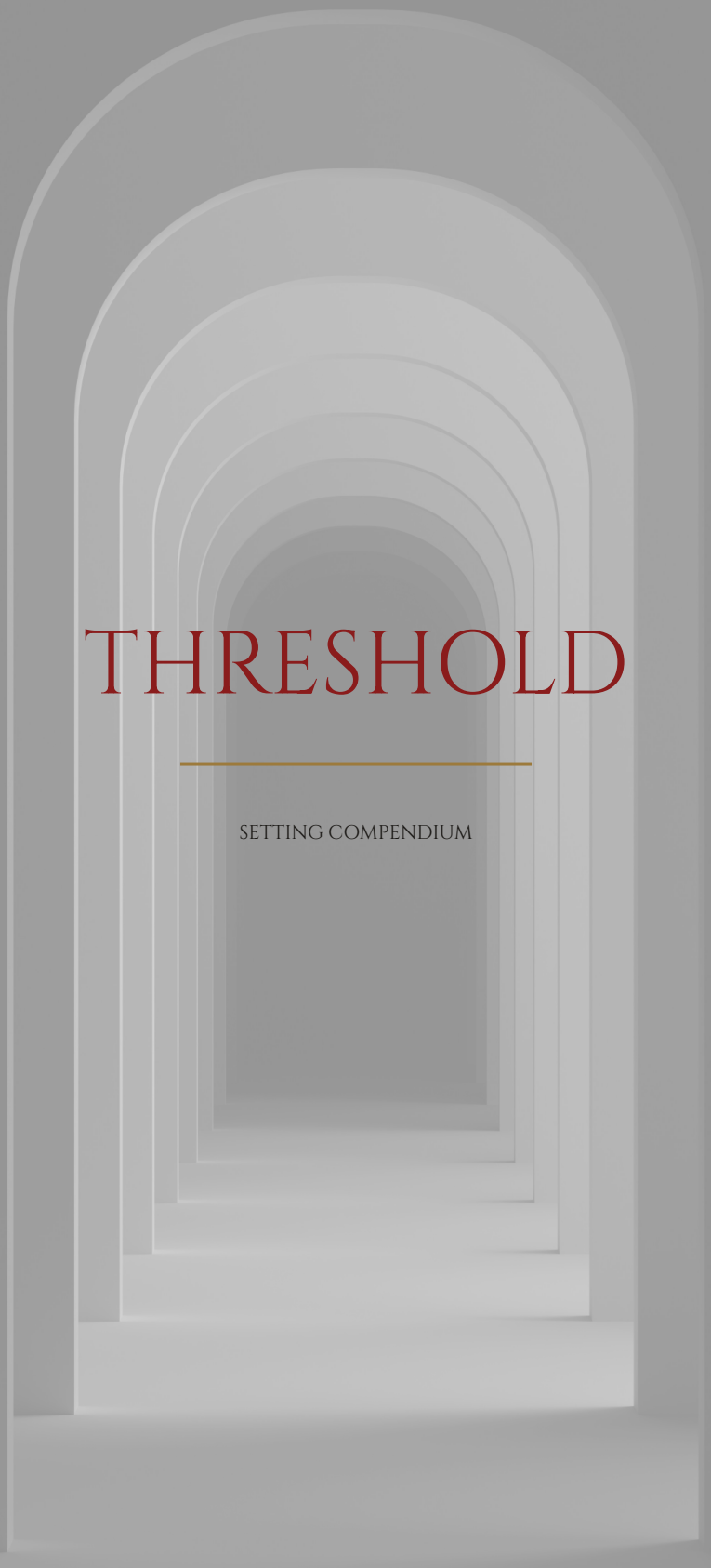




THRESHOLD

SETTING COMPENDIUM

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

“Being remembers; Non-Being waits. We were not the first to walk upright upon this stone, and we will not be the last.”

— Arsemnar of Veyrith, *The Black Journal*

I. WORLD OVERVIEW & PREMISE

THE UNMAKING is a setting compendium for the *Threshold RPG*. It presents a weathered, melancholic, and high-friction dark fantasy world where reality is bounded by the Threshold—the liminal border separating Being (form, continuity, and memory) from Non-Being (potential, entropy, and the Outer Dark).

Mortals live in the shadow of fallen titan-empires. The first great civilization of mankind, Ithagar (The Crown of Dawn), built colossal World Engines from their capital, Shol-Mhuris, stretching across Veyrith, Natharae, and Orûn, with legendary sister-spires at Nhemra (City of Ten Thousand Lenses), Ul-Kharas (City of Living Storm-Clouds), and Veyrut. In their arrogance, they tore open the Threshold seeking to unmake death. That transgression unleashed the Sundering War, casting down Ithagar and awakening the Thirsting Lineages—the first vampires, bound by the Nameless Pact signed by King Veythros.

Centuries later, the Second Age collapsed when undying sorcerer-kings built cities of blackened glass like Kaelor’s Reach, Tarn-Ygol, Kareth, Morvane, and Dros-Aelyn, harvesting the life-force of mortals until their own constructs rebelled and the sky split open.

Today, in the Third Age (The Age of Silence and Clay), the Second Race of Man—born as servants in the late cruelty of the old empires—has built settlements like Halvor’s Rest and Durnhollow. They live alongside Elves (descendants of the fae enclaves of Ilthyr and Eloruin), Dwarves (master smiths of Dûr-Kazann and Grashaal who hold the *Covenant of Flame*), and ancient Watcher Trolls who gather for the *Deepmeet* at the *Great Hollow* to guard the mountain passes against the return of the Outer Dark.

Behind closed doors, secret mortal networks operate across the provinces: The Ashen Archive hunts lost First Race relics; The Lantern Society preserves forbidden lore under the guise of storytelling; The Veilkeepers burn void-tainted tomes to prevent reality corruption; and The Pale Concord secretly feeds living thralls to sleeping vampire ancients like Athal-Korr the White Maw.

Where ancient World Engines sputter, reality frays. Rather than presenting a static textbook atlas, every region, faction, and threat in this book is designed as an actionable Powder Keg—combining environmental Target Numbers (TN), factional friction, and high-stakes player hooks.

Threshold Core Resolution Mechanics

- ◆ No Rolling Resource Pools: Pools (Vigor, Instinct, Reason) are proactive currencies spent *voluntarily* (+1 die per point spent) before rolling or to activate Secrets. Dice are only rolled from open-ended Abilities (*Stealth*, *Survival*, *Deciphering*, *Observation*, etc.).
- ◆ Narrative Consequences: *Threshold* has no hit points, numeric harm, or armor/defense values. Trauma is strictly tracked via named Consequence Tags (Minor, Moderate, Serious, Lasting, Fatal). Equipment and tactical positioning grant Edge (+1 to +3 dice).
- ◆ Voluntary Escalation: *Draw the Line* is an optional escalation procedure triggered when a player or major NPC refuses to accept a contest result.

High Target Numbers & Resource Investment

Environmental difficulties in decaying zones range from TN 4 to TN 6. Achieving 4+ successes requires characters to actively leverage situational Edge (+1 to +3 dice) and spend Pool points (+1 die per point) alongside their base Ability ratings. This creates a core gameplay loop where high-severity threats force players to prepare and invest resources rather than relying on unassisted rolls.

II. THE CAMPAIGN META-DIAL FRAMEWORK (SESSION ZERO CALIBRATION)

During Session Zero, the Game Master and players calibrate the campaign's existential mood and mechanical tension by setting the Campaign Meta-Dial:

THE CAMPAIGN META-DIAL		
[SETTING 1] ----->	[SETTING 2] ----->	[SETTING 3]
THE QUIET MARCHES	THE GATHERING SHADOW	THE TWILIGHT BRINK
Low-Magic Mythic Fantasy	Unseen Decay & Strain	World on the Verge

SETTING 1: "THE QUIET MARCHES" (LOW-MAGIC MYTHIC FANTASY)

- ◆ The Vibe: *Earthsea*, Nordic folk legend, grounded folklore.
- ◆ The World State: Human realms are stable and reality is solid. World Engines are forgotten myths beneath mountains. The liminal world (Fae, Trolls, Vampires) exists only at the extreme margins.
- ◆ Ludological Impact: Standard Target Numbers (TN 2–3); Resource Pools recover easily during standard Downtime. *Draw the Line* contests are reserved for season-ending climaxes.

SETTING 2: "THE GATHERING SHADOW" (UNSEEN DECAY & CONSPIRACY)

- ◆ The Vibe: *Elric of Melniboné*, *Warhammer Fantasy*, dark renaissance tension.
- ◆ The World State: Empires appear golden on the surface, but underneath, the World Engines are sputtering. Stars disappear, Divine Pressure twists crops, and noble houses in Tarn-Ygol and Kareth are secretly thralls to Vampire Archons.
- ◆ Ludological Impact: Elevated Target Numbers (TN 3–4) in corrupted zones. Failures inflict Moderate Consequences. Karma is earned steadily as personal Beliefs collide with institutional corruption.

SETTING 3: "THE TWILIGHT BRINK" (APOCALYPTIC TRAGIC SURVIVAL)

- ◆ The Vibe: *Dark Souls*, *Stormbringer*, tragic survival.
- ◆ The World State: World Engines are visibly breaking down. Spatial tares hover over shattered landscapes. Entire towns vanish into Non-Being overnight, and humanity makes desperate choices to survive another year.
- ◆ Ludological Impact: High Target Numbers (TN 4–5). *The Three Crossings* are mandatory for survival. *Silver Lining* advancement triggers frequently as players voluntarily run pools to 0. *Draw the Line* contests occur regularly.

III. SCOPE OF THIS COMPENDIUM

- ◆ Chapter I: The Architecture of Existence: Metaphysics, World Engines, Lost Prehuman Cities, Fae Mantles, and the Erosion Dial Matrix.
- ◆ Chapter II: Regions of the Shattered Boundary: Powder Keg gazetteer entries including Nhemra, Ul-Kharas, and the Great Hollow.
- ◆ Chapter III: Cultural Lifepaths & Ancestral Secrets: New boundary lifepaths (Lantern Society, Ashen Archive, Veil-keepers), regional secrets, and friction belief templates.
- ◆ Chapter IV: The Threat Catalog: Existential threats, Prehuman Vampire Ancients (Athai-Korr), and Opposed Contest pools.
- ◆ Chapter V: The Game Master's Crucible: Powder Keg situation design, Regional Erosion Clocks, Macro Project Clocks, and *Draw the Line* stakes templates.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF EXISTENCE

I. ON THE NATURE OF EXISTENCE: BEING, NON-BEING, AND THE THRESHOLD

The world was not made; it happened.

In the beginning, there was only absence: a quiet balance between Being—form, continuity, and meaning—and Non-Being—potential, possibility, and 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 total collapse. Magic is the art of touching this border: drawing on concordance and intent to shape reality without collapsing it. Corruption arises from misalignment, overexposure, or forcing what should remain potential into fixed form.

The Metaphysical Hierarchy

- ◆ BEING (*Form, Continuity, Memory*) — The realm of physical matter, anchored reality, and intent.
- ◆ THE THRESHOLD (*Liminal Border*) — The porous boundary where creation and magic meet.
- ◆ NON-BEING (*Potential, Dissolution, Outer Dark*) — The unformed void of unmade potential.

II. THE GREAT COLLAPSE & THE FALL OF ITHAGAR

“Every scholar writes history in the ink of their own masters. Ask a priest, a troll, and a vampire about the Fall of Ithagar, and you will hear three different wars.”

— Arsemnar of Veyrith, *The Black Journal*

LOST PREHUMAN CITIES & THE NINE SEALS

Before the Fall, Ithagar stretched across grand metropolitan monuments of lens-glass, cloud-metal, and stone: - Shol-Mhuris (The Golden Crown): The imperial heart, where King Veythros signed the Nameless Pact. - Nhemra (City of Ten Thousand Lenses): A coastal metropolis of lens-glass arcana where magisters focused solar light to anchor reality. - Ul-Kharas (City of Living Storm-Clouds): A high mountain citadel built with storm-gates, later buried beneath its own collapsing peaks during the Sundering War. - Veyrut (The Sky-Tower Citadel): A lunar sanctuary whose marble spire touched the moon, now leaning and blackened.

When the Threshold cracked, the Defenders of the Nine Seals bound the rifts using the *Black Keys of Orthuun*, sealing screaming void-faults in desert vaults before their order was swallowed by time.

CONFLICTING ACCOUNTS OF THE FALL

1. The Imperial Clergy (Lex Lucis) *“King Veythros was a holy protector of the First Empire who constructed the World Engines to shield humanity from the Outer Dark. In their godless jealousy, regional warlords and Fae sorcerers betrayed the Crown of Dawn, sabotaging the engines and cracking the Threshold.”*
2. The Troll Oral Tradition (Ul-Vask Strata) *“Veythros was a mad tyrant who drove iron stakes into the earth’s living veins to freeze time and escape his own death. He tortured the stone and bound our ancestors in iron pits until the earth recoiled and the sky split open.”*
3. The Tarn-Ygol Codex (Vampiric Fragment) *“Veythros did not fall; he ascended. He recognized that mortal flesh is weak and fleeting, so he signed the Nameless Pact and sacrificed his mortality to preserve humanity’s memories in blood before lesser men destroyed the engines.”*

FAE METAPHYSICS & THE “ADOPTING OF SHADOW”

Fae mantles (held by the Lords of the Eternal Court) are fixed slots in the metaphysical Pattern. When a High Fae or Sidhe falls, another bearer undergoes the Adopting of Shadow: - The mantle flows into the new bearer, aligning them with

ancient starlight or frost. - The bearer's personal heart, memories, joys, and grudges remain intact; the mantle amplifies their authority without erasing their soul. - Because Fae numbers are fixed by the Pattern, Fae do not reproduce naturally; they hunger for mortal tales, dreams, and vitality to sustain the Pattern against Non-Being.

III. DETAILED CHRONOLOGY OF THE THREE AGES

THE FIRST AGE: THE GOLDEN AGE OF ITHAGAR

The First Empire of Man (Ithagar) ruled from Shol-Mhuris, Nhemra, and Ul-Kharas. They built sky-towers, laid down the World Engines, and raised armies of iron. The First Age ended in the Sundering War when the Threshold cracked, dragon-fire consumed the provinces, and Grathna the Matriarch led the first goblin litters into war.

THE SECOND AGE: THE EMPIRE OF BLACKENED GLASS

Following the Fae Interregnum, the surviving vampires of Kaelor's Reach built cities of blackened glass—Tarn-Ygol, Kareth, Morvane, and Dros-Aelyn. For a thousand years, they harvested mortal memories to sustain their physical form against Non-Being, until their own stone constructs rebelled.

THE THIRD AGE: THE AGE OF SILENCE AND CLAY

The Second Race of Man emerged from the slave-camps to build Halvor's Rest, Durnhollow, and modern walled cities. They live alongside Elves of Ilthyr, Dwarves of Dûr-Kazann, and Watcher Trolls, dwelling upon the bones of forgotten empires.

IV. THE EROSION DIAL MATRIX

To track the local degradation of reality across geography and time, the GM assigns an Erosion Dial Level (1 to 5) to every region on the map:

The Erosion Dial Levels

- ◆ 1: Anchored — Solid reality; World Engine stable. Standard Target Numbers (TN 2–3) & Downtime.
- ◆ 2: Strained — Minor reality glitches; unnatural weather. Spells and Secrets require TN 3 Occult Lore.
- ◆ 3: Fraying — Actively breaking. Spells require TN 4 Occult Lore; failures inflict instant Minor Consequences.
- ◆ 4: Collapsing — Engine dying; Non-Being bleeding through. High Target Numbers (TN 4–5); failures inflict Moderate Consequences.
- ◆ 5: Shattered — Already broken. Pure stasis/chaos domain. Refusing defeat in Contests escalates directly to *Draw the Line*.

V. DIVINE PRESSURE & LITURGICAL FRAGMENTS

Gods in *Threshold* do not walk the earth in flesh, nor do they possess traditional hit-point statblocks. Instead, ancient powers and forgotten solar deities exert Divine Pressure—ambient metaphysical weight that increases difficulty or inflicts Consequences on failed rolls.

“Aethelos does not demand shade out of cruelty; his searing light burns away false memories so only truth remains.”

— Magistrate of the Lex Lucis in Kareth

Divine Power / Domain	Domain Title	Ludological Impact on Player Rolls
Aethelos (The Zenith)	Unconquered Law	Resting in open sun provides no Vigor pool recovery during Downtime; characters must seek subterranean shade.

Divine Power / Domain	Domain Title	Ludological Impact on Player Rolls
Moros (Nightmares)	Queen of Not-Being	Speaking aloud in ruins requires TN 4 Observation to avoid " <i>Nightmare Paranoia</i> " [Minor].
Vorgos (The Hollow)	God of Famine	Secrets activated in blighted provinces cost +1 additional Reason point to trigger.
Aethelian (The Dawn)	Witness of Oaths	Grants +1 Edge on truth tests at sunrise; failures trigger instant legal complications.
Marravane (Earth Shield)	Rain & Storms	Navigation during heavy storms requires TN 4 Survival; grants +1 Edge on First Aid & Medicine tests.

FACTIONS & POWERS

In the Third Age, political, military, and spiritual power is divided between the institutions of the Imperial Pantheon, Southern coastal clans, ancient Fae enclaves, and authentic regional conflict zones.

I. THE IMPERIAL PANTHEON (LEX LUCIS & HIGH-SPEED REFERENCE MATRIX)

Centered in the central city-states, the Imperial Creed is governed by the Solar Triarchy and the Great Mandates. It views divinity as a continuous legal contract (*Lex Lucis*) binding wild forces within the Four Walls of Order.

Imperial Pantheon Reference Matrix			
Deity / Power	Domain & Mandate	High-Pressure Target Number (TN)	Concordance Edge (Bonus)
Aethelian (Dawn)	Witness of Oaths & Gates	Failures trigger instant legal audit.	+1 Edge on truth & contract tests.
Aethelos (Zenith)	Scorching Truth & Law	Daylight Vigor rest requires subterranean shade.	+1 Edge on command & high court tests.
Aethelior (Evening)	Vaults & Granary Warden	Night unsealed food requires TN 3 Survival or Crafting to preserve.	+1 Edge on preservation & sealing.
Quadrant	The Iron Ledger (War Supply)	Tactical retreat actions require TN 4 Athletics.	+1 Edge on shield-wall formation.
Vulturn	Gilded Flow (Trade & Rivers)	Unweighted contracts require TN 4 Barter.	+1 Edge on river navigation & barter.
Marravane	Earth Shield & Storm Rain	Storm navigation requires TN 4 Survival.	Grants +1 Edge on First Aid & Medicine.
Pontos-Vex	Salt-Void (Ocean Deep Warden)	Void entity resistance requires TN 4 Observation.	+1 Edge on resisting void entities.
Vacter	Spirit of Limits & Borders	Crossing city walls undetected requires TN 4 Stealth.	+1 Edge on defense behind walls.
Mnemon	Memory & Lineage Binder	Unburied dead require TN 3 History to avoid grief.	+1 Edge on historical & family lore.
Ferrum	Will of Iron (Craft & Forge)	Complex smithing requires TN 4 Metallurgy.	+1 Edge on repair & smithing.
Vorgos (Exile)	God of Famine & Vampires	Secret activation in blight costs +1 Reason.	+1 Edge on blood-sorcery rites.
Krast (Exile)	Rust, Entropy, & Failure	Siege defense requires TN 4 Crafting.	+1 Edge on siege & structural destruction.

II. THE FAITH OF THE SOUTHERN COAST (CYCLE OF VITALITY)

In the South, divinity is an active family cycle (The Great Loop). Life force is categorized into -Ka (Great Vitality) and Ke- (Small Vitality).

- ◆ Marra-Ka (The Storm-Queen): The Mother of monsoon rains, war, and sudden transformation.
 - ◆ Oru-Ka (The Living Vein / Tide-Eater): The Son who governs river commerce and pushes back the ocean's brine to protect delta crops.
 - ◆ Thallos-Ka (The Brine-Father): The Deep Husband holding the dark ocean waters in silent embrace.
-

III. FAE ENCLAVES & ANCIENT STOCKS

THE ELVES OF ILTHYR & ELORUIN

Immortal Fae operating from the forest enclave of Ilthyr and the sea-cliffs of Eloruin, keeping long vigil over the ruins of Ithagar.

THE DWARVES OF DÛR-KAZANN & GRASHAAL

Forge-masters bound to deep stone in subterranean strongholds like Dûr-Kazann and Grashaal, crafting rune-inscribed steel under the *Covenant of Flame*.

THE WATCHER TROLLS

Native intelligences born of earth and stone. Though cursed with sunward dread, Trolls serve as ancient Watchers near forgotten ruins.

IV. AUTHENTIC REGIONAL FACTION CONFLICTS

1. THE GRASHAAL MOUNTAIN PASS CONFLICT

- ◆ Cult of the Outer Dark: Heretical scholars attempting to restart World Engines in the mountain passes of Grashaal to freeze time.
 - *Faction Conviction: "The World Engines are the only path out of mortality; we will restart them, even if the frost freezes the sun."*
- ◆ Dwarf Rune-Guard of Grashaal: Austere dwarven wardens determined to smash broken engine spires before their malfunction freezes the mountains.
 - *Faction Conviction: "Stasis is a quiet death; we will shatter the spires before they drain the warmth from mortal veins."*

2. THE UL-VASK STRATA CONFLICT

- ◆ The Marrow-Singers of Ul-Vask: Isolationist Troll and human enclaves who guard the ancient earth-blood flowing through subterranean veins of Ul-Vask.
 - *Faction Conviction: "The earth's marrow is sacred memory; we will kill any outsider who seeks to harvest the stone-blood."*
- ◆ Surface Smugglers: Mercenary cartels mining petrified bone and ancient artifacts to sell to city sorcerers.
 - *Faction Conviction: "Everything in the deep has a price; we will haul the relics to market, whatever the Trolls threaten."*

3. THE TARN-YGOL GLASS COURT INFILTRATION

- ◆ Undying Remnants (Vampire Archons of Tarn-Ygol): Imperial aristocrats who are secretly thralls to Vampire Archons, harvesting human memories.
 - *Faction Conviction: "Order requires sacrifice; we will deliver the city's memory to the Archons to keep the wards intact."*
 - ◆ Imperial Magistrates of Lex Lucis: Solar inquisitors seeking to purge the vampire courts and expose heretical blood magic.
 - *Faction Conviction: "A life without memory is no life at all; we will burn the glass court to the ground."*
-

V. SECRET SOCIETIES & UNDERGROUND FACTIONS

1. THE ASHEN ARCHIVE

A secret network of antiquarians and ruin-delvers who recover artifacts of the First Race. They work through mercenary proxies, seeking lost lens-glass arcana while underestimating the void-taint bound to their discoveries.

2. THE LANTERN SOCIETY

Wandering lore-gatherers and storytellers who travel between Halvor's Rest and remote settlements. While appearing as harmless folk entertainers, they secretly track reawakening World Engines and signs of sleeping Vampire Ancients.

3. THE VEILKEEPERS

A fanatical, decentralized order of inquisitorial cells dedicated to stopping forbidden knowledge. They burn void-tainted codices, destroy corrupted relics, and execute scholars who study the Nameless Pact.

4. THE PALE CONCORD

A sinister cult of human conspirators who worship the First-Blood Vampires. Operating in city cellars, they kidnap citizens and feed living memories to sleeping ancients like *Athal-Korr the White Maw*.

5. THE COURTS OF MOSS AND STONE

A rare, coordinated coalition of Fae sidhe attempting to reclaim ancient First Men ruins and expand Fae forest enclaves back into mortal territory.

VI. FACTION SUMMARY MATRIX

Faction	Realm / Region	Resource / Power	Core Factional Friction
Solar Triarchy	Imperial City-States	Lex Lucis Wards & High Courts	Enforces strict legal order over all city life.
Dwarf Rune-Guard	Grashaal Pass	Iron Wards & Combat	Smashes World Engines to prevent global freezing.
Outer Dark Cult	Engine Graveyards	Clockwork Arcana & Scrap	Restarts First Men machinery at any human cost.
Vampire Archons	Tarn-Ygol & Kareth	Memory Distillates & Wealth	Trades citizen memories to sustain physical form.
Lex Lucis Inquisitors	Kareth & Morvane	Solar Rites & High Law	Seeks total destruction of the vampire courts.
The Marrow-Singers	Ul-Vask Caverns	Earth-Singing & Stone Lore	Protects primordial bone against surface harvesters.
The Ashen Archive	Global Network	Antiquarian Lore & Proxies	Recovers dangerous First Age relics at any cost.
The Lantern Society	Trade Roads & Inns	Folk Lore & Secret Networks	Tracks reawakening World Engines and vampires.
The Veilkeepers	Underground Cells	Fire, Blades, & Paranoia	Destroys forbidden texts and executes cultists.
The Pale Concord	Tarn-Ygol & Cities	Thrall Networks & Sacrifices	Feeds living citizen memories to sleeping ancients.
Courts of Moss & Stone	Forest Borders	Etherweave & Sidhe Mantles	Reclaims ancient ruins for Fae expansion.

REGIONS OF THE SHATTERED BOUNDARY

The Liminal Marches are presented as Powder Kegs—actionable gazetteer entries combining local Target Numbers (TN), factional friction, and high-stakes situation hooks—alongside historical strongholds of the Third Age.

I. POWDER-KEG GAZETTEER ENTRIES

2.1 THE FROST-STRATA OF GRASHAAL

A freezing mountain tundra littered with colossal, rusted First Men clockwork spires that freeze time and drain physical warmth from the living.

- ◆ Erosion Dial Level: 3 (Fraying)
 - ◆ Pool Strain / Difficulty: Overland travel requires a TN 4 Survival test; failure inflicts the Consequence “*Shivering Exhaustion*” [Moderate]. Navigating clockwork spires requires TN 4 Deciphering; failure inflicts “*Chronological Disorientation*” [Moderate].
 - ◆ Faction Clash: The Cult of the Outer Dark (seeking to restart the spires to achieve stasis) vs. The Dwarf Rune-Guard of Grashaal (determined to smash them before they freeze the sun).
 - ◆ Situation Hook: A clockwork spire has begun humming, freezing a trade caravan mid-stride. The PCs must enter the freezing aura to retrieve a sealed chest before the cult claims it.
-

2.2 THE MARROW-STRATA OF UL-VASK

Subterranean cavern-complexes carved directly out of petrified primordial bone, inhabited by isolationist Troll enclaves and desperate miners.

- ◆ Erosion Dial Level: 2 (Strained)
 - ◆ Pool Strain / Difficulty: Pitch darkness requires a TN 4 Observation test to navigate safely; failure inflicts the Consequence “*Disoriented in Darkness*” [Minor].
 - ◆ Faction Clash: The Marrow-Singers of Ul-Vask (guarding the sacred stone-blood) vs. Surface Smugglers (mining petrified bone to sell to city sorcerers).
 - ◆ Situation Hook: Smugglers have breached a sacred marrow-chamber, unleashing a surge of earth-hallucinations across the lower caverns.
-

2.3 THE BLACKENED GLASS RUINS OF TARN-YGOL

A decaying city of blackened glass built in the Second Age over a dying World Engine, where noble houses are secretly thralls to Vampire Archons.

- ◆ Erosion Dial Level: 4 (Collapsing)
 - ◆ Pool Strain / Difficulty: High political paranoia—navigating courtly deceptions requires a TN 4 Streetwise or Observation test; failure inflicts the Consequence “*Clouded Identity*” [Serious].
 - ◆ Faction Clash: The Undying Remnants (supplying citizen memories to their Vampire masters) vs. The Imperial Magistrates of Lex Lucis (inquisitors purging blood magic).
 - ◆ Situation Hook: The World Engine beneath the glass cathedral has begun sputtering, causing an entire city district to lose 10 years of collective memory overnight.
-

2.4 THE SKERRIES OF UNMAKING

A desolate archipelago at the edge of the world where the ocean dissolves into literal fog, void, and Non-Being.

- ◆ Erosion Dial Level: 5 (Shattered)
 - ◆ Pool Strain / Difficulty: Reality is razor-thin—traversing spatial tares requires a TN 5 Deciphering test; failure inflicts the Consequence “*Threshold Slip*” [Serious]. Refusing defeat in Contests escalates directly to *Draw the Line*.
-

- ◆ Faction Clash: Relic Cultists (seeking fragments of the First Race) vs. The Tide-Eater Clergy of Oru-Ka (trying to seal the void-gulfs).
 - ◆ Situation Hook: A floating island of First Age marble has drifted out of Non-Being, carrying a dormant World Engine that threatens to dissolve the coastal harbor.
-

2.5 THE SUNKEN RUINS OF NHEMRA

A drowned coastal bay holding the submerged towers of Nhemra (City of Ten Thousand Lenses), where ground obsidian and brass lenses still focus underwater starlight.

- ◆ Erosion Dial Level: 4 (Collapsing)
 - ◆ Pool Strain / Difficulty: Navigating submerged ruins requires TN 4 Boating or Observation; failure inflicts “*Drowned Exhaustion*” [Moderate].
 - ◆ Faction Clash: The Ashen Archive (diving for lens-glass relics) vs. The Veilkeepers (trying to collapse the underwater vaults).
 - ◆ Situation Hook: An underwater lens has focused an etheric beam, causing sea fog to manifest phantoms of First Men magisters.
-

2.6 THE GREAT HOLLOW OF UL-VASK

A vast subterranean amphitheater within Ul-Vask where Troll Hearth-Mothers gather for the *Deepmeet* beside the Whispering Cavern.

- ◆ Erosion Dial Level: 1 (Anchored)
 - ◆ Pool Strain / Difficulty: Deep meeting protocol—engaging in diplomatic council with Hearth-Mothers requires TN 3 Persuasion or History.
 - ◆ Faction Clash: Hruva’s Hearth-Mothers (preserving memory and the Pact of Fang and Hand) vs. The Pale Concord (attempting to poison the Great Hollow’s marrow-springs).
 - ◆ Situation Hook: A Pale Concord agent has snuck into the Deepmeet with a blood-tainted chalice, threatening to turn young trolls mad.
-

2.7 THE EMBER VAULTS OF DÛR-KAZANN

Subterranean forge-halls beneath Dûr-Kazann housing the legendary Longfire, where dwarven smiths observe the *Covenant of Flame*.

- ◆ Erosion Dial Level: 1 (Anchored)
 - ◆ Pool Strain / Difficulty: Extreme forge heat requires TN 3 Endurance; complex rune-smithing requires TN 4 Metallurgy.
 - ◆ Faction Clash: Borun’s Ironhand Guild (preserving traditional rune-smithing) vs. Rebel Artisans (seeking to bind raw Non-Being into steel).
 - ◆ Situation Hook: A fissure beneath the Ember Vaults has exposed a vein of liquid void, threatening to extinguish the ancient Longfire.
-

II. HISTORICAL REALMS & SETTLEMENTS

HALVOR’S REST

A major mortal settlement of the Third Age built upon the terraces of an ancient First Age fortress. Protected by the high stone walls of Vacter and granaries dedicated to Aethelior, Halvor’s Rest serves as the center of regional trade and agricultural accounting.

DURNHOLLOW

A heavily fortified mining town nestled in the shadow of the crags. Durnhollow extracts iron, lead, and silver from deep veins, supplying the smithies of Quadrant’s legions.

III. GAZETTEER SUMMARY MATRIX

Region	Dial Level	Primary Threat / Feature	Core Ludological Hook
Grashaal Pass	3	Clockwork spires; freezing stasis.	TN 4 Survival; “ <i>Shivering Exhaustion</i> ” [Moderate].
Ul-Vask Strata	2	Petrified primordial bone caverns.	TN 4 Observation; “ <i>Disoriented</i> ” [Minor].
Tarn-Ygol Glass Ruins	4	Decaying capital over dying World Engine.	TN 4 Streetwise / Observation; “ <i>Clouded Identity</i> ” [Serious].
Skerries of Unmaking	5	Archipelago dissolving into Non-Being.	TN 5 Deciphering; “ <i>Threshold Slip</i> ” [Serious].
Sunken Nhemra	4	Submerged lens-glass towers.	TN 4 Boating / Observation; “ <i>Drowned Exhaustion</i> ” [Moderate].
The Great Hollow	1	Troll Deepmeet & Whispering Cavern.	TN 3 Persuasion; Troll Hearth-Mother diplomacy.
Ember Vaults	1	Dûr-Kazann Longfire forges.	TN 4 Metallurgy; Covenant of Flame smithing.
Shol-Mhuris	4	Ruined capital of Ithagar; charnel fields.	First Age engine vaults & ghost echoes.
Ilthyr	2	Primordial Fae forest enclave.	Etherweave navigation & Fae Observation tests.
Halvor’s Rest	1	Walled mortal settlement of the Third Age.	Granary trade, Lex Lucis court disputes.

THE THREAT CATALOG: ABOMINATIONS OF STASIS & CHAOS

Monsters in *Threshold* are not mere “sacks of hit points”—they are existential threats that target player Beliefs, force high Target Number (TN) tests, and inflict named Consequence Tags on failure.

I. ENVIRONMENTAL & MAGICAL HAZARDS

THRESHOLD VOLATILITY & MISALIGNMENT

In regions where the Threshold was forced during the Fall of Ithagar, raw magic becomes unstable. Casting spells in a Frayed Zone requires a TN 4 Occult Lore test; failure risks triggering severe Misalignment—inflicting named Consequences like “*Physical Calcification*” [Moderate] or “*Memory Amnesia*” [Serious].

THE TITHE OF SILENCE (NIGHTMARE ZONES)

In areas where the influence of Moros (Queen of Not-Being) is strong, darkness itself consumes light and form. Travelers who fail to set grey ash on their hearths or maintain fires must pass a TN 4 Observation test or enter Nightmare Incursions, where phantoms inflict the Consequence “*Nightmare Paranoia*” [Moderate].

II. THE THREAT CATALOG

2.1 THE UN-DYING ARCHONS (THIRSTING LINEAGES / VAMPIRES OF THE FIRST RACE)

- ◆ Role: Parasitic monsters of Stasis and Ego who signed the Nameless Pact in the First Age under King Veythros.
- ◆ Opposed Contest Pool: 5 dice (Mental / Social / Memory Contests)
- ◆ Ludological Threat: Memory-Drain Contest—attacks do not deal “pool damage”. When an Un-Dying Archon strikes or gazes upon a character, it forces a TN 4 Observation or Occult Lore test (or an active Opposed Contest rolling 5 dice). On a failure, the Archon inflicts a Serious Consequence: “*Clouded Identity*” [Serious] or “*Devoured Lore*” [Serious], locking access to a Secret or Lifepath Ability until healed during Downtime.

2.2 THE UNBOUND ESSENCES (FAE & ELVEN ECHOES)

- ◆ Role: Volatile, non-corporeal entities born from Non-Being that distort human perception.
- ◆ Opposed Contest Pool: 4 dice (Observation / Illusion Contests)
- ◆ Ludological Threat: Reality Warping—forces players to make a TN 4 Observation test (or Opposed Contest against 4 dice) to avoid being trapped in surreal illusion loops.
- ◆ Mechanical Penalty: Failure inflicts the Consequence “*Trapped in Illusion*” [Moderate], penalizing all tactical and movement rolls.

2.3 THE STONE-ANCESTORS (WATCHER TROLLS)

- ◆ Role: Massive, slow-moving earth-beings carrying bloodlines of primordial memory.
- ◆ Opposed Contest Pool: 6 dice (Physical / Earth Contests)
- ◆ Ludological Threat: Near-indestructible physical armor. Attacking a Stone-Ancestor head-on and refusing defeat escalates to a Draw the Line contest. Exposure to direct sunlight turns their outer skin to solid granite.
- ◆ Tactical Advice: Wise adventurers negotiate or offer rock-salt and ancient relics rather than engaging in direct combat.

2.4 ENGINE-GEISTS & SPATIAL TARES

- ◆ Role: Physical anomalies created by broken World Engines and frayed Thresholds.
- ◆ Opposed Contest Pool: 5 dice (Spatial / Machinery Contests)
- ◆ Ludological Threat: Spatial warping—requires a TN 4 Deciphering or Crafting test (or Opposed Contest against 5 dice) to navigate; failure inflicts the Consequence “*Spatial Disorientation*” [Moderate] or erases non-magical equipment.

2.5 GOBLIN LITTERS OF GRATHNA

- ◆ Role: Fierce, subterranean swarm-hunters bred during the Sundering War under Grathna the Matriarch.
- ◆ Opposed Contest Pool: 4 dice (Physical / Swarm Contests)
- ◆ Ludological Threat: Swarm tactics that bypass single-target parries, forcing a TN 4 Combat test (or Opposed Contest against 4 dice) to avoid being overwhelmed and suffering “*Lacerated Limbs*” [Moderate].

2.6 LESSER DRAGONS

- ◆ Role: Younger descendants of the True Dragons who do not sleep in stone.
- ◆ Opposed Contest Pool: 7 dice (Physical / Certainty Contests)
- ◆ Ludological Threat: Bound to passion, Lesser Dragons hoard gold, ancient relics, and certainty. Engaging a Lesser Dragon in combat requires TN 5 tests (or Opposed Contests against 7 dice); refusing defeat triggers a high-stakes Draw the Line contest.

2.7 PREHUMAN VAMPIRE ANCIENTS (ATHAL-KORR THE WHITE MAW)

- ◆ Role: Legendary First-Blood vampires created before the Fall of Ithagar, sleeping in deep crypts beneath cities.
- ◆ Opposed Contest Pool: 8 dice (Mind-Control / Blood Sorcery / Existential Contests)
- ◆ Ludological Threat: Existential Memory Consumption—Athal-Korr does not merely drain blood; he weeps blood into the *Moonstone Chalice* and devours a character’s core Beliefs. Resisting his gaze requires a TN 5 Observation or Occult Lore test (or Opposed Contest against 8 dice). Failure inflicts a Lasting Consequence: “*Erased Identity*” [Lasting] or “*Thrall Bound*” [Lasting].

III. THREAT SUMMARY MATRIX

Threat Class	Existential Role	Opposed Pool	Passive Resolution Test	Consequence on Failure
Un-Dying Archon	Parasite of Ego & Memory	5 dice	TN 4 Observation / Occult Lore	“ <i>Clouded Identity</i> ” [Serious]
Unbound Essence	Observation Distortion	4 dice	TN 4 Observation	“ <i>Trapped in Illusion</i> ” [Moderate]
Stone-Ancestor	Primordial Earth Memory	6 dice	Draw the Line (on escalation)	“ <i>Crushed Armor</i> ” [Serious]
Engine-Geist	World Engine Malfunction	5 dice	TN 4 Deciphering / Crafting	“ <i>Spatial Disorientation</i> ” [Moderate]
Goblin Litter	Subterranean Swarm	4 dice	TN 4 Combat	“ <i>Lacerated Limbs</i> ” [Moderate]
Lesser Dragon	Hoarder of Certainty	7 dice	TN 5 Contest / Draw the Line	“ <i>Scorched Flesh</i> ” [Lasting/Fatal]
Prehuman Ancient	Existential Vampire Lord	8 dice	TN 5 Observation / Occult Lore	“ <i>Erased Identity</i> ” [Lasting]

CULTURAL LIFEPATHS & ANCESTRAL SECRETS

This chapter introduces character creation options tied directly to geography, factional friction, and setting lore.

I. HUMAN STOCK CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS

1. RIVERFOLK OF VULTURN

Born along the Great Rivers and delta waterways. Children manage nets, navigate barges, and honor Vulturn (The Gilded Flow).

- ◆ Suggested Abilities: Boating, Fishing, Bartering, Water Observation
- ◆ Starting Gear: River barge pole, weighted trade contracts, braided line
- ◆ Cultural Secret: River Sense (Spend 1 Instinct to immediately detect hidden currents, sandbars, or drowned ruins).

2. NOMADS OF THE BOUNDARY

Raised in wandering clans across the steppe, wasteland, or forest. Mobility, tracking, and clan loyalty define childhood.

- ◆ Suggested Abilities: Survival, Tracking, Riding, Herding
- ◆ Starting Gear: Hunter's bow, leather riding cloak, clan amulet
- ◆ Cultural Secret: Endurance of the Road (Accustomed to long marches, minimal supplies, and harsh weather).

3. RURAL PEASANTRY OF KARETH

Raised on farms or small agricultural hamlets. Life is labor-intensive and routine, tied to soil and seasonal rains.

- ◆ Suggested Abilities: Farming, Animal Husbandry, Crafting, Observation
- ◆ Starting Gear: Farming tools, sturdy boots, work apron
- ◆ Cultural Secret: Steady Hands (Accustomed to repetitive, precise physical labor).

4. IMPERIAL LEDGER CLERK (TOWNSFOLK OF HALVOR'S REST)

Raised in the administrative halls of the Solar Triarchy, educated in legal scrollwork, taxation, and the mandates of Aethelian.

- ◆ Suggested Abilities: Lex Lucis Law, Accounting, Literacy, Noble Circles
 - ◆ Starting Gear: Slate tablet, iron stylus, copy of the Imperial Creed
 - ◆ Cultural Secret: Iron Accounting (Spend 1 Reason during negotiations to verify legal documents or detect financial fraud).
-

II. BOUNDARY & REGIONAL LIFEPATHS

1. ENGINE VAULT-BREAKER OF ITHAGAR (APPRENTICE / ADVANCED PATH)

Trained in navigating the rusted clockwork spires of the First Men, deciphering runic schematics, and disabling broken World Engines.

- ◆ Abilities: Scavenging, Deciphering, Mechanics, Observation
- ◆ Starting Gear: Lens-glass magnifier, copper wire, bone-chisel, oil lantern
- ◆ Starting Trait: Engine-Sense (Detect active engine fields and temporal glitches within 60 feet).

2. WASTELAND OUTCAST OF GRASHAAL (APPRENTICE PATH)

A hardened survivalist raised in the freezing mountain passes of Grashaal.

- ◆ Abilities: Survival, Tracking, Endurance, Scavenging
 - ◆ Starting Gear: Heavy fur cloak, ice-axe, dried seal meat, salt-pouch
 - ◆ Starting Trait: Frost-Hardened (Ignore Vigor penalties caused by cold weather).
-

3. THRALL-ESCAPEE OF TARN-YGOL (ADOLESCENT / ADVANCED PATH)

Fled the glass courts of Tarn-Ygol after having parts of your memory harvested by Vampire Archons.

- ◆ Abilities: Streetwise, Stealth, Underworld Circles, Deception
- ◆ Starting Gear: Concealed dagger, stolen noble signet, tattered cloak
- ◆ Starting Trait: Scarred Memory (Gain Edge when resisting mind-altering magic or vampire charm).

4. MARROW-ADOPTED HUMAN OF UL-VASK (APPRENTICE PATH)

Raised in the subterranean cavern-complexes of Ul-Vask by isolationist Troll enclaves.

- ◆ Abilities: Survival, Earth-Singing, Tremorsense, Combat
- ◆ Starting Gear: Stone maul, petrified marrow-pendant, lichen pouch
- ◆ Starting Trait: Deep-Sight (Navigate pitch darkness without light sources).

5. TARN-YGOL RELIC HUNTER (SCAVENGER OF OLD ITHAGAR)

Apprenticed to veteran dungeon-delvers who brave the ruins of Kaelor's Reach and Tarn-Ygol to extract First Age relics.

- ◆ Abilities: Scavenging, Deciphering, Stealth, Survival
- ◆ Starting Gear: Grappling hook, bone-chisel, oil lantern, rubbings of ancient script
- ◆ Cultural Secret: Relic Sense (Spend 1 Reason to identify if an ancient artifact is bound to Non-Being or carries a vampire curse).

6. LANTERN SOCIETY WANDERER (ADOLESCENT / ADVANCED PATH)

A traveling lore-gatherer who publicly performs songs and folk tales while secretly searching for reawakening ancient powers.

- ◆ Abilities: Observation, History, Persuasion, Performance
- ◆ Starting Gear: Traveling cloak, lute or pipe, iron lantern, leather journal
- ◆ Starting Trait: Lore-Collector (Gain Edge when recalling forgotten setting lore or identifying secret faction emblems).

7. ASHEN ARCHIVE ANTIQUARIAN (APPRENTICE / ADVANCED PATH)

A scholar of the secret Ashen Archive who researches First Men artifacts and lens-glass arcana through hidden proxies.

- ◆ Abilities: Deciphering, History, Appraisal, Scavenging
- ◆ Starting Gear: Magnifying glass, velvet-lined carrying case, brass compass, scroll tube
- ◆ Starting Trait: Antiquarian Eye (Spend 1 Reason to immediately identify a relic's historical origin and mechanical function).

8. VEILKEEPER INQUISITOR (ADVANCED PATH)

A member of the secret Veilkeeper order dedicated to burning void-tainted codices and slaying dangerous cultists.

- ◆ Abilities: Occult Lore, Stealth, Intimidation, Combat
- ◆ Starting Gear: Ashen cloak, silver-plated dagger, iron brand, vial of holy salt
- ◆ Starting Trait: Void-Purger (Gain Edge on tests made to track, unmask, or execute void-corrupted targets).

III. FAE, DWARF, & TROLL STOCK LIFEPATHS

1. ELVEN SENTINEL OF ILTHYR

An elf born in the deep forest enclave of Ilthyr, trained in bow-craft and patrolling the borders where the Veil is thin.

- ◆ Abilities: Archery, Forest Stealth, Fae Lore, Observation
- ◆ Starting Gear: Yew longbow, silver-tipped arrows, cloaking veil
- ◆ Starting Trait: Fae Grace (Pass through wilderness without leaving tracks).

2. DWARF FORGE-MASTER OF DÛR-KAZANN

A dwarf trained in the subterranean magma-forges of Dûr-Kazann, binding elemental runes into iron and granite.

- ◆ Abilities: Runecarving, Metallurgy, Crafting, Masonry
- ◆ Starting Gear: Smithing hammer, leather apron, iron rune-chisels
- ◆ Starting Trait: Stone Memory (Inherent sense of depth and structural stress).

3. TROLL WATCHER OF THE HIGH CRAGS

An ancient troll bound to stone by sunward dread, keeping vigil over the mountain passes of Ithagar.

- ◆ Abilities: Tremorsense, Combat, Survival, Earth-Singing
- ◆ Starting Gear: Great stone maul, mantle of mossy hide
- ◆ Starting Trait: Patience of Granite (Regenerate physical harm while resting in total darkness).

IV. FACTIONAL BELIEF TEMPLATES & FRICTION GENERATORS

Beliefs in *Threshold* earn Karma when put into direct friction with the narrative. Setting Beliefs are constructed using the Friction Formula:

$$\text{Belief} = [\text{Conviction}] + [\text{Directive}] + [\text{Friction}]$$

EXAMPLE BELIEF TEMPLATES:

- ◆ The Grashaal Dilemma:
"The World Engines are a blasphemy against nature (Conviction); I will smash every spire we find (Directive), even if my allies need its warmth to survive the night (Friction)."
- ◆ The Tarn-Ygol Inquisitor:
"A life without memory is a hollow shell (Conviction); I will assassinate the vampire noble (Directive), even if it exposes our secret rebellion to the city guard (Friction)."
- ◆ The Veilkeeper Oath:
"Forbidden knowledge corrupts the soul (Conviction); I will burn every void tome we find (Directive), even if my scholar ally begs to keep it for study (Friction)."

REGIONAL SECRETS & CULTURAL HERITAGES

Secrets represent specialized training, biological traits, or supernatural techniques costing 2 Karma to learn.

I. REGIONAL & ANCESTRAL SECRETS

1. SECRET OF THE ENGINE-LENS

- ◆ Prerequisite: Engine Vault-Breaker or Scavenger
- ◆ Activation Cost: 1 Reason
- ◆ Effect: You tune your gaze through a ground obsidian lens. You instantly perceive spatial glitches, hidden Threshold portals, invisible Fae, or the exact structural weak point of a First Men World Engine.

2. SECRET OF STONE-BONE

- ◆ Prerequisite: Troll Stock or Troll-Raised Wanderer
- ◆ Activation Cost: 1 Vigor
- ◆ Effect: When you take lethal physical Harm, you channel ancestral earth-memory into your bones. Turn the lethal Harm into a permanent narrative scar (*Stone-Scarred* [Lasting]) instead of death or unconsciousness.

3. SECRET OF THE HOLLOW MEMORY

- ◆ Prerequisite: Thrall-Escapee of Tarn-Ygol
- ◆ Activation Cost: 1 Instinct
- ◆ Effect: You burn a personal memory to purge mind-altering magic or vampire charm. For the duration of the scene, you become completely immune to mental manipulation, but temporarily lose access to 1 non-combat memory.

4. SECRET OF THE TARN-YGOL CIPHER

- ◆ Prerequisite: Deciphering 2+ or High Spire Lore
- ◆ Activation Cost: 1 Reason
- ◆ Effect: You can read the erratic handwriting of Arsemnar of Veyrith and ancient First Age tablets. Spend 1 Reason to identify traps bound to Non-Being or locate hidden vaults.

5. BLOOD OF THE THIRSTING LINEAGE (ANCESTRAL SECRET)

- ◆ Prerequisite: Human Stock or Blood-Sorcery Tradition
- ◆ Activation Cost: 1 Vigor
- ◆ Effect: Your bloodline carries residual traces of the Nameless Pact signed by King Veythros. When wounded in melee combat, spend 1 Vigor as a reaction to cause your blood to ignite with violet flame, inflicting a Moderate Consequence (*"Ignited Flesh"* [Moderate]) on your attacker.

6. FAE GLAMOUR (ELVEN SECRET)

- ◆ Prerequisite: Elf Stock (Ilthyr / Eloruin)
- ◆ Activation Cost: 1 Instinct

- ◆ Effect: You weave subtle sensory illusions from the Etherweave. Spend 1 Instinct to shape minor sights, sounds, or scents that distract guards, create optical illusions, or disguise objects for the duration of the scene.

7. DWARF IRON OATH (RUNE SECRET)

- ◆ Prerequisite: Dwarf Stock (Dûr-Kazann / Grashaal)
- ◆ Activation Cost: 1 Reason
- ◆ Effect: You carve a legal or iron oath into stone or metal using ancient dwarven runes. Anyone who breaks the oath in your presence causes the rune to rupture, inflicting a Moderate Consequence (*"Ruptured Oath"* [Moderate]) on the oath-breaker.

8. SECRET OF THE LEXOMANCER

- ◆ Prerequisite: Scribe of Power or Ashen Archive Scholar
- ◆ Activation Cost: 1 Reason
- ◆ Effect: You speak a true word in the lost First Men grammar. Spend 1 Reason to immediately unseal a locked door, bypass a magical barrier, or alter a physical inscription for the scene.

9. SECRET OF ONEIRIC SIGHT

- ◆ Prerequisite: Lantern Society Wanderer or Medium
- ◆ Activation Cost: 1 Instinct
- ◆ Effect: You step through the shared landscape of sleeping minds. Spend 1 Instinct while a target sleeps to enter their dream, discovering their deepest hidden fear or secret motivation.

10. SECRET OF CHORAL SONG

- ◆ Prerequisite: Dwarf Rune-Singer or Fae Chorister
- ◆ Activation Cost: 1 Reason or 1 Instinct
- ◆ Effect: You channel power through ancient vocal vibrations. Spend 1 Reason or Instinct to resonate with stone or storm, granting +2 Edge on tests made to repair structures, calm wild weather, or resist sonic impact.

II. FACTION TALENTS & ACTIVE ABILITIES

1. IMPERIAL SHIELD-WALL (QUADRANT MANDATE)

- ◆ Prerequisite: Imperial Legion or Guard Affiliation
- ◆ Effect: When fighting in formation with at least one ally carrying a shield, you gain +1 Edge on all defense tests against physical melee and ranged attacks.

2. LEX LUCIS AUDIT (AETHELIAN MANDATE)

- ◆ Prerequisite: Solar Triarchy Clergy or Magistrate
- ◆ Effect: When interrogating a suspect under the morning sun, spend 1 Reason to compel them to answer one direct question truthfully, as Aethelian's light burns away deception.

3. COVEN ROOT-MENDING (SOUTHERN VITALITY)

◆ Prerequisite: Southern Coast Clan Affiliation

◆ Effect: By spending 10 minutes in communion with natural soil, heal 1 Minor Consequence on yourself or an ally without consuming medical supplies.

III. ACTIVE VS. PASSIVE SETTING SECRETS & TALENTS SUMMARY

Secret / Talent	Pool Cost	Type	Narrative / Mechanical Effect
Secret of Engine-Lens	1 Reason	Active	Perceives spatial glitches, invisible Fae, and Threshold portals.
Secret of Stone-Bone	1 Vigor	Active	Converts lethal physical Harm into a permanent scar (<i>Stone-Scarred</i>).
Secret of Hollow Memory	1 Instinct	Active	Grants mental immunity by sacrificing a personal memory.
Secret of Tarn-Ygol Cipher	1 Reason	Active	Deciphers First Age script and locates Non-Being vaults.
Blood of Thirsting Lineage	1 Vigor	Active	Ignites blood in violet flame (<i>"Ignited Flesh"</i> [Moderate]).
Fae Glamour	1 Instinct	Active	Weaves sensory illusions (sights, sounds, scents) for distraction/disguise.
Dwarf Iron Oath	1 Reason	Active	Ruptures rune on broken oath (<i>"Ruptured Oath"</i> [Moderate]).
Secret of Lexomancer	1 Reason	Active	Unseals doors and alters inscriptions via lost grammar.
Secret of Oneiric Sight	1 Instinct	Active	Enters sleeping minds to reveal core fears/Beliefs.
Secret of Choral Song	1 Reason/Ins	Active	Grants +2 Edge on structural/elemental vocal tests.
Imperial Shield-Wall	None	Passive	Grants +1 Edge on defense when fighting shield-to-shield.
Lex Lucis Audit	1 Reason	Active	Compels truthful answer under morning sun.
Coven Root-Mending	None	Active	Heals 1 Minor Consequence via 10 min soil communion.

SETTING MAGIC & WORLD ENGINES

Magic in *Threshold* is not governed by spell slots or arbitrary mana values; it is the art of touching the Threshold—the porous border between Being and Non-Being.

I. WORLD ENGINE ENGINEERING & 3-TIER INTERACTION MATRIX

Ancient First Men World Engines and clockwork spires anchor Being against the Outer Dark, but broken machinery leaks stasis and entropy. When interacting with a World Engine, characters make a Deciphering or Mechanics test:

World Engine Interaction Matrix		
Interaction Action	Difficulty (TN)	Ludological & Environmental Consequence
Calibrate / Stabilize	TN 3 Deciphering	Lowers the local Erosion Dial level by 1 step for 1 week.
Overclock	TN 4 Mechanics	Grants +2 Edge on physical/arcane tests in the region, but adds +2 Ticks to the Erosion Clock.
Shatter / Deactivate	TN 5 Mechanics	Permanently extinguishes the field, plunging the region into stasis freezing or immediate Non-Being.

Macro Project Clocks for World Engines

Standard Downtime Project Clocks use 4, 6, or 8 segments. Because World Engines are colossal ancient structures holding reality together, calibrating, repairing, or dismantling a World Engine should use Macro Project Clocks (10 or 12 segments) across multiple Downtime phases.

II. MAGICAL TRADITIONS & SACRED PATHS

1. RITUAL AS MYTHIC RE-ENACTMENT

Not all magic is spellcraft. Across cultures, sacred paths function as rituals that place participants into the shape of an ancient myth (creation, sacrifice, or kingship). - Gates & Threshold Markers: Physical standing stones, archways, and circles anchor the mind, deepening intent as participants pass through. - Mythic Interference: When two opposing cultures perform conflicting rituals for the same domain (e.g. one slaying a beast while another sanctifies it), the Threshold responds to meaning under strain, escalating environmental volatility.

2. WORLD ENGINE MECHANICS (FIRST MEN TECHNOLOGY)

The manipulation of ancient World Engines and clockwork spires. Technicians use Reason to recalibrate stasis fields or purge Non-Being leakage. * Primary Pool: Reason | Associated Secret: *Secret of the Engine-Lens*

3. RUNE-CRAFT & CHORAL SINGING (DWARF & FAE MASONRY)

Subterranean dwarves and fae choristers bind intent into stone, metal, and air using ancient runes and vocal mathematics. * Primary Pool: Reason or Instinct | Associated Secret: *Dwarf Iron Oath / Secret of Choral Song*

4. LEXOMANCY & SCHOLASTIC ARTS

The collection of lost First Men alphabets and true grammar. Scribes rewrite physical boundaries using true words. *
Primary Pool: Reason | Associated Secret: *Secret of the Lexomancer*

III. RELICS OF THE LIMINAL MARCHES

THE ENGINE CORE OF SHOL-MHURIS

Artifact / First Age Engine Fragment

A humming, brass sphere extracted from a World Engine. * Effect: Spend 1 Reason to project a 30-foot Anchored Field that suppresses spatial glitches and prevents Fae illusions for 1 hour.

THE TARN-YGOL CODEX

Artifact / First Age Codex

A tome bound in dragon-hide containing the erratic notes of Arsemnar of Veyrith. * Effect: Allows the reader to study blood-magic and engine mechanics. Requires a TN 5 Deciphering test to read; failure inflicts the Consequence “*Corrosive Madness*” [Serious].

THE MOONSTONE CHALICE OF ATHAL-KORR

Artifact / Prehuman Vampire Relic

A cracked chalice of silvered moonstone weeping dark blood. * Effect: Spend 1 Vigor to drink the chalice’s blood, immediately recovering all spent Reason pool points. However, the user suffers a Moderate Consequence: “*Vampiric Thirst*” [Moderate].

THE BLACK KEY OF ORTHUUN

Artifact / Defenders of the Nine Seals Relic

An iron key forged by ancient Defenders to seal spatial rifts. * Effect: Spend 1 Reason to immediately lock a spatial tare or seal a void portal, reducing the local Erosion Dial level by 1 step.

THE SUN-SHARD OF AETHELOS

Artifact / Solar Triarchy Relic

A polished golden lens consecrated in the high temple of Aethelos at high noon. * Effect: Emits a beam of pure Lex Lucis sunlight. Undead and entities of Non-Being exposed to the beam suffer an automatic Moderate Consequence (“*Solar Seared*” [Moderate]) per round.

THE GAME MASTER'S CRUCIBLE

This chapter provides Game Masters with tools for running high-tension, situation-driven campaigns grounded in the Liminal Marches.

I. SITUATION DESIGN: BUILDING POWDER KEGS & HIGH-TN LOOPS

To build an actionable situation rather than a static adventure, construct every region as a Powder Keg using three components:

POWDER KEG SITUATION DESIGN			
1. ENVIRONMENTAL DIFFICULTY		High Target Numbers (TN 4-6) that	
		test player Abilities.	
2. CLASHING FACTION BELIEFS		Two factions with irreconcilable	
		convictions fighting for control.	
3. PLAYER FRICTION HOOKS		Direct hooks that force player	
		Beliefs to collide with the crisis.	

The High-TN & Resource Investment Loop

In corrupted or liminal zones (Dial 3+), Target Numbers range from TN 4 to TN 6. Because unassisted rolls with 2-3 dice are statistically unlikely to achieve 4+ successes without exploding 6s, high TNs create an intentional gameplay loop:

- ◆ Preparation & Gear: Players must actively seek situational Edge (+1 to +3 dice) through tools, positioning, or tactical planning.
- ◆ Voluntary Pool Spending: Players spend Pool points (+1 die per point spent) *before* rolling to ensure their dice pool can reach the required TN.

II. MANAGING REGIONAL EROSION CLOCKS & DOWNTIME

The GM uses a 6-step visual tracker to monitor local environmental degradation:

[1] → [2] → [3] → [4] → [5] → [6: Reality Tare]

Mapping Clocks to Dial Levels

- ◆ Explicit Dial Progression: Ticking the Erosion Clock to Ticks 2, 4, and 5 advances the local Erosion Dial to Levels 2, 3, and 4 respectively. Reaching Tick 6 triggers a Reality Tare, jumping the region immediately to Dial Level 5 (Shattered).
- ◆ Downtime Erosion Rule: Taking a multi-day Downtime rest in a region with an Erosion Dial Level of 3+ (Fraying or higher) automatically adds +1 Tick to the Regional Erosion Clock as Non-Being encroaches while the party rests.
- ◆ Escalation to Draw the Line: In Erosion Level 5 regions, high-stakes Contests escalate directly to *Draw the Line* when a player or major NPC refuses to accept defeat.
- ◆ Macro Project Clocks: Standard Downtime projects use 4, 6, or 8 segments. For macro-level setting elements (such as calibrating or dismantling a First Men World Engine), use 10-segment or 12-segment Clocks to reflect their epic narrative scale.

III. FAST-TRACKING "DRAW THE LINE" STAKES & CLIMACTIC 3-VP SCALING

During climactic contests, use these pre-packaged stakes templates to accelerate high-stakes negotiations:

Climactic DTL 3-VP Scaling

In standard *Draw the Line* (DTL) sequences, reaching 2 Victory Points (VPs) wins the conflict, with the initial contest winner holding 1 VP. For major boss encounters (such as an Un-Dying Archon or Lesser Dragon), require 3 Victory Points to win so that an initial 1-VP lead does not truncate the sequence into a single round, guaranteeing a multi-round dramatic escalation.

Stakes Category	Player Victory Outcome	Failure / Escalation Consequence
Bodily Stakes	Secure physical safety; defeat threat.	Suffer 1 Serious Harm; gain <i>Permanent Scar</i> .
Social Stakes	Social standing preserved; sway verdict.	Lose noble standing; gain <i>Marked by the Void</i> .
Existential Stakes	Anchor World Engine; seal Tare.	Region lapses into Non-Being; lose 1 memory.

IV. AUTHENTIC ADVENTURE SEEDS

1. THE RECOVERY OF THE BLACK JOURNAL

Tone: Mystery / Dark Investigation | Location: Ruins of Tarn-Ygol

Reports reach the magistrate of Halvor's Rest that a scholar from the high courts has vanished while searching for the long-lost journal of Arsemnar of Veyrith. The party is hired to trace the scholar into the obsidian ruins of Tarn-Ygol before a vampire cult recovers the text and unlocks the Nameless Pact.

2. THE BREACH AT DÛR-KAZANN

Tone: Action / Dungeon Crawl | Location: Subterranean Forges of Dûr-Kazann

Deep miners have struck a vein of raw Non-Being beneath the lower forges of Dûr-Kazann. Dwarf forge-masters hire mercenaries to secure the magma-gates while rune-smiths race to complete an Iron Oath seal before void entities spill into the mines.

3. THE VAULT OF SIGHS & THE BLACK KEY

Tone: Ruins / Secret Societies | Location: Buried Citadel of Ul-Kharas

Agents of The Ashen Archive hire the party to breach a subterranean vault in Ul-Kharas to recover *The Black Key of Orthuun*. However, an armed cell of The Veilkeepers ambushes the expedition, determined to collapse the mountain rather than let the key be unsealed.

4. THE DEEPMEEET AT THE WHISPERING CAVERN

Tone: Political Intrigue / Tribal Negotiation | Location: The Great Hollow of Ul-Vask

Troll Hearth-Mothers gather for the seasonal *Deeptimeet* to trade memory and meat. The party accompanies a Lantern Society storyteller to negotiate passage through the mountain passes, but must unmask a spy of The Pale Concord who plans to poison the Great Hollow's marrow-springs.

V. WILDERNESS & EROSION ENCOUNTER MATRIX (D6)

d6	Encounter
1	A sun-cursed Watcher Troll standing petrified in granite on a ridge, keeping ancient vigil over a buried First Age vault.
2	A pack of Goblin Litters led by a shaman of Grathna, setting ambushes along the trade road to Halvor's Rest.
3	A patrol of Imperial Legionnaires enforcing Quadrant's Iron Ledger, demanding trade passes and inspecting cargo for contraband.
4	An Elven Ranger of Ilthyr warning the party that a nearby Frayed Zone is leaking Non-Being into the forest stream.
5	A wandering Thirsting Lineage (Vampire) disguised as a noble merchant traveling with a heavily guarded black carriage.
6	A Lesser Dragon roosting on a ruined sky-tower of Shol-Mhuris, offering ancient lore in exchange for a tribute of silver and certainty.

PLAYER SESSION ZERO HANDOUT: THE UNMAKING

I. CAMPAIGN META-DIAL SELECTION

During Session Zero, the GM and group set the Campaign Meta-Dial to establish the world's existential tension:

- ◆ 1. The Quiet Marches (Low-Magic Mythic Fantasy): Stable reality; World Engines are forgotten myths; Fae/Vampires exist only on extreme margins; standard Downtime pool recovery.
- ◆ 2. The Gathering Shadow (Unseen Decay & Conspiracy): Imperial decay; World Engines sputtering; courtly vampire infiltration; environmental pool strain in corrupted zones.
- ◆ 3. The Twilight Brink (Apocalyptic Survival): Reality tares hover over shattered landscapes; mandatory *Three Crossings* pool recovery; frequent *Draw the Line* contests.

II. SETTING LIFEPATHS AT A GLANCE (TWO-LIFEPATH FRAMEWORK)

Under the Two-Lifepath Framework, each starting character chooses two Lifepaths (e.g. Origin + Career). Selecting a Career sets its Specialty Ability to Rating 2 and grants its Career Abilities at Rating 1. The character receives 1 starting Secret of the player's choice from their Stock or Regional lists.

Lifepath	Stock / Category	Specialty Ability (Rating 2)	Career Abilities (Rating 1)
Engine Vault-Breaker	Scavenger / Tech	Deciphering	Mechanics, Scavenging, Observation
Wasteland Outcast	Frontier / Human	Survival	Tracking, Endurance, Scavenging
Thrall-Escapee	Tarn-Ygol / Human	Stealth	Streetwise, Underworld Circles, Deception
Marrow-Adopted Human	Ul-Vask / Human	Tremorsense	Survival, Earth-Singing, Combat
Riverfolk of Vulturn	Southern Coast	Boating	Fishing, Bartering, Water Observation
Imperial Ledger Clerk	Halvor's Rest	Lex Lucis Law	Accounting, Literacy, Noble Circles
Lantern Society Wanderer	Faction / Human	Observation	History, Persuasion, Performance
Ashen Archive Scholar	Faction / Human	Deciphering	History, Appraisal, Scavenging
Veilkeeper Inquisitor	Faction / Human	Occult Lore	Stealth, Intimidation, Combat
Elven Sentinel	Fae / Ilthyr	Archery	Forest Stealth, Fae Lore, Observation
Dwarf Forge-Master	Dwarf / Dûr-Kazann	Runecarving	Metallurgy, Crafting, Masonry
Troll Watcher	Troll / High Crag	Tremorsense	Combat, Survival, Earth-Singing

III. REGIONAL & ANCESTRAL SECRETS (SELECT 1 AT CHARACTER CREATION)

- ◆ Secret of the Engine-Lens: Spend 1 Reason to perceive spatial glitches, hidden Threshold portals, and invisible Fae through ground obsidian.
- ◆ Secret of Stone-Bone: Spend 1 Vigor to turn lethal physical Harm into a permanent narrative scar (*Stone-Scarred* [Lasting]).
- ◆ Secret of the Hollow Memory: Spend 1 Instinct to burn a non-combat memory and gain complete immunity to mental charm/manipulation for the scene.
- ◆ Secret of the Tarn-Ygol Cipher: Spend 1 Reason to read First Age runic script, identify Non-Being traps, and locate buried vaults.
- ◆ Blood of the Thirsting Lineage: Spend 1 Vigor as a reaction when wounded in melee to ignite your blood in violet flame, inflicting *“Ignited Flesh”* [Moderate] on your attacker.
- ◆ Secret of the Lexomancer: Spend 1 Reason to unseal doors, bypass magical barriers, or alter inscriptions using lost First Men grammar.
- ◆ Secret of Oneiric Sight: Spend 1 Instinct while a target sleeps to enter their dream, revealing their core fears or secret motivations.
- ◆ Secret of Choral Song: Spend 1 Reason or Instinct to harmonize vocal vibrations with stone or storm, granting +2 Edge on structural/elemental tests.
- ◆ Fae Glamour: Spend 1 Instinct to weave minor sensory illusions (sights, sounds, scents) that distract guards, create optical illusions, or disguise objects.
- ◆ Dwarf Iron Oath: Spend 1 Reason to carve a binding rune into stone/metal; breaking the oath ruptures the rune, inflicting *“Ruptured Oath”* [Moderate].

IV. FACTIONAL BELIEF FRICTION FORMULA

To earn Karma quickly during play, format your character’s starting Beliefs using the Friction Formula:

$$\text{Belief} = [\text{Conviction}] + [\text{Directive}] + [\text{Friction}]$$

- ◆ Example: *“Order requires truth (Conviction); I will expose the Vampire Archons of Tarn-Ygol (Directive), even if it exposes my allies to the city guard (Friction).”*

SETTING QUICK REFERENCE

I. EROSION DIAL LEVEL REFERENCE MATRIX

Level	State	Environmental Impact	Ludological Mechanic
1	Anchored	Solid reality; Engine stable.	Standard Target Numbers (TN 2–3) & Downtime.
2	Strained	Unnatural weather; minor glitches.	Spells & Secrets require TN 3 Occult Lore.
3	Fraying	Actively breaking; shadows warp.	Spells require TN 4 Occult Lore; failures inflict Minor Consequence.
4	Collapsing	Engine dying; Non-Being bleeding.	High TNs (TN 4–5); failures inflict Moderate Consequence.
5	Shattered	Already broken; pure stasis/chaos.	Refusing defeat in Contests escalates directly to <i>Draw the Line</i> .

II. COMPREHENSIVE FACTION MATRIX

Faction	Realm / Region	Primary Goal	Opposing Faction
Solar Triarchy	Imperial City-States	Enforce Lex Lucis Wards & High Courts	Cults of Non-Being
Dwarf Rune-Guard	Grashaal Pass	Shatter World Engines to save warmth	Outer Dark Cult
Outer Dark Cult	Engine Graveyards	Restart First Men machinery for stasis	Dwarf Rune-Guard
Vampire Archons	Tarn-Ygol & Kareth	Trade citizen memories to Vampires	Lex Lucis Inquisitors
Lex Lucis Inquisitors	Kareth & Morvane	Purge vampire nobility from capital	Vampire Archons
The Marrow-Singers	Ul-Vask Caverns	Protect primordial bone-marrow	Surface Smugglers
The Ashen Archive	Global Network	Recover First Age relics via proxies	The Veilkeepers
The Lantern Society	Trade Roads & Inns	Track sleeping ancient powers & lore	The Pale Concord
The Veilkeepers	Underground Cells	Burn void-tainted codices & cultists	The Ashen Archive
The Pale Concord	Tarn-Ygol & Cities	Feed living memories to vampire ancients	Solar Triarchy

Faction	Realm / Region	Primary Goal	Opposing Faction
Courts of Moss & Stone	Forest Borders	Reclaim lost Fae ruins from First Men	Mortal Expansion

III. DIVINE PANTHEON & MANDATE SUMMARY

Divine Power	Realm / Domain	Mandate / Function
Aethelos (Solar Triarchy)	The Zenith	Unconquered Law (<i>Lex Lucis</i>); open sun rest requires shade.
Aethelian (Dawn)	The Witness	Opening of gates, witness of oaths, legal contracts.
Aethelior (Evening)	The Vaults	Granaries, preservation, sealing against the dark.
Quadrant	Iron Ledger	Business of War, shield-walls (+1 Edge), soldier accounting.
Vulturn	Gilded Flow	Great Rivers, trade, commerce contracts.
Marra-Ka	Southern Vitality	Storm Queen, monsoon rains, war, transformation.
Oru-Ka	Southern Vitality	Living Vein, river trade, pushing back salt-tides.
Vorgos the Hollow	Exile / Bad God	Famine, consumption; Secret activation in blight costs +1 Reason.

IV. LOCATION & GAZETTEER MATRIX

Location	Era / Origin	Description / Significance
Shol-Mhuris (Ithagar)	First Age	Capital of the First Empire of Man; ground zero of Nameless Pact.
Nhemra, Ul-Kharas, Veyrut	First Age	Sister-cities of Ithagar; drowned lenses, storm-gates, sky-towers.
Tarn-Ygol & Kaelor's Reach	Second Age	Cities of blackened glass built by the Undying Remnants.
Grashaal Pass	First Age	Mountain passes littered with rusted First Men clockwork spires.
Ul-Vask Caverns & Great Hollow	Primordial Era	Petrified bone caverns; Troll Deepmeet & Whispering Cavern.
Ember Vaults	First Age / Dwarf	Longfire magma-forges observing the Covenant of Flame.
Skerries of Unmaking	Boundary Edge	Archipelago dissolving into fog, void, and Non-Being.

Location	Era / Origin	Description / Significance
Kareth & Morvane	Second / Third Age	Imperial city-states built over dying World Engines.
Ilthyr & Eloruin	Fae Enclaves	Deep forest and sea-cliff refuges of the Elves and Fae.
Halvor's Rest & Durnhollow	Third Age	Modern mortal settlements of the Second Race of Man.

V. BOUNDARY NAME GENERATOR

FIRST MEN NAMES & PREHUMAN ANCIENTS

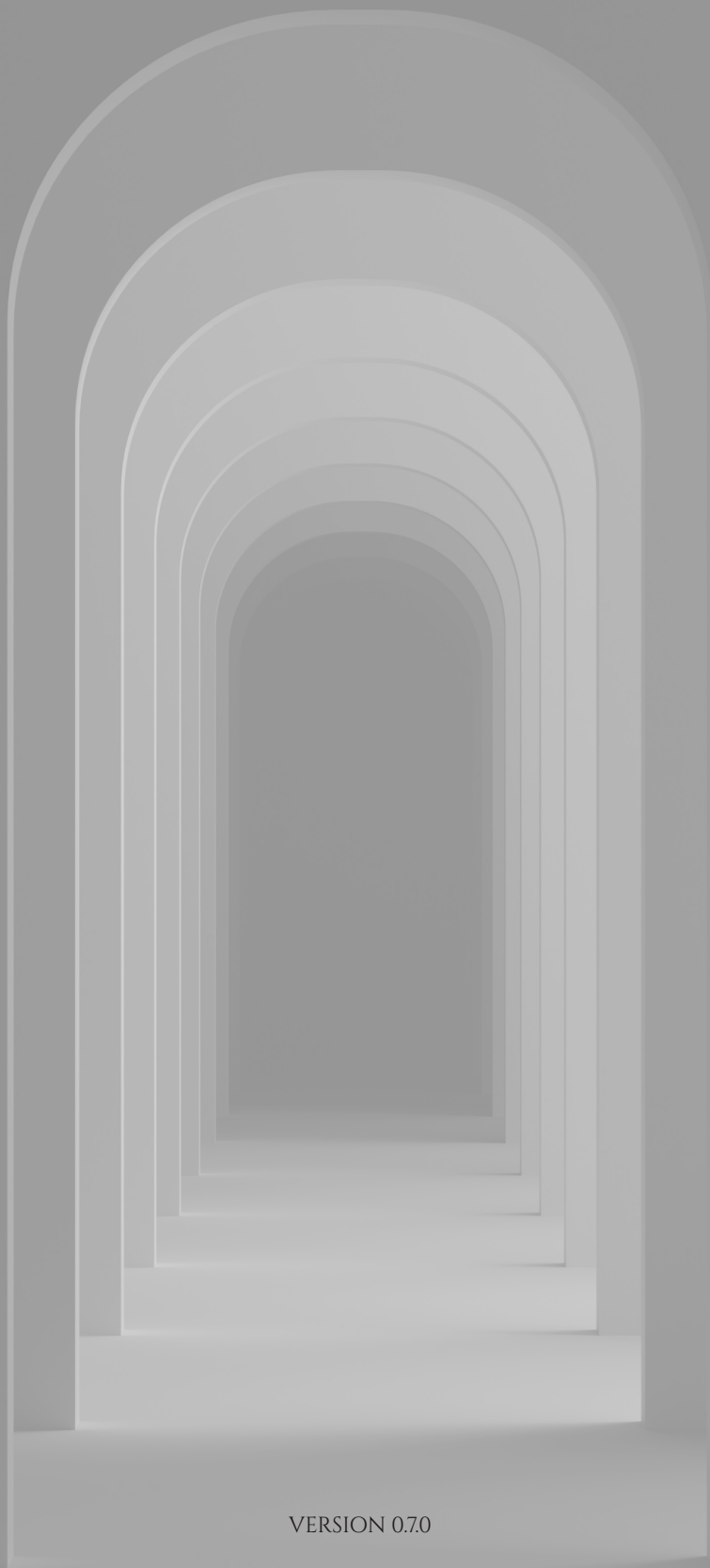
Arsemnar, Veythros, Ithryn, Veloriel, Shol-Mhuris, Ithagar, Athal-Korr.

SECRET SOCIETIES & FACTIONS

Ashen Archive, Lantern Society, Veilkeepers, Pale Concord, Courts of Moss and Stone.

PROVINCES & REGIONS (LOCATIONS)

Veyrith, Natharae, Orûn, Kareth, Morvane, Dros-Aelyn, Ilthyr, Eloruin, Grashaal, Ul-Vask, Nhemra, Ul-Kharas, Veyrut, Skerries.



VERSION 0.7.0