

FEEDING A CITY

Feeding Pulse's growing population was no easy task, especially when attacked by a horde of undead. To address this, the Iron Ring utilized the ancient method that was rediscovered shortly after the Reckoning: hydroponics. Locally found plants and animals were used for this process.

The first of which is a colony of crustacean extremophiles, called **shardleaf**, which feeds on toxins from the water, and condenses anything unusable into its rock-like "stems." The residual water gained through this process is stored in polyps of organic glass called **shards**. Unfortunately, none of this water is potable but is generally considered safe for growing.

Pulse also uses a locally found tuber called tenderoot. Each part of this hearty plant is edible; the starchy roots, the pliable and nutritious leaves, and the mildly sweet fruit. The tenderoot also purifies the water even further to allow for a variety of herbs and spices to be grown.

Every citizen of Pulse is allotted a daily ration based on their rank and job requirements. Any surplus is rotated into the city's emergency stockpiles and anything rotated out is left in Downtrod for any takers.

THE CITY AT A GLANCE

Pulse has its share of trouble, but it is, above all other things, a place of order. Where the original Iron Ring gave it purpose, function, and focus, the posthumously titled "**Iron King**" Brecht gave it shape and propriety. The impact of these endeavors is still plainly visible today in the clean-cut organization of Pulse's districts. This order is an absolute necessity in Feneryss's largest and most populous city.

THE AXIS

The ever-growing towers of Pulse are by far its most noticeable features, with each point striking the sky like pillars of the firmament. Here at the center of the city is Pulse's military nerve center containing training arenas, lecture halls, offices, and armories. Each tower is home to the administration for one of the city's key elements. Starting with the northeast tower, and rotating clockwise, they are: the navy, martial forces, the special forces, the Great Forge, and Quarterlock. The central tower houses the city's ruling members and administration, including the **Governor of the Axis**. The current Iron Ring in order is: **Iron Lord Hearst Rocshtaal**, **Lord of Navy Ulder Ving**, **Lordess of Armies Aafia Um-khal**, **Savinic Lord Garrulous-in-Solitude**, **Lady of the Forge Denna Lohrne**, and **Iron Warden Ghyst**.

Governor Ludis is directly responsible for the upkeep of the Axis and its crown jewel, the **Field of War**. Here, officers pit their wits against one another and soldiers vie for prestigious medals and titles. A team of superb arkänists apply their trade to alter the landscape and simulate weather. If the rumors are to be believed, they are strong enough in their magic to simulate volcanic eruptions and even the Reckoning itself, albeit on a much smaller scale. Every battle is meticulously recorded in the **War Arc** by a scribe referred to as the **Fieldsman**.

FLORA LABS

Most of Pulse's food is produced within the wall that connects the Axis towers. Efforts there are split in three directions: water purification, agriculture, and research. Here, arkänists of all schools work alongside botanists and engineers to develop more effective ways to feed the city. For health reasons, the water purification section is completely segregated from the rest of the facility. Greywater and wastewater are processed and treated to allow for safe use with irrigation and hydroponics. Once the processed water has gone through the agriculture section, it returns for sterilization and public distribution.

In the agriculture hub, thousands of acres of hydroponics labs are cultivated day and night to provide a steady supply of sustenance for Pulse's citizens.

Finally, the research section of the Labs is second only to the city's food stores in terms of security. Top researchers strive endlessly to refine their methods and breed heartier strains.

THE GREAT FORGE

It is here that the might of Pulse's military is built: airships, tanks, and weapons all pour from here like the molten metal from which they were shaped. The Great Forge is both literally and figuratively the city's foundation. The city's underground arrangement is an approximate reflection of the surface. Airship construction is relegated to the northwestern sector, military armaments to the northeast, and so forth. Within each sector, however, little rhyme or reason exists. New businesses and factories spring up wherever vacant space can be found, even if it means getting in the way of others. Crime is commonplace and everyone, even government officials, are guilty of illegal conduct.

The most notorious of these illegal activities are the **death pits**, which are host to bloody battle royales between slaves, indentured workers, soldiers, and free citizens. In these gory brawls, men and women alike tear each other apart, often literally, for a ruthless crowd. Defeat brings only death, but survival earns participants infamy as victors and the opportunity to bet on and spectate future bouts.

While many of these crimes are truly random, one individual resides in the margins of every illegal exchange; an information broker known only as **Lysanius**. This mysterious figure has built a well-funded crime empire on the stockpile of secrets that he has collected over his lifetime. This fact is also what has kept him outside of a prison cell; many important figures in Pulse fear what blackmail might land on their doorstep should he be incarcerated.

Opposite the crime and chaos is **Lady of the Forge Denna Lohrne**, whose primary directive is to guarantee order and stability of the government manufactories. She accomplishes this task handily and enforces order in the rest of the district with reckless disregard.

Her former military rank being of small acclaim, she rose to prominence by striking a deal with the Iron Lords of Pulse. Little is known about the deal that was made, but upon taking command of the Forge, she immediately descended into the death pits. She is said to have fought with an animalistic ferocity, and over the course of the fight she collapsed a man's chest cavity, disemboweled another fighter with her bare hands, and ripped out the throat of a third victim with her teeth. Denna staggered from the pits short one eye and long in fresh scars. People still speak of it, and it has become something of a legend within the city. Enforcing her law are a cadre of fighters from the pit that follow her onto the battlefield during times of war.

The history and culture of the Great Forge stands as a stark contrast to the meticulous nature of the rest of the city, but it is this chaotic churning that drives the city and citizens of Pulse, much as friction of shifting plates creating molten rock.

QUARTERLOCK

Home to the remainder of Pulse's population, **Quarterlock** is split up into five sections in accordance with the five towers. Visitors to Pulse are cautioned not to enter Quarterlock without a guide, especially the southern sector, home to the common man. Wandering aimlessly through the twisting boulevards and erratic alleyways is dangerous.

Citizens of all kinds, from the wealthy and powerful on the upper crust, to the lowly and forgotten, call this home. It stands as a microcosm of the greater city, complete with business lanes, micro-government, and militia. While there are a number of players, power is divided primarily between the Pathfinders and the Vortem.

The **Pathfinders** are the police division of the Pulse military. Its majority are locals that seek to wrest the district from the grasp of criminal enterprises, cults, and warlords. Under the guidance of their commanding officer, **Pes Grimtrod**, they have been largely successful in this goal, with one principal exception: the Vortem.

The **Vortem** is a conglomeration of thieves, assassins, spies, and smugglers who work together to hoard secrets of both the past and present of Feneryss. They lease their services to customers with ample funds or valuable knowledge while simultaneously infiltrating their clients' lives. Many of these infiltration agents have procured the Vortem unfettered



access to numerous areas that would have otherwise been restricted. Their influence is vast and they are well supplied, which is the primary reason they have not yet been eradicated by the Pathfinders.

Quarterlock, however, is not purely a haven for warring entities. Every Leid, the district enjoys a great peace. It is a time of rest and celebration fixated on an event called **Traitor's Run**. A handful of Downtrod hopefuls compete in this deadly race from one end of the district to the other, concluding at Pulse's sky port, **the Nest**. The first three to complete Traitor's Run earn a space in Quarterlock.

On the northwestern side of Pulse, hundreds of public and private hangars line the **Nest** alongside inns and pubs. It is the busiest port in Feneryss, importing and exporting goods and services day and night. Locals and foreigners can find comfort in glimpses of the Pulse armada berthed here as well.

DOWNTROD

Immigrants came to Pulse in droves, and its birthrates boomed in the early years of the Iron Ring. Soon, the population had outgrown the city wall. Faced with the chaos and societal collapse that often comes with overpopulation, the Iron Lords of Pulse forged a new mandate that allowed the city guard to remove known criminals, truants, and deviants from the city.

Many of these exiles settled just outside of the city's walls. There, they scavenged city scraps and made paltry trade with merchants traveling to and from the city. These slums grew to such an extent that the area is almost a city unto itself. Being a city of discarded people, it was not long before it became known as **Downtrod**.

This area, which surrounds Pulse on all sides, is nestled in **the Crush**. Here, the perpetual expansion of the wall does as its name suggests, crushing homes and lives with equal indifference.

The military protects travelers on the city roads, but the **Peacekeepers**, Pulse's constabulary regiment, rarely wander into the trash heaps most residents call home. Many Downtrodden form small militias to protect their livelihoods in the absence of the slum wardens. Kingpins and local gang leaders carve out their minuscule spheres of influence and impose their will on the unlucky souls trapped within. The majority of the Downtrodden owe their relative safety to the Vampire coven, Stillyr. A good number also work for them in seedy gambling dens and bawdyhouses.

One establishment of particular interest is the Grey Shade Tavern, which attracts customers from all over the slums and city proper. Many come to revel in the showmanship of the Tavern's barkeep, **Jordan Flunn**, and experience an inclusive atmosphere that is rare for Downtrod and taverns alike. All are equal here, provided the tab is paid, and it is a common stop for explorers and would-be adventurers.

TRAITOR'S RUN

While Downtrod has seen improvement since the Pes Grimtrod's appointment, he is still limited in his power, and desperation is still the default state for most living outside the wall. Competition in the Run remains fierce and lethal, with most competitors concealing various implements ranging from boot daggers or caltrops to smoke bombs or flash bangs to hamstring their opponents, often literally.



CITY LIFE

INSIDE THE WALLS

The average Pulse citizen wakes up bright and early with the morning drill sirens, or **Reveille**. They open their businesses precisely one hour later. Poorer children go to work or report for duty with their local junior military. Wealthy youth report for their cadet classes at one of the spires or attend tutoring to develop any unique skills. After serving their two years of mandatory military service from sixteen to eighteen, they are free to remain or pursue a productive field of work. Art, music, and literature are performed solely in one's spare time. Social and political mobility are smoothest with a prudent military career, but any contribution that serves the city-state is a plausible tool for advancement.

Most citizens are endowed with a fierce patriotism and local pride. Sharing the same childhood street in Quarterlock is usually enough to seal a business partnership, and military units are organized according to residential districts to foster camaraderie and friendly rivalry. Race, unfortunately, is a very divisive issue in Pulse. Despite making up roughly forty percent of the citizenry, non-Humans have a difficult time establishing themselves without a sterling military record. Even then, many are dismissed out of hand merely for their race. Younger generations are gradually fighting this issue, but it is slow going.

OUTSIDE THE WALLS

In Downtrod, and especially in the Crush, living each day is an arduous task. They rise with Reveille the same as their secure counterparts. Unlike their counterparts, they must maneuver between the literal and figurative traps and obstacles of the slums. Tripwires, jagged refuse, brothels, and gambling dens all glint and glower from soot-smearred facades. Children earn their education in the streets and alleys, or from their parents and

neighbors. Skilled laborers are rare as anyone with a tradeable craft can earn themselves a spot on the inside of the city. Residents of the Crush spend their day seeking or constructing a new home, hopefully farther from the wall than the last abode. The gangs flex and flaunt, but are inevitably cowed by Stillyr Vampires: the true source of power in Downtrod.

Tensions are still high between local and civil entities, but Warden Ghyst's appointment has drastically changed the situation. Some call him the father of Downtrod. Upon shouldering the mantle of Iron Warden, he took to the streets, forgoing his personal guard in order to learn about the lives of the destitute masses that huddle around Pulse's outer wall. He admires their grit in enduring the annual Undead Tide and the relentless Crush, and seeks to improve their lives. The Peacekeepers now collect a voluntary tithe, which purchases used weapons and humanitarian aid from the interior. Critics point out that many of his measures, meant in earnest, simply fuel the constant struggles among the impoverished.

COVEN ACTIVITY

The local Vampire coven, **Stillyr**, is largely contained within the confines of Downtrod, although it labors incessantly to establish holdings in Quarterlock. **Anatoly**, their leader, possesses a wizened demeanor and takes the wellbeing of his members quite personally. His clandestine sibling, **Bogdan**, is little more than a rumor to most citizens, including Stillyr members. Time has made him something of a "boogeyman," with all manner of dastardly deeds attributed to his name. The one constant in his legend states that he handpicks elite members from the coven to become assassins and enforcers. The coven's primary claim to fame is a string of bawdyhouses throughout Downtrod that cater to the carnal desires of its residents. These fiscal successes are overshadowed by the

coven's ugliest secret: a debt owed to the Lanisian coven, Skryst. The rumor mill also hints at a possible working relationship between Stillyr and the infamous information broker, **Vsevolod**. He supposedly feeds the coven information about their creditors to help them "settle" the debt, but it is unclear what his motive is.

LOCAL ECONOMY

Pulse was the first of the major cities to fully integrate Notes into its economy and the first to fully convert. Within one year of the Cistern Accords, the city had completely phased out the old **salt stamps** that had been prevalent for so many years. In addition, Pulse also instituted Forge Hours, which became the primary currency for large-scale manufacturing on Feneryss.

THE VORTEM

The Vortem are a widespread order of thieves, assassins, and smugglers that populate all echelons of society. While originally founded in the Quarterlock district of Pulse, their greatest numbers thrive in the Spindle of Neroth. There is no central leadership controlling the actions of the Vortem as a whole. Instead there is only a web of power brokers, each manipulating information via vast networks of contacts. Every interaction is a transaction, although the currency varies from cold hard Notes to less quantifiable services and favors. For many Feneryans, however, the Vortem are little more than folklore made up to scare children and explain the ugliness of the world.

In the earliest days of civilization's revival, a great number of the most impactful figures of history went unnamed and unnoticed. They were primarily tools of the upstart politicians and headstrong military officials, acquiring secrets and blackmail material to further the goals of faces in the spotlight. Civilization grew, populations boomed, and the power of spies, assassins, and thieves blossomed. Having attained status sufficient enough for independence, many severed all ties to their unwitting puppet masters and vanished as easily as they had appeared.

They forged an independent organization and honed themselves into a keen and invisible edge capable of striking anywhere whenever they desired. Their recruitment was by invitation only, and incredibly exclusive. This flourishing organization, calling itself the Vortem, quickly found itself on even footing with its erstwhile employers, and it began to manipulate the influential and wealthy members of Feneryss to its own aims. Much to the chagrin of those who believed themselves in control, the Vortem very nearly ruled and united all of the city-states, but arrogance and complacency unraveled their well-woven plans. The powers of Feneryss retaliated, bringing the Vortem to the brink of extinction. Yet again, they slunk into the dark to lick wounds and recoup.

CITIZEN SOLDIERS

In the early days of Pulse, the Iron Ring established the **Institutes of Combat and Tactical Study**. There, students were trained in martial and ballistic mastery, with the top pupils being enrolled in the **Combat Tactics Academy**. In recent years, however, a new training school was established to explore the benefits of Arkāna use in a military setting. Upon graduation, new members of the military are split into soldiers, sailors, and mages. Within the larger military organizations, there are three specialized units that work with little to no oversight: the **Savinical Method**, **Intervention**, and **Towerfall**.

No military would be complete without an intelligence community to give it actionable information. This community relies heavily on its web of spies, called the Savinical Method or **SavMet**. When new recruits are screened, any psychic or eidetic manifestations are selected for additional training in covert operations. Throughout their training, they are taught to be experts in the art of social engineering and disguise. They are also subjected to interrogations that border on torture. Roughly two-thirds of the recruits do not make it through this rigorous process. Some perish while others break under the pressure. The ones who make it through are hardened machines of deceit capable of becoming a doppelganger of anyone, even those outside of their race.

Before any large-scale military movements, Pulse utilizes a small legion of assassins, called Intervention, to destabilize enemy armies or political structures. In order to be selected for this faction, recruits must be free of mutation and of lean build. Though unproven, a lack of mutation is believed to be an indicator of genetic stability. Initiates then undergo a number of procedures to unlock traits useful to stealth and infiltration. While they generally lack the same savvy that the Savinical Method possesses, they make up for it in lethality.

If a situation arises where a high-value target needs to be extracted or exterminated, Pulse calls upon Towerfall. They are also often used as an instrument to infiltrate SavMet and Intervention agents deep in hostile territory. Each member undergoes a military funeral prior to their training, which includes survival training and numerous exfiltration drills.

PERSONS OF INTEREST

"18-SHOTS" O'BLACKSKULL



"18-Shots" as he prefers to be called, hails from a powerful and elusive Wretched clan known as Blackskull, with a reputation as exterminators. The clan is unique to the Wretched in that it has an established and rather altruistic goal: to prevent Feneryss from falling deeper into chaos and destruction. This has led them to hunt down various threatening beasts, demons, and cults across the continent. Their name comes from their rite of passage, an emblematic skull tattoo that covers the faces of both the men and women of the clan.

From a young age, children born into Blackskull are trained to use firearms in combination with martial arts. 18-Shots was no different. In fact, he took to the training so well that he went on his first hunt at the age of ten. It was not long before he got his first kill. At the age of twelve he took down a small, but murderous death cult in the slums of Pulse using his great grandfather's revolver-shotgun.

At sixteen he accompanied his parents on a hunt, searching for an unknown creature that was hunting people indiscriminately and leaving no corpses behind. When they managed to track the beast, they bore witness to horror in its purest form. It was not a single creature, but an amalgamation of dozens of living corpses. The fight that ensued was short and brutal. His father was knocked off his feet and promptly crushed; his mother was thrown into a wall and rendered unconscious. 18-Shots narrowly escaped with his own life, suffering from several broken ribs and a collapsed lung. He circled back to the area in the shadows only to witness the creature disassemble his now conscious mother and incorporate her body into itself. To this day, he is still haunted by her screams of terror and agony.

In the years since he has lost touch with the rest of the clan, spending most of his time trying to track down his parents' killer. He has had little luck thus far, but knows it is only a matter of time. Whenever a murderous creature rears its ugly head, 18-Shots is right behind it to prevent others from suffering the same trauma that he did, and hopefully avenge his parents.

ACE MAJOHRA IBAHRI

Ace Ibahri is one of the few national celebrities in Pulse. She is best known for taking down three squadrons of pirate strikecraft and then crippling their galleon over the Ashlands. The promotion of her triumphs

has led to unprecedented numbers of female flight recruits. She can often be seen at dedications and commencement events for the Pulse navy. While her public persona is that of a brash and overconfident pilot, she is actually quiet and introspective. It's not well known, but she is displeased with her mascot status, and craves a return to her former strike team.

IRON LORD HEARST ROCSTAAL

Head of the Iron Lords of Pulse, Hearst Rocštaal is an unrelenting man whose loyalty is rivaled only by his utter brutality. He was born in Pulse's death pits, emerging from a pile of corpses, still attached to his mother. Being an Alypse, he would never ascend past the edge of the ring, but some believed raising a child to fight from birth could prove profitable. He was bathed in violence from the time he could stand and took his first kill in the ring at the age of six. He enjoyed a successful career as a child and would have gone on to be a grand champion, but he had higher ambitions. Even as a child, he believed that the city birthed him for a greater purpose than fulfilling the wanton needs of the masses. Hearst mastered his flesh mask unaided, then staged his death in the arena.

He was careful to plan the event with precision. He grappled with another child fighter, and the two careened into the pile of corpses that had accumulated in the center of the ring. He promptly killed the child, assumed his appearance, and emerged as the victor. He took the name Hearst Rocštaal and continued fighting until he was marked by the military for recruitment. Once uplifted from the corpse-laden wound that birthed him, he flew through the ranks of Pulse's military. Twenty-five years after his departure from the pits, Hearst Rocštaal was named Iron Lord. He is the most charismatic of the bunch and often takes opportunities to address the city. His rhetoric often alludes to the city as his mother and the public his siblings.

JORDAN FLUNN

Owner and barkeep of the Grey Shade tavern, Jordan has a strong hand, but a soft heart when it comes to newcomers in his tavern. He always has an ear for the city and can get just about any information, given enough time. His bartending skills are legendary, and he is known for the way he can serve several drinks at once, which can be attributed to his two extra arms.

JUN PAK

Born to a highly regarded forgehouse in Lanis, **Jun Pak** was nothing short of a prodigy, mastering his family's classical weapon designs by the age of fourteen. As a young man, he was prone to creative flights of fancy that culminated in unorthodox weapon designs that put him at odds with some of the elders in his family.

His father, however, valued Jun's talent and encouraged him to pursue the unconventional. Despite that, he remained critical, often asking Jun to offer up practical justification for his designs. As the years passed, Jun perfected his designs, offering up weapons that were nuanced fusions of the traditional and bizarre, earning him a reputation separate from his family. Though he had this small measure of fame, Jun was bored with the traditions of the forgehouses of Lanis and eventually left home seeking to learn about the traditional weapons of other cultures and cities. In his travels, he witnessed the suffering and death that looms over everything outside the city walls and subsequently found a new purpose. He later settled in Pulse, eventually establishing his own smith in Quarterlock that specialized in manufacturing inexpensive, durable weapons and tools to help the average person make their way through life on Feneryss.

This goal has become something of a private religion, and he often frequents the small settlements that dot the wasteland in order to help train and learn from local craftsmen. Despite the humble nature of his goals, he markets his creations heavily and has a number of trusted followers scouring Feneryss for new materials and potential apprentices.

Contrary to his perceived nobility, Jun cares little for who actually acquires his weapons, only that they use said weapons correctly and precisely. A thief once attempted to rob him with one of his own blades

while holding the weapon incorrectly. Enraged, Jun disarmed the thief and cut off both of his hands. True or not, Jun Pak tells of the encounter to all prospective customers in hopes that they do not suffer the same fate.

L.I.C.A.

L.I.C.A. is the owner of **Licurio**. She insists it is a small curio shop in Pulse's southern Quarterlock district, but nothing on its shelves is for sale. Instead, she finds lost items and cares for them until the owners come to reclaim them. Her shop is filled to the brim with trinkets, toys, knickknacks, and tokens. Some of the items are useless, such as worn work boots, while others, like her collection of polished gemstones, are priceless. Patrons are free to rifle through the towering piles in attempts to find their lost item, but it is far simpler to ask her for directions. L.I.C.A. can perfectly recall the location of any item in her shop.

While L.I.C.A.'s shop might seem like a treasure trove for thieves, she has an uncanny knack for discerning the true owner of an object. Whether this is due to incredible perception or more mystical means is unclear. She guards the lost items aggressively and has only been fooled on two occasions. The perpetrators have not been seen since.

Unlike some Drones, L.I.C.A. has embraced the culture of humanity. She bears a humanoid face and wears a powder blue dress with white lace trim and a blonde wig tied in pigtails with matching bows at the ends. She carries a steel teddy bear and steel parasol around with her everywhere, which double as "physical deterrents" should the need arise. L.I.C.A. is not much for small talk and is utterly ignorant of current events and trends. Whenever asked about her own origins, she always diverts the topic with, "What have you lost?"

LYSANIUS

Lysanius is one of the most prolific businessmen and information brokers in Pulse. His early life was unforgiving, leaving him cold and merciless, but he managed to climb out of Downtrod, bloody knuckles and all when he won Traitor's Run. The way most people tell it, he chased down the leader mere yards from the finish line, snapped her neck, and nonchalantly strolled out of Quarterlock a naturalized citizen.

Rumors of his early years in the city vary, but the majority revolve around him taking up jobs as a barkeeper and chef, where he collected secrets from loose lips wet with alcohol. Each small secret was a deposit to his growing hoard. As the decades passed he ascended from a lowly barkeep, trading in tavern gossip, to a feared lord of shadow, trading in state secrets and other illicit markets. Drugs, people, weapons; all are a means to gain information.

He lacks any sufficient moral structure, and his associates are only measured by their potential benefit; such as several military officials that he dominates with blackmail. Lysanius is not without his own skeletons. The rise to his current station was not built brick by brick, but instead on a pile of corpses, many of which were former business partners. The sanctity of these secrets is purportedly the reason why he deals regularly with **Vsevolod**, a Vampire under the Stillyr Coven's protection.

VSEVOLOD

Vsevolod is a successful information broker that established herself by stealing details about Lysanius. In spite of the danger it poses, she currently maintains residence in Pulse and has largely evaded Lysanius' pursuit by taking advantage of the local Vampire coven, Stillyr.

She maintains financial solvency through a network of informants and couriers that are exclusively Vampire. These agents can be found in every coven on Feneryss and because of the secretive nature of Vampire culture, the information she trades and collects remains largely anonymous to outsiders.

LANIS

THE SHINING CITY



HISTORY

This city towers over the southern cliffs of Duel Lake and serves as a bastion of science, archaeology, and arkāna, but it was not always so. The Great Library's halls of alabaster, adorned with inlays of gold and black granite, were once the unformed faces of the **Aleppa Mountains**. This great repository of knowledge was initially constructed to carry on their tale after their inevitable doom.

As the Reckoning transpired around them, many Old Worlders sought to preserve their history from obliteration by taking to the skies in ancient spacefaring vessels. Their hopes were crushed when arkāna flooded the world of Feneryss.

Most of these would-be survivors were killed as their vessels came crashing down, but luck continued to smile upon a select few. These few hundred men and women, who would come to be called "**The Founders**," rallied together inside the corpses of their fallen saviors and established a plan to build a memorial to humanity. Convinced of their own eventual demise, they would use what time remained to construct a monument that would endure for all time.

One of the greatest turns of luck was the crash site. Their vessel carved away part of the mountain's face, revealing a vast array of useful minerals. Fuel sources were systematically detonated in order to unlock the material wealth trapped within the stone: limestone, granite, iron, and alabaster, to name a few. This process reduced the mountain range to a fraction of its former size. In its place, the people constructed a monolith of pure white stone that glimmered in the orange glow of the cloud-covered skies.

However, this was not the full extent of their mission. Craftsmen worked to recreate great pieces of history and art; laborers and scientists

worked to recover lost pieces of history from the wreckage of their vessel and the world around them; countless souls worked tirelessly to catalog everything; others were put to the task of feeding all the rest, that they might survive long enough to achieve their ambition.

Not everyone found this a fitting endeavor. One particularly outspoken woman was **Arvha Jana** and was, as fate would have it, the sole surviving botanist among the original survivors. For her constant agitation, she was ousted from the vessel that served as the primary shelter, and many of her sympathizers departed at her side. She derided her colleagues in her farewell, saying, "I will not live out my days garnishing my headstone." Those words resounded through history, and continue to serve as a popular idiom in Lanis. "Not my headstone," is used to dismiss a task that is considered either pointless or beneath one's station.

Jana turned her eyes to the desecrated soil just beyond the safety of Lanis. Her renegades, those sympathizers that accompanied her in exile, learned to muster life from the unyielding land. They established the current means by which Lanis fertilizes its pastures and vineyards. For her lasting contributions to the continuity of Lanis, Jana was exonerated in 62 PR, thirteen years after her death.

Thanks to her efforts and the passage of time, the notion of an impending extinction event vanished in a mere two generations. They had been working to build a monument to humanity, but realized there is no greater testament to mankind than the next generation. So, the city turned toward the future with the revitalized hope only youth can instill.

Hope produced demagogues, each touting their solution to the issue of governance. It began as simple disagreements over political structure but gradually devolved into a cutthroat power struggle when none could

see eye-to-eye. This constant debate led to a revolving door of political structures in the city-state as various entities acquired power. From 70 PR to approximately 1900 PR, Lanis cycled through so many organizational structures that it was impossible to accurately document each one. It was an era of subterfuge and doublespeak; secret arrangements, betrayals, and the knowledge of such things becoming the dominant currency. These dealings became so pervasive that the city nearly plunged into civil war.

Fortunately for Lanis and its vast wealth of data, the city did not succumb to flame and bloodshed. When one of their dirigibles happened upon a small boat on what is now known as Duel Lake, the politicians seized the opportunity to consolidate power by aiming the fear of the people at this foreign threat, ultimately leading to the War of Duel Lake.

The colossal failure of the war forced a paradigm shift in the city. It didn't eliminate all the subterfuge or intrigue, but it did establish order. In 1924 PR, Lanis ushered in the guilds, codified their rules, and inaugurated the position of **Consulate Prime**. Everyone earned a say where it mattered most: their dynasty's business. Lanis entered a period of rehabilitation, during which it actively worked to expand its continental trade influence.

With the sudden onset of Tae'k's Crusade in 2686 PR, Lanisian leadership was horrified to discover that their arkänists were wholly unprepared to respond should the Crusade reach their doorstep. In response, the Consulate Prime ordered the construction of a new wing to the Great Library, the Logerra, and established the **Mage Legion**, a guild comprised entirely of combat-trained arkänists. Within this wing's tightly secured hallways and private libraries, the mages collaborated on an arkäne defense for the city. The Crusade never assailed Lanis directly, but many citizens flocked to Tae'k's banner.

In the absence of the great battle they had anticipated, the Mage Legion didn't truly gain recognition until after **Letch Malign** (known more widely as the Corpsefather) discovered the secrets of stitching, circa 2718 PR. He was offered a place to continue his studies. In exchange, Letch would train other arkänists to be necromancers. The Malign Dynasty continues to enjoy a plush lifestyle thanks to his efforts, and to this day Lanis maintains a reputation as the home of the world's greatest arkänists.

THE DYNASTIES OF LANIS

Dynasties are part family history and part tradecraft reputation. They are divided into several **guilds**, such as forgehouses, artisans, and legions. A prestigious forgehouse is more likely to provide a set of armor, or even offer discounts, to a renowned legion. A legion likewise will desire to contract a forgehouse with a colorful legend. **Legends** are the written histories of a dynasty that boast their many successes. While a forgehouse legend might describe many great weapons that have slain mighty beasts, an artisan legend may recount a dynasty's masterpiece sculptures or portraits. A Lanisian's dynasty and legend define their socioeconomic status. With greater renown come greater opportunities to further one's dynasty and legend. It is therefore incredibly difficult for members of less reputable dynasties to advance, but skill and time are the only true requirements. It is also incredibly difficult for one to cross-train into another field of work, or to establish themselves in multiple fields. This stems from the cultural prejudice against "muddying the waters." It is considered a waste of talent or focus if one does not devote their efforts wholly to a single endeavor.

THE CITY AT A GLANCE

Despite the city's unified beginnings, it is now carved up into sections that fan out from a single point, the **Great Library**. These sections are organized by function, and administration of each is determined by dynastic politics.

STONESCROLL

Although this district is the smallest within the city, it is the definitive nerve center. The guilds for all the city's tradecrafts radiate from the core

of the city-state: the Great Library. The grand structure once meant to stand as humanity's gravemarker now houses the city's leadership and countless clerks. Those scribes, who make up the majority of the district's population, bustle around the corridors attending to a multitude of civil services that fall under one of three branches, the Populous Registrar, Summit, and Logerra.

The **House of Records** is a sprawling complex located in the lower levels of the Library. Its purpose is to document each historical object contained within the Library. Each record is an exhaustive dossier detailing everything from who found it and where, to whether it is part of a larger collection. At last count, the Great Library's stockpile exceeded 175 million objects, most of which are mere scraps of Old World.

The **Populous Registrar's** chief task is maintaining a record of dynasties and legends. They also issue citizen IDs, administer the annual census, and track visitors. This latter task is managed by satellite offices at city entrances. After logging their intent and an estimated length of stay, warrants and bulletins are checked for possible criminal activity. After clearing this, visitors are issued a visa. Visitors caught without these papers can expect detention or even deportation.

The **Summit** sits at the crown of the Library. Occupying the suites of the Summit are the Consulate Prime and the **Guildmasters**. Guildmasters are elected by a three-fifths majority of the dynasties within their guild. The Consulate Prime is then elected by a three-fifths majority of the Guildmasters and is traditionally also a Guildmaster. The other feature of the Summit is the **Hall of Erudition**. Occupying the entire top floor of the Library, is the Consulate Prime's office and personal library.

The Summit's location affords the leadership an ideal view of the city for logistical and military matters. It also makes maintaining record of administrative action much easier.

Lastly, the Mage Legion makes its home in the **Logerra**, which is a vast, ground-level wing devoted to arkäne study and practice. It is under strict security, which the mages manage themselves.

ARKÄNUS

After the completion of the Great Library, many of its craftsmen settled around it in an area that is sometimes called the Center Ring as it lies between Stonescroll and Threshacre. It serves as the industrial and military center of the city while also housing many of the seminaries dedicated to the study of Arkäna.

With a few exceptions, the most powerful dynasties reside nearest to Stonescroll, while the weakest reside on the outskirts near Threshacre. The Skryst also operate their "fang" district here, replete with brothels, casinos, drugs, and other parasitic ventures. This distribution of power is disrupted at the end of Arkänus, which is where the military institutions and airship docks are located.

THRESHACRE

Lanis was the first to reclaim the soil for produce with a series of graveyard plots. **Putrefacts**, small slug-like creatures that break down and spread carrion into thin sheets of rotting flesh, are used to fertilize the soil. This has allowed for a number of crops that thrive in acid-rich environments: crisp and spicy **soetriss bulbs**, crunchy **zhethau**, and starchy **izahbe root**, among others. It is now second only to the Alecian Plains in production. They are most famous for the gardens of **rhyberries**, **euclith tea leaves**, and **Arvhan ale**.

CITY LIFE

From an early age, the children of Lanis are sent to academies in Stonescroll to learn the history and importance of their parents' tradecrafts. Once they complete their education, they are placed as apprentices with rival families of their guild. Not only does this foster diversity of their craft, but also preserves peace between potential antagonists. On rare occasions, this practice unites two dynasties in marriage or friendship.

After five or ten years, they return home to contribute to their

legend, for better or worse. Their successes and failures will improve or decrease the family's standing, determine potential business and marital propositions, and political clout within their guild. This pressure is strongly felt throughout the culture. It has caused dynasties to disown family members, and it has led others to suicide.

While this unique skill-oriented culture is the reason Lanis stands as the best source of skilled labor, science, and knowledge, it also propagates inequity, typically in the forms of racism and classism. Furthermore, the system makes it quite easy for more powerful dynasties to quash upstart rivals, although it is still possible to rise through the ranks.

This is partially offset by the nature of the guilds. Each guild is devoted to a single tradecraft. Every dynasty is allowed to attend their guild's meetings and cast a single vote, when necessary. The greatest contributor to a dynasty's legend is given the final word in a dynasty's vote. This is a murky ruling that has made infighting common.

GUILDS

Dynasties are organized into guilds according to their family's craft. They are as follows:

- Artisans are poets, painters, sculptors, and other trades with emotive products.
- Calligraphers are scribe dynasties who define themselves by style of script, measure of writing, or written "voice."
- Forgehouses produce tools of war (weapons, armor, etc.)
- Homesteads run farms, mining sites, and other operations that produce raw materials (crops, ores, etc.)
- Legions are warrior families, typically sworn to either the Consulate Prime or a particular guild.
- Masons work with wood, stone, and other constructive materials to create structures and hardware (homes, tools, bridges, etc.)
- Savant-gardes (often shortened to savants) study and practice arkana or psy.
- Tradehouses import, export, buy, and sell every manner of good.

COVEN ACTIVITY

Skryst stands in counterpoint to the Dreyri Coven, wielding massive political clout, and burgeoning economic might. They hold the strings on a great number of powerful Lanisian dynasties, have a few guildmasters on their payrolls, and even reach as far as Pulse, where they play puppet master to the local Stillyr Coven. The nature of this relationship is mucked up in light of the fact that Skryst is split into two houses: **House Lightborn** and the **House of Ror**. Their disagreement stems from conflicting histories about the life of their idol: Anthasius. She was a Draculesti Ascendant, and revered as a goddess in her prime. Lightborn attests that she achieved power through fasting and refusing to devour the weak; House of Ror, contrarily, believes that her strength was derived from consuming anyone she desired.

The **Lightborn** are a group of Vampires driven to fight their base instincts and stand as paragons amongst vampire-kind. They run a few charities in Lanis as well as care for the sick and help fight political corruption within the city. These seekers of justice are "*born again into the Light*," as it were, in order to better serve the city and fight the debauchery of vampire culture. They use the covenant's political sway to improve living conditions. Not only do they firmly believe that they are the superior sect of the vampire race, but that anyone who allows themselves to be caught up in their base desires can't be the spawn of the First Lightborn and must be put to death. As such, they often hunt down and kill the weaker members of the House of Ror.

On the other hand the, **House of Ror** is a decadent congregation of self-proclaimed royalty. They and their followers participate in any and

all of their hedonistic debauchery with reckless abandon. Daily feasts, orgies, blood baths, and slave fights are only a few of the better-known activities. There's not a single concern among them for the state of the world; they wish only to honor their primitive beginnings through action. The more ambitious of the faction run the budding "fang" district within the city, which hosts low-end brothels, drug and gambling dens, and other unsavory functions.

A scant few rumors suggest the true leadership of this coven plays both parties against each other in order to keep the Lanisian vampire populace occupied. They say a select few rule with an iron fist and anyone who tries to bring this truth to light is immediately silenced. In addition to playing the factions against one another, this ruling **Shadow Council** is able to shunt any criminal investigations toward these puppets and remain far from the prying eyes of the public. They alone know the lies of **Meliny** and wield rumors to guide the conflict as they desire.

LOCAL ECONOMY

Reconnecting with Arva and her exiles was difficult for the rest of the Founders. Arva's people wanted compensation, and the Founders desperately needed the food. Ultimately, they agreed on a currency of polished stones, using the debris of their demolitions that was too small for use in construction. The Note system was met with ardent resistance from stonemasons who provided the currency materials. Notes are now the predominant currency, but many Lanisian businesses still accept the **stone currency**.

PERSONS OF INTEREST

THE CORPSEFATHER, LETCH MALIGN

Letch was born in 2688 PR, and brought his dynasty to prominence in the field of biology with his Axiom of Might: Life develops in response to its environment to produce successful cohabitants. Second, he hypothesized that consciousness, while a byproduct of physical development, could be synthesized with arkana. Despite this, he struggled for nearly a decade to actualize his theory. It was this theory that led him into arkane study, despite the derision of his colleagues.

Maddened by years of failure, he ultimately attempted to imitate the Aल्पse ritual sacrifice. He offered his blood to a lifeless cadaver laid out on his examination table. When Letch regained consciousness, he found himself on the very same table with his creation looming over him. As the first recorded necromancer to create a stitch, **Letch Malign** earned the title of Corpsefather.

Letch is one of the oldest living citizens in Lanis, though the term citizen is used loosely. He no longer lives as a single entity, but as a shared consciousness among a legion of stitches. The method of this transformation is unknown, though it remains the topic of much debate in philosophical and scientific circles. When he has spoken of his current state, he insists that he maintains his existence in order to thwart his former student, colloquially known as "The Last."

JOHAN DEVRIES

A man with a deathwish, **Johan DeVries** is one of the most notorious and sought-after bounty hunters in Feneryss. He has a penchant for extreme violence and has little sympathy for those that get between him and his quarry. This general disregard for others has led Johan to have one of the highest collateral damage counts of any bounty hunter on record. It is not uncommon for other bounty hunters to interfere with his pursuits in hopes of claiming the ever increasing bounty on his head. Many officers of the law give Johan a wide berth, and generally accept his presence as a sign of worse things lurking in their jurisdiction.

It is well known that when not on a job, Johan is a connoisseur of aged spirits and has been known to enjoy stimulants of various kinds while visiting some of his favorite Lansian bawdyhouses. His general recklessness is believed to be the result of trauma suffered in his past, though the few that know him well enough know not to ask.

LOKORAN

THE WELLSPRING



HISTORY

The journey from the southern city-states to Neroth is a long and treacherous path. During the month of Delebakk, when the Undead Tide is passing the Snapspine Mountains on its way south, the only path to the northern city is through the small outpost of Lokoran, founded in 2700 PR. At the foot of the mountains, there is a lone cave entrance dwarfing even the Great Library of Lanis. It is the mouth of the **Snapspine Caverns**, which are quite dangerous in their own right. Lokoran served as a rest stop before venturing further into the dark, winding chasms. For more than a century, Lokoran remained a small outpost whose population numbered no higher than several hundred due to lack of natural resources.

As with much of history, drastic change tends to fall into the hands of rebels and outcasts. In the case of Lokoran, the catalyst was a young man named **Urd Mald**. Orphaned as a newborn, Urd proved to be resourceful and adventurous at a young age on Lokoran's rock-hewn streets. When he was not lifting goods from market stalls, he would be planning excursions into the caverns, a pastime that continued into early adulthood. His knowledge of the caverns allowed him to turn a small profit offering his expertise to caravans seeking passage through to Neroth when sanctioned expeditions were not departing.

On one of his private ventures, in 2750 PR, Urd was underground for three weeks. He had run out of torches and resorted to using luminescent drakewurm blood to continue his journey. It was here in the dark depths that he made a discovery that would change the world forever. He sought out a small alcove to rest and noticed that the equipment he had set on the ground was damp with water, which, as far as Urd could tell, was not acidic in the slightest. Instead of resting, he explored further and

found himself up to his knees in cool water. Knowing full well what he discovered, he filled his canteens and returned to the surface.

On the trip back, Urd contemplated his options. He could sell it by the canteen and make a fortune; he could sell the information to one of the traders that he frequently worked with and make a much larger, more immediate fortune; or he could give the find to Lokoran. After several days of racking his brain, he decided that rather than face the danger and scrutiny of becoming a rich man overnight, it would be best to give the water to the people. He sought an audience with the **Warden of Lokoran, Ralm Kalev**, to present his find and offer suggestions on how to collect the water.

Ralm was a native son of Lanis and former Pulse military officer. After being stationed at the Lokoran outpost, he had found himself thrust into the position of Warden, staving off the city's financial collapse in the wake of his predecessor's stress-induced suicide. The things he had seen in his life and the people he dealt with on a daily basis made Ralm a tired and jaded man. His skepticism at young Urd's findings, however, were smothered by his hopes. Freshwater meant financial stability and growth for the outpost.

To ascertain the truth, Ralm commissioned a crew of explorers to join Urd on another expedition to determine the size of the water source, which returned with proof of an expansive aquifer whose actual size could not be determined. Ralm wasted no time in taking advantage of the news and a plan was formulated to get the water to the people. An ark-drive situated at one end draws water up to Charity Bluff. From there it plummets into the **Basin** before running off to the siphon pool. There, it drains back into the aquifer underground.



Then, Ralm drafted laws for the consumption, sale, and pollution of this blessed gift. Anyone caught in the act of pollution would be sentenced to death by drowning. Next, he wrote the **Act of Charity**, which founded an elected council who would serve the people of Lokoran and oversee their wellbeing. Ralm's last act, before resigning his position, was to repay Urd for his gift to the city. The **Vhiesstu** was established to explore and chart the Snapspine Caverns, with Urd as their leader.

Under these new laws, and with a source of untainted water, Lokoran was speedily upgraded from a small outpost to a booming and beautiful city in the span of a decade. It was this prosperity, which the people of the city attribute to the selfless acts of Urd and Ralm, that propelled Lokoran toward inevitable conflict. Ralm's heritage and previous position as Warden prompted two military behemoths to lumber forth to the city gates, each believing they had claim to the city and its water. Thus started the War of Fools in 2758 PR.

THE ACT OF CHARITY

Written by Warden Ralm Kalev, the Act took effect with his summary resignation. It founded a ruling council of five elected persons, known as **Coffers**. To enter into the election, prospective council members must bid on a seat through a charitable donation to the city. Any donations that would benefit the government, Cistern, or wealthy are required to have a proportional donation to the poorer districts. These bids are tracked in the **Alms Register**, regardless of whether or not they are fulfilled. After the bids are collected, all property owners are allowed three votes, and licensed caravans are allotted one vote. The nominees whose bids receive the most votes will sit on the council for five years.

Similarly, in order to construct or renovate any waterside facilities, charity must also be allocated to the outer city. The ultimate goal of the

Act is to ensure there are no "second-class citizens," like those in the Crush, which surrounds Pulse.

THE CITY AT A GLANCE

THE APERTURE

The southern entrance to Lokoran and the path to the Snapspine Caverns starts here. Hundreds of merchants pour through each of the Aperture's three heavily armored gates every day. The city guard also takes up residence here, watching all those who enter the city from the south.

BASIN

This boulevard marketplace runs from the Aperture to the Precipice, parallel to the water as it courses north from the waterfall to the siphon pool. Other marketplaces are but ash in one's mouth when compared this festive shopper's paradise. It is an ever-shifting tapestry of merchant stalls, pop-up eateries, and auction houses; anything the body needs or wants can be found somewhere along this strip.

Even the dead partake in the joviality. Fresh corpses are stripped of their valuables, cleaned, then painted and carried about the street on lush carpets in a practice called **Raising**. Once they reach the Precipice, they are dismembered and sold to necromancers. Although it persists as superstition, it is said that these parts gift a stitch with a sense of humor and lust for life. Contrary to popular belief, this path is the greatest source of Lokoran's wealth, even moreso than its water.

OVERLOOK

This lavish and colorful part of the city is the home of all citizens, except the Coffers. It's a sloping cliff that stands opposite Charity Bluff. The



largest estates enjoy gorgeous views of the waterfall and pools below. Differences between the lives of rich and poor are small thanks to the Act of Charity. This is most visible here, where no home falls to disrepair.

CHARITY BLUFF

Nestled on the highest cliffs of Lokoran, the city's elected officials, the Coffers, gaze out over the city and its endless cheer from their manses. In addition to the leadership, much of the city's wealth is stored here: water reserves, foodstores, and cold, hard Notes.

PRECIPICE

Looming on the edge of the Snapspine Cavern's dark abyss are a series of gatehouses that mirror that of the Aperture. This entry into the city is warded by the Vheisstu, a subset of Lokoran's city guard. They frequently send out detachments to explore the darkness of the caverns, ensuring safety for travelers, and accompanying caravans whenever necessary.

CISTERN

Below the city, beneath the canal, lies the source of its prosperity: pure water. An ark-drive pumps water up to Charity Bluff like an inverted waterfall. It then runs a few hundred yards before cascading into the Basin. Security surrounding the underground area is so tightly monitored that the exact safeguards are unknown by the general populace. Rumors suggest anyone who guards it is psychically forced to never give out the secrets. It is also the birthplace of the Florvana, and many still cling to it as their home.

CITY LIFE

Life in the Wellspring City is good. The Act of Charity ensures a high standard of living, even for the "poor." Everyone receives some level of institutional education, work opportunities are plentiful, and it is not hard for an ambitious person to launch a small business. With the constant flow of land and air traffic, mercantile and mercenary endeavors are always available. The Act of Charity also promises regular work for craftsmen, especially woodworkers and stonemasons. A typical day at work in Lokoran is the polar opposite of Pulse, with no clearly defined hours. Smaller shops often close for tea breaks and Raisings two or three times a day, for up to twenty minutes at a time. This relaxed atmosphere is deeply ingrained in the city's personality, but larger shops closer to the central boulevard of Stigia tend to be more reliable.

Come the month of Leid, however, the jubilation becomes muted as the city prepares to battle the Undead Tide. As it is the only defensible position between the horde and the Alecian Plains, Feneryss's breadbasket, other city-states regularly contribute forces to the defense of the city. They also organize forces to lead the horde southeast, into the Wastes of Galaam. Guardsmen are spread from the Aperture to the Untarnished Steppes to act as a dragnet for any undead that stray from the pack and venture toward the Plains. Around this time, the Florvana celebrate **Sporrin**. After the Undead Tide has passed, the entire city celebrates **Messanah**, mourning the dead with hourly Raisings and celebrating those who remain.

Lokoran boasts status as the most proportionally diverse city. Florvana have their greatest presence here, and the Dreyri Coven is possibly the largest group of Vampires in Feneryss. Even unmasked Aल्पse can find solace here, although the steady stream of travelers means discretion is still wise. Also noteworthy is the fact that at least one member of every race has held the position of Coffer at some point.

SPORRIN

Florvana celebrate Sporrin during the month of Leid, amidst the horrors of combating the Tide. Themes of birth, growth, and bounty permeate every element. Any Florvana that spawn during Leid also have the unique opportunity to pick their names during a public gathering. The latter half of the day is spent exchanging stories and interesting facts about Feneryss, especially Florvan adventures like the Tales of Lady Greenseed, or Simmerstalk the Salty Warrior.

COVEN ACTIVITY

With influence stretching from the Snapspine Mountains to the southern side of the Alecian Plains, as far east as the Aerilon, and westward to the footspires of the Glass Forest, the Dreyri Coven is unarguably the largest coven in all Feneryss. This is due to a few things particular to this coven. The coven is purely democratic in its running, meaning all adult members share in the responsibility of decision making and the consequences of their collective actions. They were the first coven to create and enforce illegal feeding (or cannibalism) laws, as well as the first to institute indentured feeding with the help of the Lokoran legislature.

Indentured feeding is a law in Lokoran that allows vampires to indenture members of the clean-blood races for a predetermined period of time to reconcile debts. These unfortunate souls are more frequently called **blood slaves**, or **pumps**, serving as personal blood sources for the entirety of their term. The coven often manipulates this ruling to provide for members via its many businesses. When injured or ill Lokoris arrive at a Dreyri-run hospital short on Notes or come begging for a loan, the coven will offer blood slavery terms or turn them away. They will then pass the desperate customer to a member in need.

The law comes with a slew of benefits. It ensures regular feeding, which keeps member Vampires consistently stronger than those of other covens. A guaranteed supply of clean blood is also an irresistible offer for most Vampires and keeps their numbers on a steady rise. The law, in combination with the coven's promise of capital punishment for cannibals, has virtually eliminated illegal feedings, which in turn keeps the non-Vampires quite happy.

Of course, not everyone views them in a positive light. Indentured feeding is seen by many as a crueler form of slavery that lacks proper oversight and leaves ample room for abuse of the debtor. It makes the Dreyri a powerful socio-political force, and many see them as a threat to Lokoran's otherwise well-balanced government. Still, the opinion of the overwhelming majority is that both the coven and its blood slavery are necessary evils. They keep the peace and grease the gears of a growing economy.

LOCAL ECONOMY

Lokoran stands apart from the rest of the world by serving as an exchange for many of the lesser currencies of Feneryss. While the Coffers deal primarily in Notes, they have also been known to deal in teeth and slaves from time to time. To establish an exchange rate, the proponents of the new currency must present it to the Coffers and attempt to buy an item from each member. If each member accepts the offer, the currency in question is recognized, and a bank is established in the Basin. The exchange rates for all currencies in Lokoran is reset on a monthly basis and is based on usage trends and the liquidity of each respective bank.

PERSONS OF INTEREST

ALISSA "LOCH" STEINLOCH

Alissa is the sole remaining heir to the Steinloch dynasty. She, like her forebears, is an adventurer of the highest caliber, often taking on nigh suicidal expeditions simply for the sake of adventure. Of course, treasure

is always involved. These trinkets serve to finance future expeditions, build the legacy, and stock their curio shop, The Old World. In their glory days, a franchise could be found in every major settlement; these days, The Old World can only be found in Lokoran, where the lone Steinloch currently resides. Alissa rarely wastes time with its administration, instead entrusting the shop to a small lib of Drones that have been close to the Steinlochs for generations.

The Steinloch matriarch is a mild agoraphobe, preferring the enclosed spaces of her estate or Old World catacombs to the expanse outside. For this reason, she has a predilection toward multilayered traveling clothes and never leaves home without her favorite hooded scarf. Buried beneath all those layers, however, is a lithe and athletic form, toned from nearly a decade of protracted travel and expeditions. Physically, Miss Steinloch is easiest described as conventionally attractive, with auburn hair tumbling past her shoulders and blue eyes that glow in dim light. Personally, she is a very competitive person, and prone to brisk swings from raucous joviality to smoldering brimstone. Her most distinguishing feature is a cybernetic arm with functionality similar to a bioreactor. It allows her to interface with a wide variety of technology; when pressed, she insists on a different explanation every time.

Her family's fall from the limelight all began when she was only seventeen years old. She, along with her father and siblings, were on an expedition to a location they had dubbed, the Blacksteel Vaults. They spent years carefully mapping its interior. During this time, word of their endeavors reached a rival relic hunter, one Dietrich Frost. Believing this location would likely be the greatest treasure trove of his life, set a plan in motion to steal the treasures out from under the Steinlochs and bring their legacy crashing down. His plan was even more effective than he had intended. Mr. Frost stole off with all of the Steinlochs's discoveries and left them for dead within the Blacksteel Vaults. Alissa and her father escaped, but only she survived the trip home.

Their survey of the Blacksteel Vaults lasted nearly eight years. In their absence, the Steinloch dynasty had lost all prestige, and their legacy had become dusty, forgotten ledgers. Their string of shops had all closed their doors save for the one in Lokoran. It was there Alissa recouped and plotted her revenge. Traveling Feneryss was inherently dangerous, so the final Steinloch was no stranger to violence, but she desired a far more sinister vengeance. She resumed activities as a relic hunter, but under the alias, "Loch." She informed no one of her return and continues to operate covertly from The Old World. Alissa funnels all her finances into Lokori mercantilism, undercutting Mr. Frost, buying out his various partners, and sowing discord in his businesses. Her plan to drag him into obscurity and financial ruin continues to this day.

GUNMETAL BAKLAI

Born amongst the powder and steel that became his namesake, Gunmetal was the youngest son born to a gunrunning empire that made its home in Lokoran. His great-grandmother established their family during the War of Fools by smuggling military grade equipment out of Pulse and across the Ashlands.

As a Shade with five older sisters, he was no heir. All that was expected of him was to learn a craft and marry into another blind to father children. Much to the disdain of his mother, Gunmetal took after his older sisters and bucked the traditions of his heritage. With each of his older sisters in Lanis exploring the mysteries of arkana, he chose to take up the family trade.

His mother would never to see eye to eye with him, and he was forced to work as her direct competitor until her death in 80 AE. At this point, he took control of his mother's business and the family name, henceforth known as **Gunmetal Baklai**. Today, Gunmetal is an outcast amongst his kind but has become a lauded and influential figure in Lokoran. Among the right circles, it is said that he can get his hands on nearly anything. If the price is right.

NEROTH

FREEDOM IN CHAOS



HISTORY

In 2571 PR, an indentured workforce was struggling on the Alecian Plains. While the conditions for the laborers were rarely indignant, vertical and lateral movement were nonexistent. Escape from the backbreaking labor was impossible. Among these farmers was **Alesia Rydriect**, and she was fed up with clawing through a strenuous life toward a miserable death. She sold her family's land to free her from their ancestral debts, then departed northward with nothing but hope and the clothes on her back. The journey was somehow more exhausting than her previous life, but freedom had become a wellspring of energy for her. With it, she was able to surmount every obstacle in her path.

Beyond the Snapspine Mountains, beyond the arid flatlands, she found the **Mortemwoods** and its behemoth inhabitants. She carved herself a home from one of the great trees and spent months studying the area. The value of the flora here soon dawned on her. Equipped with a new plan for her future, she turned back to the south.

Rydriect crossed the continent via a series of trader's carts to wind up in Pulse. After weeks of pitching her lumber expedition to a number of potential financiers, she was concerned that any partner from Pulse would hold greater loyalty to the Iron Ring than any contracts.

Undeterred, she set her sights on Lanis. Among the many potential partnerships to be had, Rydriect found two families. The first, **Norvet**, were moderately successful woodmasons; the second, **Advaeja**, was a legion of similar reputation. While each dynasty had garnered modest legends, both were interested in opportunities and glory beyond Lanis. It was a perfect match, each party filled with hopes of a prosperous future. And so it was agreed: should they find success, each party would own a full and proportional third of the venture's profits.

Nearly four years after her initial discovery, Rydriect and the two

Lanisian families were in business. Their partnership was inaugurated with the felling of their first erminsul tree. Rydriect picked it out, Norvet supplied the axe, and an Advaejan chopped it down. The settlement from that tree, the mastercraft axe, and the mighty woodcutter were all given the name **Neroth** to symbolize the unity of their efforts.

Promises of steady work and security lured people from all corners of the world to Neroth. The city flourished under the **triumvirate**. The surrounding woods were neatly split into three portions, and the houses, now known as **Lodges**, dutifully worked their shares. In that fashion, business went well for nearly four decades. During that time, both of Alesia's partners succumbed to natural deaths. She was the last of the three to pass away. In the wake of her death, the new Lodge leaders vied for increased power. The struggle was subtle at first, restricted purely to political and financial maneuvers, but came to an ugly head with a string of assassinations. Then all bets were off.

The trio of Lodges began to assert their authority more aggressively. They clamped down on the citizens and businesses, eventually dividing the city in thirds and ruling each independently. These borders were blurred at best, and the constant conflict meant that lines were frequently redrawn. It was common for a Nerothi to fall asleep within the borders of Advaeja and awake within the realm of Norvet. The backlash from the commoners was as inevitable as it was violent.

Faced with bloody revolt, the Lodges withdrew from the majority of the city and consolidated their assets into a single section, which became **Keyhold**. Between bouts of rioting and infighting, they hastily constructed an inner palisade with little regard for any structures already established. The effect was twofold, securing their most important holdings and surrendering control of the rest of the city.

They area beyond the Keyhold, known as the **Spindle**, quickly descended into all-out war as revolutionaries and self-titled warlords flooded the power vacuum. These new minor powers, of course, had to finance their pursuits, so they turned to the only source of income readily available: lumber. Lodges were suddenly in competition with lesser entities, and the conflict spiraled further out of control.

Just when it seemed the roiling chaos had reached its most turbulent, a new ingredient was tossed into the pot. Vampires, fleeing the scorn of the south, found refuge in the near-lawless Neroth. These new arrivals brought with them their compulsion towards hematophagy and formed a new coven, **Margyr**, which translates to, "Many." Initially, Margyr was a great source of pride and unity for the immigrants, but the whirlpool of strife in Neroth soon swallowed them as well. The coven fractured from within and soon became many, much weaker elements.

Many years later, following the emergence of Florvana, Neroth and its forest became one of the more popular destinations for Florvan adventurers. Neroth became a symbol of hope for the Florvana, and many emigrated to the city in hopes that it would influence the regrowth of Feneryss. Their dreams plummeted with every erminsul that fell. Disheartened that their bastion of growth was not what it seemed, most Florvana departed. Others remained joined the Lodges to improve their practices, but most remnants ventured down more extreme lines of thought. They began a movement to destroy the Lodges and their industrial machinations. Unfortunately, these aspirations frequently fall short of their aims and blend into the cacophony of Neroth, only one more cog in the machine of chaos.

THE MORTEMWOODS

Engulfing the city of Neroth is an ancient woodland called the **Mortemwoods**. This forest provides the numerous entities at work in the city with lumber while also serving up a great deal of hunting and foraging opportunities. While the forest itself bears a diverse collection of trees, the most prominent are the **erminsul**. These massive conifers regularly grow to a height of 1,000 feet and a circumference of three hundred feet. Past their thick bark, which is commonly used for armor plating, the interior bears a rich red or purple hue. The sap of these giants is used in a number of different applications. The most prominent application is, ironically, fire prevention. However, it would be remiss to not mention that the sap is also fermented into the ever-popular bloodwine.

Among the assorted trees live a wide variety of fauna, both threatening and docile. The most perilous creatures to stalk the Mortemwoods are the broodhives and chirshun, each of which is responsible for Nerothi deaths numbering in the thousands.

The Mortemwoods also contain one of the only three domesticated creatures on Feneryss. The miltbrade is a small- to medium-sized tentacle-clad invertebrate that feeds on rotting wood fiber. Its tendrils, which grow back when lost, are edible when cooked and a staple of Nerothi cuisine. They also produce a natural fiber that presents flame retardant properties similar to the erminsul's sap. As such, it has many possible applications but is frequently used to make rope and textiles.

While the extremely wealthy simply import their water from Lokoran, the majority of citizens collect theirs from **Gata** and **Stigr** lakes, also known as the **One Path Lakes**, which are located a couple hundred yards north of the city proper. Since the water is highly acidic, it must be purified either by magical or chemical means, or a combination of the two. There is a minor religion surrounding the twin lakes that suggests those who drink the "pure" water from the One Path Lakes will receive salvation. These followers often die young from internal acid burns.

The One Path Lakes are also home to rare and dangerous creatures, the hamour being one of them. Hamour are semi-aquatic creatures bearing sharp teeth and fins that double as clumsy feet when waddling on land. If tales are to be believed, the land kraken dwells in the caves beyond the northern shores of Stigr and pull unruly children and solicitous husbands into its cave with spined tentacles.

THE CITY AT A GLANCE

KEYHOLD

The most secure section of Neroth houses the three Lodges within the city's Inner Palisade. The walls are thirty feet high. Each of the five gates is guarded in triplicate, with one guard from each Lodge. Of course, each family has its own secret entrances and exits, but those are politely ignored by the other families. A dedicated area has been set aside in the Keyhold as neutral ground for trade, negotiation, and even various competitions. Despite their need for one another, animosity persists in passive aggression, but is more commonly vented in competitions such as wrestling and weapons sparring.

SPINDLE

A sea of chaos, this section of Neroth sits between the Inner and Outer Palisades, the latter of which has fallen into disrepair since the Lodges' retreat. Self-proclaimed warlords, revolutionaries, and other power-hungry figures are in constant contention for territory. When one falls and is devoured by their followers, another rises to take their place. These gangs derive strength from the efforts of others, putting citizens to work in the woods for little to no wages, or charging a "**guardian's fee**" to protect them from rival gangs. The means of lordship vary, but in every case, it is enforced with violence and is suffered by honest workers. Some attempt to avoid the game and live life day-to-day as freelancers or solitary rogues. For all its ugliness, the Lodges appreciate the Spindle come Skog and the first wave of the Undead Tide. It serves as an excellent buffer of bodies and walls, and the cutthroat culture breeds strong combatants for defending the Outer Palisade.

CITY LIFE

"*Straight as a Nerothi street,*" is a common Feneryan criticism of shoddy work. It refers to the curving, disorganized lanes that weave through the erminsul stumps. Nerothi homes are carved from those stumps and storefronts are frequently nothing more than a lean-to beside an occupant's front door. Most stumps are large enough to support four or five families, although many wealthier residents claim an entire stump to themselves. True wealth is measured by the height of one's home, though, and the Lodges reside within living erminsul that continue to grow. They do not have enough occupants to utilize the entire tree, so most of it is untouched. Among the most fascinating features are the rooms carved out of the thicker, lower branches that stretch out over shorter structures.

The power blocs that divide the city are easiest to measure by the number of stumps, usually referred to as erms, under their influence. Most citizens are content to lean whichever way the wind blows, offering only as much allegiance as will preserve relative peace. They trade in the markets, operate forges, and perform manual labor with the potential for sudden outbursts of violence at any moment. They live beneath the banners of aspect cults, Vampire covens, branch gangs, and even the Vortem, but the general populace is closer to their neighbors than whoever is strutting their street that morning. Governing forces are rarely locals, but in those situations, the bloc tends to be a tightly knit community.

From an early age, children form their own cliques that typically evolve into gangs as the group matures. Education for most is trade knowledge passed down from their family, much like Lanisian dynasties. There is little higher education to speak of in Neroth, and those few who are privileged enough to receive an education are typically tutored by scholars from Pulse, Lanis, or Lokoran. Most jobs are in the fields of lumber, horticulture, trapping, or airship construction, but Neroth is also a promising source of mercenaries.

COVEN ACTIVITY

The Vampire Hunts of 2719 PR, nearly 150 years after Neroth's founding, forced a mass exodus from the major city-states. Many fled to Neroth, hoping to disappear within the young and turbulent "city

among giants.” While they were met with venomous resistance, the lack of any real structure allowed them to establish the Margyr Coven, which conveniently translates to “the many.” Racial tension bound them tightly together, but as that tension wilted, so did the coven’s resolve. Cracks began to appear within its second year as the city’s politics began to divide its members. Expatriates of Hel’s anarchy yearned to reclaim their former independence, while others diverged on the topic of which lodges could provide superior partnerships. The coven’s erosion perfectly mirrored the city’s own collapse in the wake of its founders’ deaths. Margyr became many, much smaller, warring factions.

Sewing even more confusion, many groups chose to keep the name Margyr, while others converted to their party name, or devised a unique name for themselves. Regardless, everyone else simply refers to all Nerothi covens as Margyr.

In modern Neroth, Margyr factions are often little more than racially-oriented gangs, though a scant few maintain a foothold in the political and financial scenes. As with all other Nerothi entities, they are in constant flux. Their influence waxes and wanes over time. Most are eventually wiped out or collapse from within, only to be replaced by others.

It is impossible to define any common tenets or practices due to the Margyr’s fractious condition, but it is safe to say that every imaginable ethos is represented. If it is not, creating an “ideal” coven is as simple as recruiting a few friends and saying so. Similarly, public opinion varies wildly. Some Margyr fiercely defend their turf and its inhabitants and are thus positively regarded by their constituents. Others prey on the weak and are targets of the city’s collective scorn.

LOCAL ECONOMY

While Neroth is not typically known for much beyond its lumber, a number of institutions in the city pioneered some financial practices that were ahead of its time. The most influential was the **Perennial Bank**, which housed and orchestrated the exchange of pressed flowers for goods and services. The system only stood for a few years, the primary flaw being that each flower possesses different value based on its flaws. The currency’s service was cut short when the Perennial Bank was burned down in 2760 PR. Thankfully, it was replaced the following year by the Second Perennial Bank, which deals in the standardized Note to this day.

THE MILITIA OF NEROTH

Even though much of the city has become complacent with the perpetual civil war, there is one particular occasion that draws all these bickering parties together. It is called **Freehold**, and falls in the last weeks of the month of Deadtide, leading into Skog. During Freehold, all of Neroth bands together in the face of the undead horde. The early days of Freehold begin with the first sighting of the horde outside Hel and are observed differently by the varied cultures of Neroth. People face their mortality with celebrations of life, gifts of apology, or debaucherous activities to preempt what may be their final days. Many organizations, both large and small, often make peace offerings during this time. The classic offering is a budding erminsul tree.

These activities dwindle as the undead close on the city. The Lodges exercise what influence remains to spearhead the organization of the city’s defense. Forces are allotted locations along the Outer Palisade while the Lodges maintain administration and logistics. Even here, however, Nerothi politics butt their ugly head. Certain segments, especially those along the gates, are considered highly respected and glorified positions to defend. This tends to be the primary factor that slows preparations.

While the fighting men are standing their ground at the Outer Palisade, some depraved souls are keen to take advantage of the eerie emptiness of the city. In light of this, it is often easy to identify the poorest defenders: they are the ones who have brought all their belongings to the wall. The defense of Neroth lasts anywhere from two to four weeks, after which it devolves back into petty quarreling.

PERSONS OF INTEREST

CAPTAIN DARQ



One of the finest scoundrels north of the Snapspine Mountains, Darq makes a living as the captain of the **Darqling Sanction**, an experimental Pulse naval vessel turned privateer brig. While at the helm, he exhibits a brash confidence and recklessness that is inherent to new captains, but thus far has managed to come out on top of any encounter.

Prior to his ascension to captain (and piracy), Darq was a lowly sergeant, known by a different name, serving under a sadistic bastard of a captain, who commanded the ship with terror and tyranny. Believing the great ship deserved better management, Darq initiated a mutiny. The crew overwhelmed the captain and his officers in a matter of minutes, and showed no hesitation in throwing them over the side of the ship.

Taking for himself the mantle of captain, he announced to the remaining crew that he was renouncing his old name and title to become the living will of the Darqling Sanction. He took the moniker **Captain Darq**, then with ship and crew in tow, set out for Neroth. It was in that chaotic city that Darq believed he and his crew would find their fortunes.

While only a few short years have passed since that fateful day, Captain Darq has managed to establish a name for himself, not only as a top notch privateer but also as quite the lady’s man. While he claims no direct responsibility for it, tales of his various conquests have spread across Feneryss, either shouted at the raucous taverns of the everyman or whispered as part of many a lonely maiden’s fantasies of love and peril.

HUSTLE

At a glance, **Hustle** is an average Rekindled, but the truth is that he is a prolific liar with a serious gambling problem. This is a man who will gamble away the clothes on his back if he thinks he can win a bet. Sometimes, he does not leave such things to chance, and is a well known cheat. He has successfully scammed, conned, or otherwise swindled nearly everyone in the city. Unfortunately for Hustle, there are many in Neroth that do not take kindly to such deception. On more than one occasion, the offended party has killed him for his many, many transgressions. In a few weeks, he stumbles back into town with little or no memory of what previously occurred. Usually, after his miraculous recovery from death, most people give up their grudge on him, with one exception: Lord Harrceus. After he picked the Lord’s pockets and used their contents to empty one of their storehouses of all its valuables, he attempted to sell the loot back to the **Harrceus Family**. Hustle was captured, tortured, and killed over and over. Eventually, Lord Harrceus grew weary of killing the Rekindled, but his grudge remains. It is best to seek out Hustle when searching for anything or anyone in Neroth. Although his memory can be spotty, his information gathering is exemplary, and his deft hands are notorious.

LORD HARRCEUS

His origins are lost to the chaos of Neroth, but the rise of this self-proclaimed Lord was swift and unflagging. This rush to the top also revealed Harrceus as a cold and calculating Wretched with a penchant for brutality and longstanding grudges. With these particular attributes, he established himself as one of the largest landholders in Neroth, easily on par with the three Lodges. The Lord also earned himself a healthy host of enemies along the way. His group, the Harrceus Family, rarely entertains business ventures with outsiders. When they do, their partners can expect a hefty fine for access to the Harrceus reputation and tools.

The Lord of the estate is a man that appreciates both form and function. His artfully sculpted cane secretly houses a miniature elektro-cannon, his rich cape is highly fire resistant, and a mastercrafted breastplate is skillfully hidden under his pristine attire. The size of his reputation often leaves onlookers underwhelmed by his short stature, which serves to exaggerate the pair of statuesque bodyguards always flanking him in public. However, his true power lies not in his guards nor his weapon, but within his mind. Lord Harrceus has both infallible recall and an extraordinary psychic ability, which he delights in turning to his advantage.

HEL

THE GRAVE CITY



HISTORY

Before it was the Grave City, Hel was once the capital of the mighty **Kallogorryn Empire**, known as **Nath'Kaartu**. It was a theocracy ruled by a handful of High Prophets that spread quickly to the surrounding region through crusades to convert or kill the neighboring population. It rose to power in 702 PR and fell less than 300 years ago. Yet, some historians claim this empire did not construct the towering spires that now lie in decay, nor the infrastructure that has since collapsed, but that they were erected prior to the Reckoning. Perhaps even more mysterious is the city's maze-like underbelly. Some scholars argue that the catacombs predate the city, suggesting some corpses have been housed in its depths for over four millennia. Others claim that they were built in an attempt to contain the escaping dead from the unexplored depths during imperial reign. Regardless of which hypothesis is correct, this massive Undercity houses a seemingly infinite supply of undead that slowly funnel their way to the surface above through cracks or collapsed hallways to roam the shadows of the city's hollow shell.

Historians reason that the Kallogorryn Empire was weakened prior to its collapse thanks to a zealous expansion that stretched its military and arkane resources too thin. Its army, the Order of Shattered Steel, also served as a local police force across its controlled territory. Thus, when Tae'k's Crusade reached their realm in 2687 PR, they were poorly prepared to face the onslaught, despite having the span of a year to prepare for their arrival. And arrive they would, for at the time the Kallogorryn Empire was well known as the premiere provider of necromancers and necromantic study. But for all their power, the waves of anguished souls could not be stemmed. The Order of Shattered Steel was forced into a fighting retreat.

With word of the conflict reaching the capital, slaves, debt-slaves, and prisoners revolted. The capital was already at war with itself by the time Tae'k and his army faced off with the final clutch of necromancers at the Battle at Death's Door. With the elimination of the few remaining necromancers and the collapse of Nath'Kaartu, the Empire's demise was sealed.

The absence of **Kaartu'ghal** and his worshipers seemed to embolden the Undead Tide, which grew in strength and presence throughout the ruined city of Nath'Kaartu and the rest of Feneryss. Necromancers and historians attest that a lesser known Order, the Order of Fetters, was likely responsible for managing the catacombs and that their absence is the reason for the exponential growth of the Undead Tide.

Despite this, exiles and refugees flocked to the city of the dead from across Feneryss, especially necromancers still facing persecution. It could never be said that the Undead Tide is under control, but these necromancers eventually asserted enough influence over the undead in the city that they were able to establish a meager living studying the horde. They named their home Hel.

Following the advent of the Vampire Hunts in 2719 PR, a surge of fanged refugees fled their hunters and flooded the Grave City. A brief power struggle occurred between the three forces of necromancers, undead, and Vampires. The necromancers, content to leave the Vampires to the task of managing the horde, returned to their studies. The Vampires formed the **Sarrblot** Coven, which maintains its position as the most powerful entity in the city to this day. This is surprising, as the coven is wholly comprised of anarchists, meaning that each member of the coven is beholden solely to themselves. The city's lack of centralized

governance has not diminished their familial bonds, however. The citizens of Hel regularly aid one another in reparations or efforts to rebuild after sinkholes or cave-ins occur. Regardless of whatever hate the residents may harbor for one another, they all hate the undead more.

THE CITY AT A GLANCE

The population is comprised primarily of refugees and exiles. The major bodies are necromancers who arrived to escape the widespread persecution that followed Tae'k's Crusade and Vampires who fled the Vampire Hunts. Even though the taboos against both have abated, most choose to remain. All races are represented here, with Drones making up the smallest percentage, and Vampires the largest. It should come as no surprise that significant pockets of Alypse clans also live here.

The city is situated on a steady gradient that offers a clear view of all approaches. A significant fissure runs south-to-north. It outlines the main passage of the catacombs beneath and defines the city's western edge. Beyond is desolate earth stretching to the Maw. The city above is the Upper Dirge, where the residents go about their daily lives. The catacombs, more frequently referred to as The Undercity, are a constant source of undead and prone to cave-ins.

THE UPPER DIRGE

Housing, in a conventional sense, is nearly non-existent in the city. Most of its structures are little more than crumbling frames or vague outlines. The bastions, great stone structures which once housed the High Prophets and their various Orders, now house the majority of Hel's citizens. Sarrblot makes its home in the former Bastion of the High Prophets. Within the other bastions, non-Vampires reside in barracks or rooms alongside one another like apartment tenants in the grand hallways. The downside to this is that most clues as to the inner workings of the former Empire have been scrapped, repurposed, or removed.

Away from the safety provided by the towering bastions, the former city is little more than a mass grave of ancient structures. Some opt to live out here, fortifying ruins or living like nomads, roaming from one hole in the wall to the next. Always it teems with the true denizens of Hel: the undead. The living corpses seep through the ground like blood from a wound, grasping and gnawing at any semblance of life. Their presence is greatest in the first half of the month of Deadtide, and smallest in the month of Messanah.

THE UNDERCITY

Beneath the city proper lies a network of tunnels and caverns, splitting off into thousands of branches rife with tombs and rooms of unrecognizable intent. These catacombs make the land Hel sits upon porous, absorbing both the living and the dead into its depths. Age and decay constantly transform the area, closing old paths and opening new ones, which makes mapping these catacombs moot.

Some people, mostly necromancers, believe that there is a path under the city that leads to the Lost Abyss which serves as the source of the endless Undead Tide. True or not, the undead infest Hel's Undercity in greater numbers than any other place on Feneryss.

RED FÊTE

When the last handful of undead trudge from Hel, Sarrblot Vampires commence their annual Red Fête. The whole affair lasts eight to twelve days depending on the size of their slave stock. While it was once a religious affair, sacrificing victims to their pantheon of demons, most have dismissed the formalities. It is a period of wanton feasting and celebration in the absence of their greatest foe.

CITY LIFE

Daily life is very similar to life elsewhere. The only real difference is that they have to dodge the undead while they work to put food on their tables. There are few choices of livelihood in a city that is dominated by hosts as murderous as the undead. Understandably, necromancers make ends meet studying the undead for secrets about life, death, and immortality. This close study also leads them to be some of the best stitchers in Feneryss, though most still cannot even hold a candle up to the power of the **Gravekeepers**. Others make it their business to provide quality undead (and sometimes living) body parts to these necromancers, who will often pay a full head of teeth for quality stitching material.

Of course, those are simply specialized scavengers. Many people of varying race make their living scrounging the Dirge for useful bits. This could range from gathering sturdy bricks from a ruin for someone's home to swiping possessions from victims of the undead. It is a rough living, but beats harvesting undead for the necromancers, and lacks the danger of exploring the Undercity. Their primary customers, however, are the rare skilled laborers. Craftsmen in the area are always in need of raw materials and offer good pay to anyone that can save them the trouble of scouring the city.

Braver souls scout the Undercity and hunt for ancient relics and treasures in the myriad tombs. Most of these foolhardy explorers are foreigners who work at the behest of wealthier individuals, but several Helians have made it their business. Given the potentially high reward, Sarrblot has taken to taxing plunderers for the right to enter, as well as fines based on the value of their findings.

Sometimes, though, work must be put aside for emergency repairs or construction. When the ancient supports of the catacombs give way, they often open a new exit from which the undead may spring. Sealing catacomb openings is a city-wide priority, especially when they lead into the bastions. As a testament to the resilience of Feneryans, some inhabitants have also begun to construct new homes and shops within or near the bastion walls. Surprisingly, this is due to the growing population. If they could suppress the undead, remove the hel knights, and the Dreadlord, Hel would have a chance to become a thriving city in just a handful of generations.

COVEN ACTIVITY

Sarrblot maintains an iron grip on Hel, or so they like to believe. Their control over the city is undeniable, but lacking organized leadership means a lack of uniform enforcement of the covenant's will. Much of the covenant's oppressive behaviors during its formative years have waned as the volume of voluntary food sources has consistently grown. A steady supply of blood has moved the covenant toward a much more hands-off approach to governance. Even so, being a member comes with many benefits. Nepotism is rampant. They are heavily favored when settling disputes, and political influence is the crucial deciding factor when resolving issues between members. Even if they are found in the wrong, the worst punishment a member of Sarrblot is likely to ever face is a few weeks without fresh blood. Other citizens have been executed, cannibalized, or even fed to the undead horde for crimes of varying severity. Once again, anarchy has kept the covenant from establishing a code of law, meaning what constitutes a crime is also up for debate.

Even so, the general populace is largely content with the covenant's administration. They spearhead reparations in the event of cave-ins, manage the Undead Tide to mitigate interference in daily business, and even coordinate ambushes for hel knights when their presence around the bastions becomes a problem. Perhaps the most trying business of theirs is managing the population. Food sources are few within the city, meaning their primary sources of sustenance are external. Trade, trapping, and foraging are essential but inconsistent. When the population becomes too large to sustain, Sarrblot culls the numbers through cannibalism.

Since teeth are not an accepted currency by traders and other visitors, Sarrblot finances most intercity deals by plumbing the depths of the

Undercity for treasures and taxing other explorers for the opportunity to do the very same. As rigged as the system may seem, it ensures the citizens' access to a number of luxury items that would otherwise be unavailable. Generators for electric lighting, a small fleet of Scout- and Corvette-class airships, and plumbing are just a few.

LOCAL ECONOMY

Notes are next to useless in the Grave City. The common tender in the land of the undead is teeth. They are abundant but dangerous to acquire, granting an intrinsic value. Value also has a predictable fluctuation that follows the comings and goings of the Undead Tide. Payments are often measured by the jaw (one row), or the head (both rows). The one major flaw with this system is the varying quality and types of teeth. Most vendors won't accept any tooth that they can break between their thumb and forefinger. Notes serve only to trade with foreigners, as few other places recognize the native currency. All these factors make bartering as essential to survival as keen awareness or quick feet.

PERSONS OF INTEREST

SCALE

Slightly below average height for a Shade, she carries a glaive almost twice her size which she uses to vault to higher ground when traversing the city. Her garments are old and tattered, tending to flow rapidly during movement and will occasionally reveal well-kept leather armor. The only piece of jewelry she wears is a necklace adorned with pieces of obsidian from her homeland. Scale also carries several daggers on her belt for throwing and a small, snub-nosed pistol.

She was born, like most of her kind, in the Glass Forest. Her mother was very influential within the tribe, and her father was a master blacksmith supplying the tribe with superb weaponry. Being a young woman, she was well trained in combat and was exceptional at acrobatics. At the age of 8, an unusually aggressive Undead Tide claimed the lives of many of her cabal, including the matriarch of the time. Scale finished her training with her mother and spent months preparing for a journey to Hel. She vowed to destroy as many undead as she could and bring an end to the Undead Tide. With the help of her father, she forged the large obsidian glaive that she would wield as her weapon of choice.

She spent her first few months establishing a proper, defensible position in Hel. Scale lives a dangerous life between hunting the undead, dodging the city's unusual guardians, and avoiding Sarrblot. As often as not she fails in one or more of these ventures, but this Shade is nothing if not tenacious. Scale does come to the aid of those in peril, but will not intervene if that danger involves the Vampires. They are aware of her presence in the city and remain apathetic so long as she does not upset the status quo.

TARN VOLKGEIR

Tarn is a seemingly simple man at first glance: he has the build of a former soldier, the attire of a treasure hunter, and the eyes of a haunted man. They are a mesmerizing blue, caught somewhere between anxious, sad, and cautious. He wears his four decades of adventurous living in the tired lines hidden beneath blood red scruff on his face. His mop of hair is a much lighter, faded red. Despite this, Tarn is not a simple man.

Born an only child into a Lanisian merchant family, the glitter of baubles and trinkets lit a shine in Tarn's eye from a young age. While his mother worked to support the family in her husband's off-season as a cook for a local eatery, his father traveled the continent, buying and selling relics. As he grew older, he was allowed to travel with his father on a few of the shorter, safer routes. Thanks to his son's hard work and luck, Tarn's father sold a relic for a pretty penny during their first outing. Tarn knew then he was destined to be a relic hunter.

During his home life, he was exceptionally close to his mother, spending most of his time studying history. While he preferred the more

practical knowledge imparted upon him by experience, he understood the necessity of recorded knowledge: learn from someone else's experience. Once he came of age, he traveled to the other cities to acquire a broad, worldly base of knowledge. As Tarn entered his mid-twenties, his father's health declined rapidly. Knowing how much the father and son duo loved traveling together, Tarn's mother encouraged them to go on one final trip. Looking back on it, this would be Tarn's favorite trip with his father and the most profitable. Upon returning home, they found their home in disrepair, covered in dust and rat droppings. Two days later, her body was discovered in an alleyway between the eatery and home, partially devoured by stray animals and bearing the signs of abuse. Tarn resented himself and his father for their lack of presence at home.

After his mother's death, his father retired and purchased a small curio shop in the back end of Lanis, intending to peddle the few wares he had left while purchasing new ones to resell. Tarn, unable to face himself or his father, enlisted in the military and spent the next few years protecting the wilderness of Lanis. After his enlistment, he came home to find his father had passed away mere weeks after Tarn's departure. Worn down by the loss of his family and the years spent watering the countryside with his blood, sweat, and tears, Tarn refused to renew his enlistment and opened the curio shop.

He rebooted the family business and recruited some of the more enterprising individuals from his enlistment. Together they created a charter for "Item Acquisition." While some of these contract jobs were, shall we say, less than legal, they garnered sufficient prestige to attract larger, legitimate business, and eventually catch the eye of the House of Records. Months after accepting the contract, Tarn returned scarred, alone, and empty handed. His team had been slaughtered to the last man, and their airship had been destroyed. Shortly thereafter his business floundered and eventually capsized. He took to heavy drinking and womanizing. One night during a particularly frightening bender, he made up his mind to return to the Grave City and acquire the item that his team had died in vain to obtain. Tarn has acquired many relics of interest since then, but he has never succeeded in obtaining the object of his desire. Nevertheless, he persists: part thief, part soldier, and with only a part of his humanity remaining.

VALKAERUS OF CLAN ARRENKATH

As if the Hel Knights and undead horde were not trying enough for Helians, there exists a much greater threat roaming their home. The people call him the Dreadlord. His origins are an utter mystery, although the necromancer rumor mill suggests he is a stitch or immortal necromancer from the Kallogorryn Empire. His age is unknown, but there are many years evident in his tired, weathered face. Raven locks brush his shoulders, and sapphire eyes seem to stare vacantly through everything. The Dreadlord is also a large man, over six feet tall and carrying more than 220 pounds of war-honed muscle.

He is an unpredictable figure, prone to random outbursts of violence and vehement shouting as if arguing with an invisible figure. His longsword cleaves anything in his path: the living, the undead, and the inanimate all fall away under his might. His rants are esoteric accusations against "the order," denunciations of "the mad god," and the like.

More unsettling than his outbursts is his uncanny control over the undead. There are endless eyewitness accounts of him summoning undead from the Undercity and leading them into the wilderness. His purpose and intent are unknown, but he performs this ritual regularly. Many necromancers have made study of the Dreadlord their life's work, but none have managed to recreate his incredible power over the undead, not even with their own stitches. Warriors possess a similar jealousy of his inhuman strength, but none have tested him and lived to tell the tale.

Valkaerus, the Dread Lord of Hel, can also be found on page 204 as a prebuilt Mastermind.

SYLVAN HOLLOW

ANCIENT OF DAYS



HISTORY

The oldest known settlement in Feneryss, Sylvan Hollow also enjoys status as the most defensible. Sylvan Hollow lies in a small strip of wasteland that runs between the Maw, to the west, and the Ashlands to the east. The city itself is a subterranean cavern and a phenomenon formed by the wild weather of the Reckoning. Overturned layers of earth fell upon massive steel towers of the Old World. Miraculously, they held and formed a spacious shelter for the lucky few who lived within close proximity. Those people quickly recovered from the shock and worked to stabilize their community.

Immediately they pressed to the surface in the hopes of producing fresh crops, but Feneryss rebuffed their every effort. The soil devoured the weakest seeds, frequent gales tore shallow roots from the dirt, and the extreme temperatures wilted what few managed to rupture the grit and expose themselves to the world. After their first season, the Sylvans immediately returned underground, starving and hopeless. Now, naught but ghosts occupy the miserly town resting on the Hollow's earthen roof.

To survive, they sought the wisdom of their generation's greatest minds. Within one of the facilities crushed by the violence of the Reckoning was a device the Sylvans simply call the Feeder. When provided with sufficient raw materials, it produces a rather vulgar tasting nutrient paste. None of Sylvan Hollow's residents understood how it functioned, but they refused to open it up for study. The Feeder's uninterrupted operation was arguably the sole reason Sylvan Hollow is a functioning society and not a mass gravesite.

Raw materials were needed to keep the gears turning. Overnight, Sylvan Hollow became a full-bore mining town. Anything mined that was not of sufficient size or quantity to be worked by a craftsman was dumped into the Feeder to produce more paste, which the Sylvans call **nolty**.

Leading the charge was the former mayor's son, **Mohmoud Bayesh**, who became the city's first Burgomaster. He served until 31 PR when he passed away. The people rallied to him, and with their help he established order. All families were required to mine enough to feed their own family

each week or be refused access to the Feeder. Beyond this, they were free to pursue their own endeavors.

Despite being the oldest settlement, Sylvan maintains a very monotonous history beyond its origins. This is largely due to two factors: the need for manual labor to feed the city, and the protective culture surrounding their Old World technology.

They established a miserly relationship with Pulse less than a century after the Iron Mandate. Otherwise, Sylvan Hollow had no interaction with the rest of Feneryss until after the introduction of the ark-drive and the Cistern Accords. The former opened trade lanes with the remaining city-states of Hel, Neroth, Lokoran, and Lanis. The latter meant Sylvan Hollow had more than trinkets and "dirt paste" to trade with their counterparts. Their isolationism and lack of exports, however, keeps tourism and trade at the Hollow minimal compared to others like Lokoran, or even Neroth.

NOLTY: THE SYLVAN SERUM

As previously stated, Sylvan Hollow subsists primarily upon a substance known as nolty, which is produced by the Feeder. It breaks down quantities of raw materials into their baser forms and yields a syrupy liquid with a mildly bitter flavor. Most compare it to drinking dirty water or eating dirt, which seems rather appropriate. Flavor enhancement is a strong market in the Hollow as a result. Traders deliver all manner of exotic foods, sweeteners, and spices for the Sylvans to experiment with in their meals.

It has also heavily impacted their economy. Mining efforts are logged by the town's **Mineral Oversight Committee**, which is comprised of four elected individuals. They maintain the ledgers on how much each miner extracts to ensure they are compensated with the appropriate amount of nolty. Since the implementation of the Cistern Accords, the Hollow has begun to offer cash payments to residents who mine more than is required as an optional incentive. The extra nolty is donated to struggling families, stashed, or exported.

Despite the jokes and negativity foreigners have for nolt, it remains the Hollow's number one export. Pulse uses it as a cheap means of feeding its army, the Bagdoran Syndicate uses it to nourish their slaves, and many poor Feneryans rely on it during droughts or food shortages.

THE CITY AT A GLANCE

Sylvan Hollow has been controlled by a primogeniture Burgomaster since the Reckoning. There have been a few minor scuffles over this matter during the family's reign, but their lineage and authority have remained intact. The Burgomaster has the first and final say on the settlement's development, direction, and law. Most have refrained from rocking the boat.

As one might imagine, the inhabitants of Sylvan Hollow jealously defend the Old World machines that provide for them. There is a common belief that any outsiders seeking access beyond the Market only want to steal their livelihood. For this reason, the city's security is unparalleled, and visitors will quickly discover an overwhelming paranoia that permeates their culture. Imports, chief among them being exotic flavors, have eroded this in recent decades, but it remains incredibly difficult for outsiders to tour the inner areas of Sylvan Hollow.

GHOST TOWN

Occupied for barely a year, these hovels huddle at the feet of a Giant's disintegrating remains. It kneels, poised upon one of the Old World towers that buttress Sylvan Hollow's caverns. Hidden around the Giant are a number of hatches that grant access to the world below. They are tightly secured and guarded from within.

MARKET

The Market is a trade and entertainment district that runs the length of a large, sloping tunnel leading to the largest entrance into the Hollow. Here, residents and foreigners buy and sell their wares, socialize over a few drinks, and play music for a few Notes tossed in an open case. This is the only area foreigners are authorized to enter without jumping through bureaucratic hoops. It connects to the northwestern wall of the Hollow's main cavern. On the first of Brespeak, the denizens close up the Market path to prevent the Undead Tide from sacking their businesses. Any visitors still within are forced to ride out the month with the Sylvans.

THE TOWERS

The residents of Sylvan Hollow have repurposed the Old World structures that endured the Reckoning. Since they did not originally serve residential purposes, Sylvan apartments are very irregular. The are only two rules strictly enforced by the **Residential Committee**. The first requires residents to keep common thoroughfares unobstructed. Second, occupants must obtain clearance before demolishing walls or floors. Otherwise, they are free to manage the rooms as they desire, leading to very strange floor plans and layouts.

LIGHTWELL

This is the most secure location in the city as it houses the Hearts of Sylvan Hollow, which are three large reactors of pre-Reckoning origin. The district demarcates Sylvan Hollow's subterranean south border. The Hearts provide the power necessary to run the Feeder and heat the Digs. It is protected by heavy armor and manned turrets, and there has never been a breach of security in the history of the city. Scientists are perpetually studying the reactors in the hopes of understanding their functionality before they fall into permanent disrepair.

THE FEEDER

Most of the facility sheltering the Feeder was demolished by the Reckoning's tectonic activity. Thankfully, the Feeder remains unaffected, and its storage space has since been refurbished. In addition to the nolt it produces, they have erected a distillery. Bar none, nolt spirits is the

nastiest and cheapest way for a Feneryan to get hammered. It sits on **Lightwell's** eastern flank.

HOLLOWS

Massive, winding tunnels meander their way from Sylvan Hollow's central cavern to the north and east. The people work here daily in search of valuable minerals and lost artifacts. Any excess material is carted to the Feeder. Every family has to maintain a presence here and is expected to provide for themselves. With the city's positive growth and the expansion of trade after the Note was instituted, it is possible for families that have fallen on hard times to acquire some assistance from the Mineral Oversight Committee.

THE VAULT

This is the primary tower that upholds the city's ceiling. It houses the Burgomaster and any committees, which are appointed and dissolved as the city's needs fluctuate. Its base is reinforced with plates of armor from a Giant, should it ever be attacked. Rooms within have been renovated to accommodate the residents. The Burgomaster's residence takes up the entire forty-fourth floor. No one occupies the remaining one hundred and twelve floors above him.

CITY LIFE

Nearly every facet of life in Sylvan Hollow is dependent upon Old World tech. Ancient generators heat their homes, run the water pumps, and power an unfathomable device that breaks down anything into nutrition. Pre-Reckoning technologies are fairly common discoveries during the mining process, which are restored if possible. Otherwise, they are recycled for use elsewhere, or sold to maintain the city's infrastructure. Some citizens make extra Notes on the side selling their finds covertly, or wowing visitors with their discoveries.

Everyone toils in the Hollows to feed their family. Some take shifts, others put one member to work while the rest commit to other pursuits. So long as they can move enough dirt to feed themselves, residents give little thought to this integral part of their society. There are a few jobs that excuse one from mining: science research on the Old World machines is the most common.

Education for most children is learning how to carve out stone and dirt and minerals without maiming themselves. Some are fortunate enough to be born into a household with a shop in the Market. The luckiest are born to successful parents that can afford a Lanisian tutor to teach them science, math, history, and perhaps even arkāna.

Sylvan Hollow arms just enough citizens to man guard posts at the city entrances, Lightwell, the Feeder, and the Vault; there is no standing army.

PRIORY OF SOLIDII

Actively ignored by a good portion of the populace, the Priory of Solidii can be found preaching in every major city. They denounce the Reckoning as a farce orchestrated by the city-states to control the populace. These Reckoning deniers do not believe in "lost" technology, nor that there was a civilization that existed before the present era. They eye everyone with suspicion. The only people who draw more ire than the Drones, who are supposedly spies of the unidentified ruling party, are the Aल्पse, who purportedly masterminded the entire conspiracy.

COVEN ACTIVITY

Einhandn'r is a coven in the loosest sense of the word. **Kerling**, the leader and sole constituent of this coven, has been in Sylvan Hollow since the Vampires first set foot into the realm of Maldraan. He is quite plainly insane by all standards, hosting a number of active personalities

that are believed to number in the hundreds. Because of his fractured state, he often speaks in vague riddles that lack any sort of context and allude to a greater internal dialog.

To the larger Vampire community, Kerling is an oracle of sorts. Hidden among his winding neural pathways and countless identities lie the history of all Vampires and the darkest secrets of every coven. Those who know how to ask the right questions can unlock a wealth of information that some say overshadows the whole of the Great Library of Lanis.

While it is often disputed by town locals, Kerling often claims that he founded Sylvan Hollow several centuries before its historically recognized settlement. As if to prove his knowledge of the buried settlement, he frequently turns up in secure locations uninvited or without escort.

In addition to the multiple personalities, Kerling is unique in that he does not feed on humans to combat his acidosis. He feeds on rats, which he refers to as “**sublos**.” When asked, he explains their blood is superior since they have remained largely untainted by arkāna and the Reckoning. This belief is also what spawned his use of rat carcasses as currency both within the coven and around Sylvan Hollow.

RATICIDE

From the beginning of Stahlaug until the footfalls of undead shake the Hollow’s high ceiling, Sylvans scour the caverns for any rats. The tradition has existed for as long as Ein’Hanndr has been present in the city. Kerling demands that the citizens amass for him a stockpile of the “superior blood source.” In exchange for the rats they catch, the ancient Vampire offers each of them the opportunity to ask a single question. Many who believe in Kerling’s mystic powers ask about their future, or request protection from the Tide. Of course, some pursue more mundane interests: love, business, and so forth.

Over time this tradition has transformed. Most modern Sylvans mark this time of year as their chance to do a deep clean of their homes and workspaces, which still includes clearing rat infestations. Some still cling to the old way, and will go so far as to purchase rats from others. Needless to say, Kerling is quite displeased about the increase in wasted sublos.

LOCAL ECONOMY

Officially, Sylvan Hollow utilizes the Note system like every other, but beyond the Market, its denizens more frequently barter goods and favors. Kerling continues to deal solely in sublos: rat carcasses. Their value is based on Einhanndr’s assessment of their freshness. Since he is a favored source of wisdom, rats maintain a significant value in Sylvan Hollow and are frequently involved in trade deals.

PERSONS OF INTEREST

ADRIANA ABELLA

A tall behemoth of a Wretched, she used to be a miner and dabbled in some mercenary work years ago. Now she tends to other miners, nursing their drinks and their worries at her pub, The Giant’s Bottle. She does not tolerate fighting in her bar and will actively kick out or shoot anyone that tries to damage her property or reputation. Her personality compliments her looks well: jet black hair with streaks of silver flowing through it, thick muscles mottled by scars, and her towering physique all suggest a warrior’s temper.

BURGOMASTER DION KRASTUS

The current mayor of Sylvan Hollow, this aloof man has deep-set violet eyes. He is bald but used to have thick, curly, white hair. His most prominent feature is his girth and unusually tight fitted dress clothes that look several sizes too small. He is known to be swift and ruthless when he catches the slightest scent of disorder.

REIMAR LEONHARD

The owner of the Gun & Club weapon shop. He is of average height for an Aल्पse, though he does not ever show his face without an active flesh mask. Years of smithing have blessed him with thick, tightly corded muscles and smears of soot that never seem to wash out. Leathers shield his body from stray embers, and he always wears headgear over his dark, matted hair. Testing the sharpness of his blades leaves Reimar with a patchy beard.

THIRST OF THE FORGE

Serving as a diplomat on behalf of the Lanis military, Thirst of the Forge is one of the few Rekindled to join the Mage Legion. With an exceptional talent for primaltheurgy, specifically in regards to fire, Thirst was a distinguished, if not troubled student. He reveled in the joy of creating new spells, which inevitably led to his horrific disfigurement. During a demonstration, he wreathed himself in fire to ward off would-be attackers, only to light himself ablaze in the process. He survived the ordeal but lost his right eye and suffered severe burn scarring across much of his body. Rather than living the rest of his days immobile, he chose to avail himself of his limbs and replaced them with prosthetics.

Following his lengthy recovery, Thirst returned to the **Logerra** and was permitted to complete his training. He has since joined the Mage Legion and has served with great distinction, commanding great respect among his fellow arkānists. Even to this day, he remains one of the most diligent and ingenious primalist’s to ever grace the legion. In recent years it is rumored that he has been researching enhanced bioreactors, with limited success.

THE GLASS FOREST



The Shades' home earns its name from the towering, glassine stalagmites that easily allure the unwary with their beguiling obsidian beauty. But beware, traveler, even a hair's breadth of contact will render the flesh from your innocent bones, and the slightest misstep may send you hurtling toward a grisly demise. And yet, lurking among these reflective towers are a host of Feneryss's most lethal creatures. Agile stalkers and swooping horrors plague any who dare set foot here. However, each knows either fear or grudging respect of the Shade.

Shades and their home are also known by other names: the Dragonslayers and the Dragons' Boneyard, respectively. Many of the great beasts have been lured to the obsidian spires where they fell prey to a combination of their own hubris and the Shades' clever traps. The Shade have garnered worldwide renown for their colossal feat. Whether as a result of their many successes or some other reason, the appearance of dragons has plummeted drastically in the last two centuries. Sightings have decreased to the point that most people believe dragons and the Shades' tales to be nothing more than legend.

The cabals nestled within the Obsidian Forest deal with outsiders at two primary locations: the **Obsidian Edge**, which marks the northern entrance to their territory, and the **Southern Cut** (often shortened to "The Cut"). The former negotiates trade with Lokoran, Neroth, and occasionally residents from Hel. Representatives of Pulse, Lanis, and even Dronus make use of the latter, although traders from Dronus are incredibly rare. While the Southern Cut is administered wholly by the Shades, the Obsidian Edge was established by Lodge Rydric to instigate trade with the reclusive hunters of the Glass Forest. The Edge maintains semi-autonomy despite technically belonging to the Lodge. Both continue to flourish to this day.

PERSONS OF INTEREST

REMMIE & REMUS CASSIAN



These twins are members of Lodge Rydric and renowned psykics that call the Obsidian Edge home. Born to the self-proclaimed "Lodge Prince," Thorian Cassian, and his wife, Bethia, proved themselves adept

psykics at an early age. Their skills were expertly cultured, and over time this enamored them not only to the Lodge but to the Shades as well. They became the linchpins of Lodge-Cabal relations and were instrumental in securing trade deals beneficial to both parties.

Their countless contributions were eventually rewarded with a Corvette-class airship the twins dubbed **the Shade Wolf**. They and their crew quickly developed a reputation as proficient skywhale hunters and defenders of Shade territorial claims. Their battle cry is the sound of a baying wolf, which the "Shade Wolves" psykically cast into their opponents' minds.

Physically, **Remus** and **Remmie** are nearly identical. They both stand at an average height and possess an athletic build, auburn hair, and dazzling emerald eyes. Nevertheless, there are many differences that separate them.

Remus's hair is cropped short and flanked by muttonchop sideburns. His impeccable grooming betrays "noble" heritage, but he dresses in the simple leathers of a Shade warrior. His long rifle is always slung across his back, and his trusty rapier hangs at his left hip. This airship captain is easily recognized by his grin that suggests a rogue snared in a wealthy man's history.

Remmie, on the other hand, keeps her auburn locks long. They dance freely in the wind when at the helm, and are secured in a ponytail when repairing the Shade Wolf. Freckles spattered across her cheeks are often masked by grease smears from her labors. She dresses modestly in brown suspended trousers, a plain white shirt, and an old captain's coat, which was a gift from her father. Her trusty tool belt completes the ensemble.

Remmie is notorious for going barefoot aboard her airship because she prefers to feel the thrum beneath her feet. One of her most notable features, though, is her prosthetic left arm, which came as a result of an accident with the ark-engines during her childhood. Some of the crew claim that being part of the ship is the source of her prodigious skills as a mechanic.

THE ASHLANDS



Desolate and grim are the two words which best describe **the Ashlands**. Travelers and traders who wish to cross may face ash storms, blistering heat, and earthquakes. Worse of all are the ultraviolet lightning storms, striking wildly and without warning. Though lethal, most encounters with UV lightning only result in cancerous tumors.

Despite all this, people continue to risk the Ashlands because it is the fastest way to get from Pulse and Lanis to Lokoran and Neroth. Even airships capable of circumventing this ancient wasteland will make the crossing for the sake of cutting costs. And still, others have made a home of this seemingly inhospitable dune sea.

Aldinn is located beneath the Ashlands and shares a mutual friendly border with Dreyri, the Lokoran coven. It is, for all intents and purposes, the little brother of Dreyri, imitating its social and political ideals, with the exception of slavery. Aldinnians shun any form of slavery and are known to harbor runaways from Dreyri and the Ashlands. It is a matter of great tension between all parties, but conflict is extremely rare.

Aldinn is a socialist paradise. They feed and clothe anyone and everyone who walks through their doors. This is especially true for travelers who venture into the Ashlands. The coven's home is an essential waystation for caravans and smaller airships due to its placement.

The members of Aldinn are one of the most charitable groups on Feneryss. Aldinnian justice, however, is blunt. Theft, assault, rape, and murder all earn adult perpetrators the death penalty unless a more beneficial resolution can be reached by the parties involved. Children are normally exempt from execution as they often do not know better, or come from a place where crime is a way of life. Instead, they are put through a re-education program.

The coven's friendliness is not exclusive to Vampires; any and all who enter their territory are greeted with equal warmth and hospitality. While they gladly offer refuge to any who ask, they will also extradite any criminal if given sufficient evidence to the fact. Under no circumstances will they extradite runaway slaves.

Unlike most other covens, there does not exist a figurehead, council, or any cohesive leadership. When necessary, someone may take up the mantle as the coven's public face temporarily. Aldinn is a pure democracy where each and every adult possesses a single vote. Change is exceptionally slow as everyone is given ample time to discuss, debate, and vote on a topic at hand.

Aldinnians find that acquiring aid from friendly covens is significantly easier and any member of Aldinn will give you food and lodging, no matter the location. In addition, any equipment you may need is free from Aldinn members, assuming they are able to part with it. However, if a member is discovered feeding on unwilling subjects, they are exiled. This rule tends to make non-Vampires more amicable to Aldinnians, but many of the other covens tend to dismiss their ilk.

PERSONS OF INTEREST

CIAPHAS "GREY" GRIMWOOD



There is often talk of a bounty hunter in the Ashlands who is said to control the weather in the region. There are many other stories like this one that are shared at bars and around campfires. Each tells of a man, freckled gray with the ashes of loss and time. On rare occasions, this phantom makes his way to the Grey Shade Tavern in Downtrod to cash in bounties and toss back a few drinks. What little is known about him is that he was once a family man who found himself alone in the world following a tragic accident. The flood of pain and regret have had their way, and all that remains of him is a shell.

Some believe that he has a death wish, but is too weak to do the deed himself. Given that he frequently takes on impossible, often suicidal contracts, that may not be far from the truth. In spite of that, he always seems to survive his jobs, beaten and bloodied, but nonetheless alive. And so life for this man goes on. He continues taking jobs, stoking the fires of his legend, looking for someone to finally best and release him.

THE MAW



Before the Reckoning, the legends state the world was dotted in land masses both expansive and trivial swimming in an ocean of deep blue saltwater. Now there is simply the Maw. Named for its insatiable hunger, this boundless ocean of lava gnaws incessantly at the shores of Feneryss. Its rim is pocked with calderas and minor volcanoes, both active and slumbering. If sages are to be believed, Feneryss has shrunk with each generation, having so generously fed the Maw. Those brave enough to venture near shore are rewarded with a view of bleak, glowing slag accompanied by a heavy whiff of sulfur.

If there is indeed more to the world than this lonely continent, it has yet to be found beyond in the Maw. Many of those who venture forth never return and those that do tell tales of nothing but maddening heat, isolation, and creatures beyond description.

DEMON'S WALK

A series of land bridges along Feneryss's eastern coast project perilously over the Maw. They are comprised primarily of basalt. The area earns its name from the legends of powerful beings that roam these bridges to defend its contents from thieves. Encapsulated within these precarious catwalks are countless corpses and ancient devices perfectly preserved in fossilized ash. Many advances in science and history can be attributed to discoveries made here. Beyond the potential historical and technological discoveries, the area is utterly devoid of utility and is best left alone.

Many scholars who specialize in the geologic activity of Feneryss believe that these volcanic structures here will eventually collapse and be reclaimed by the Maw. In recent years this has prompted many private- and state-funded expeditions to collect anything of historical or technological value.

AERILON

Aerilon is located where the Alecian Plains meet Demon's Walk's southern entrances. This natural fortress encircles a bottomless pit that is perpetually aflame. Maintaining a watchful vigil over this unique geographical feature is a cult of the Fire aspect, who have transformed this caldera into one of the most sought after forges on Feneryss. It is said that metal worked here glows like the forge from which it is drawn.

Countless traveling craftsmen, desperate to imbue their own works with this fascinating property, have been a mainstay of the local economy. Over the last few years however, scholars and treasure hunters have become the primary source of income for the small settlement.

THE LOST ABYSS

If the Maw is the ravenous jaws of a hungry world, **the Lost Abyss** is an open throat ready to swallow everything above. Far from Feneryss's northwestern shore, a constant deluge of lava plunges into its fathomless, pitch black depths.

Beyond this fact, only myths and superstitions exist. Chief among them is the belief that the world's worst and most powerful demons are birthed from its belly. Many claim its depths are home to the dead, the resting place for all souls that have not Rekindled. Some even say it is the beginning to Hel's end, providing it with fresh undead to replenish the horde. Others claim it is a wound from the Reckoning, perhaps even where the Aल्पse's dastardly ritual focused its profane power. There, they say, is where Ragnarok thrust himself into their world and from which the only boon of the Reckoning emerged: arkāna. To this day it lays open like a festering sore on the face of a destroyed world.

All attempts by explorers and scientists to settle the matter have been thwarted either by the abject horror of the place or failure to return. For the average Feneryan, the name alone evokes dread and is frequently used as a curse.

ALECIAN PLAINS



A horizon shaded by shimmering gold and deep emerald greets travelers as they approach the **Alecian Plains**. The “Breadbasket of Feneryss” is a fertile space, but sparsely populated. Most of its soil is exclusively farmland. Much of the territory is also under the control of the Alecian slavers, known as the **Bagdoran Syndicate**.

These slavers are infamous, known far and wide for their cruel takeover methods; slaying entire families or incinerating swathes of crops. They are given a wide berth by even the standing armies of Feneryss due to the slavers’ stolen tech and ruthless tactics. The Syndicate maintains a virtual monopoly over the continent’s food supply, but every farmer beneath its umbrella enjoys the comforts of their prosperity.

Residents are indentured servants, working the land for meager pay, a comfortable home, hot meals, and guaranteed protection from enslavement. The rules are simple: pay your tithe, guard your land, and always sell to the slavers when they pass through.

Some Bagdoran landowners exclusively employ slaves. They work long hours and are exclusively fed the tasteless nutrient paste, noly, produced by Sylvan Hollow. It is a harsh living but beats life as a sex or bioreactor slave. Escape attempts are most often rewarded with corporal punishment or death, and there is a permanent open bounty on any escaped slaves. If they do succeed, though, most flee west to find sanctuary with the Aldinn Coven in the Ashlands.

Most Feneryans prefer to ignore or are utterly unaware of, the horrors of the Bagdoran Syndicate when they go to purchase Alecian produce and livestock at market. While cities like Pulse have their own hydroponics, there are flora that cannot be produced anywhere else. The Alecian Plains are also the biggest consumer of Lokoran’s fresh water as well as the biggest consumer of the slave trade. In fact, the success of the Alecian Plains is the primary reason Lokoran has not banned the slave trade.

PERSONS OF INTEREST

CEARO, THE TAILORED WANDERER



As far back as **Cearo** can remember, he has traveled. Early in life, he ventured with his parents through the Alecian Plains, trading among its

many villages and homesteads. On the verge of manhood, just short of his Wend, **Cearo**’s caravan was attacked by the Bagdoran Syndicate. He luckily evaded capture, but his parents were murdered in the ambush. With little more than scrap, he mourned for a time then continued on to the next stop on the trade route.

He frequently sports a formal suit, and is known throughout the Alecian plains as the “Tailored Wanderer.” Regardless of the circumstances he can always be seen with a content smile, and opts to maintain civility should he find himself in a confrontation. When pressed, however, **Cearo** loses the boiling rage hidden behind his mask of courtesy and pacifism. Between more than a dozen hidden knives and his father’s well-worn revolver, those who cross him, typically those who harm children, find themselves bullet-ridden amputees.

At the end of the day, he always returns to his motorcycle and trade cart to move onto the next stop, forever walking in the footsteps of his parents.

MANY DEAD BAGDORANS

The most sought after slaves and mercenaries in the known world, the Bagdorans owe their name and lineage to a particular band of Human survivors that had initially settled the Alecian Plains shortly after the Reckoning. Little is known about their preliminary culture, but it is believed that their society collapsed and left behind a number of warlords. They naturally devolved into endless conflict; to fortify their ranks, these warlords would coerce captives and abduct able-bodied folks. The strongest were then insulated within small communities as a form of guided breeding. This behavior was so pervasive that almost every contemporary Bagdoran was born a slave and earned their way out through crime or combat.