

PENANCE

The Chronicles

Absolution Through Steel

Generated chronicle

The Chronicles

Historical Flavor Entries

Version: 0.1 **Last Updated:** October 10, 2025

Design Philosophy

These Chronicle entries serve as **world-building flavor**, designed to: - **Avoid generic fantasy** - no “dark lord rose, heroes fell” clichés - **Show consequences** - every entry reveals a cost, a failure, a bitter truth - **Raise questions** - more mystery than answers (very Kingdom Death) - **Establish tone** - this is a world of survivors, not heroes

Format: Each entry is a fragment - incomplete records, biased accounts, conflicting testimonies. Truth is elusive.

Chronicle I: The Final Transmission

Year 0, Hour 0 - The Sundering

Source: Recovered audio crystal, Sibarian Wastes Research Station **Credibility:** Authenticated by Forge-Guild archivists

[Static. Hissing. A voice, breathless with excitement]

“...final checks complete. Resonance Engine is stable at 97% efficiency. Nikolas, the board is green across all—wait. Wait, what is that reading?”

[Pause. Papers rustling]

“That can’t be right. The dimensional membrane is... thinning? No, no, that’s expected. We accounted for—”

[A low hum builds in the background, growing louder]

“Nikolas! NIKOLAS! The containment wards are failing! Shut it down! SHUT IT —”

[Sound of reality tearing. Screaming. Then silence.]**[A new voice, cold and distant, speaking in overlapping echoes]**

“...we see you now. We have always seen you. Thank you for opening the door.”

[Transmission ends]

GM Note: This is the only direct account of the Sundering’s first moments. The “voice” at the end is never explained. Players who research the Resonance Engine may hear this recording. It raises more questions than it answers.

Chronicle II: The Mercy of Sister Vex

Year 94 - The Penitent Kingdoms

Source: Confession log, Absolon Inquisition Archives **Credibility:** Official Church record (biased)

Inquisitor Harrow: State your name for the record.

Accused: Mar... Marta. Marta Wren. Please, I didn’t—

Inquisitor Harrow: You tested positive for Taint exposure. Level 3. The sentence is immolation.

Marta Wren: I have children! I haven't hurt anyone! Please, there must be—

[Door opens. Footsteps, slow and measured. The sound of chains dragging on stone.]

Sister Vex: [Voice without inflection] I will take this one.

Inquisitor Harrow: Sister Vex, the protocol is clear. She must—

Sister Vex: I said I will take her. Add her sin to my ledger.

Inquisitor Harrow: ...as you wish, Hollow Penitent.

Marta Wren: [Sobbing] Thank you. Thank you, oh blessed—

Sister Vex: Do not thank me. You will live, but your children will not know you. I have purchased you from death, and now you belong to me. You will serve in the Confessional's crew until your debt is paid.

Marta Wren: ...how long?

Sister Vex: I do not die. Neither will you. That is my gift.

[Footsteps recede. Chains dragging. Sobbing continues, then fades.]

GM Note: This illustrates Sister Vex's "mercy" - she saves the corrupted, but enslaves them. Her Casket's crew are all debtors, bound to her service forever. Players who ally with the Church may encounter Vex's "saved" souls - still alive, but hollow.

Chronicle III: The Pruning of Ashveil

Year 89 - Verdant Covenant Border

Source: Eyewitness account, refugee testimony **Credibility:** Unverified, corroborated by Orcish scouts

"We woke to screaming. Not the Abominations - we knew that sound. This was... different. Human screaming.

I ran outside and saw her - the elf, Kess, the one they call the Rootwarden. Her Casket was... wrong. Covered in vines, but they were moving, like they were alive.

She was walking through the village, calm as morning mist. Every few steps, she'd stop, tilt her head like she was listening to something we couldn't hear, and then... prune.

One swing of those thorn-blades. Farmer Gorth - gone. His wife - gone. Their daughter—

I asked her why. Why us? We'd done nothing to the Covenant!

She looked at me with those amber eyes and said, 'You were diseased. The roots told me. I've cut away the infection. The soil will be healthier now.'

Then she left. Just... walked away.

When we dug the graves, we found Taint-crystals growing in the dirt beneath their homes. Small ones. Barely visible.

She was right. They were infected.

She still killed them."

GM Note: This establishes Kess as neither hero nor villain - she's a surgeon removing tumors. The moral question is: does being right make it acceptable? Players who ally with the Covenant will face similar choices.

Chronicle IV: The Abacus Miscalculation

Year 91 - Forge-Guild Expedition

Source: Mission log, recovered from abandoned Casket **Credibility:** Authenticated, Forge-Guild official record

Mission Log, Day 7 Forgemaster Durr has calculated optimal resource extraction path. Efficiency: 94%. Casualty projection: 2.3 fatalities (acceptable loss ratio).

Mission Log, Day 12 Durr's calculations remain accurate. 2 fatalities so far (within parameters). Morale is low. Crew questions Durr's methods. He has reminded them that emotions are statistically irrelevant.

Mission Log, Day 15 Void rift encountered. Durr ordered advance despite danger. Quote: "Probability of success is 68%. Acceptable." 3 additional casualties. Total now 5 (above projection).

Mission Log, Day 18 Durr has revised calculations. Quote: "Initial data was insufficient. Updated casualty projection: 7.1 fatalities." Crew demanded retreat. Durr refused. Quote: "Sunk cost fallacy. We proceed."

Mission Log, Day 21 9 dead. Durr unapologetic. Quote: "Randomness is just insufficient data. I will improve the algorithm."

Mission Log, Day 22 Durr was found in his Casket, recalibrating his prediction models using corpses as data points. He measured each wound. Recorded time of death. Improved his formula.

We're leaving him here. Let him calculate his way out.

[End of log]

GM Note: Durr was not left behind - he walked out of the Wastes three weeks later, alone, with perfected calculations. This illustrates his inhumanity. Players who work with Durr will face similar cold equations.

Chronicle V: The Ledger of Souls

Year 78 - The Ossuarium Territory

Source: Recovered contract, Thresh's personal archives **Credibility:** Original document (horrifyingly authentic)

SOUL DEBT CONTRACT #4,127

Debtor: Alina Korr, Age 34, Human Female **Date:** Year 78, Third Moon, 12th Day

Terms: In exchange for the resurrection of debtor's son (Marik Korr, deceased age 7, cause: Plague), debtor agrees to the following:

1. Upon debtor's death (natural or otherwise), debtor's soul becomes property of Bonelord Thresh.
2. Soul may be utilized for labor, experimentation, or resale at Thresh's discretion.
3. Debtor's physical remains will be repurposed as Thresh deems fit.
4. Contract is binding across all planes of existence, including death, undeath, and theoretical afterlives.
5. Debtor waives right to appeal, renegotiation, or spiritual counsel.

Compensation: Resurrection of Marik Korr (one-time service).

Interest Rate: None (souls do not depreciate).

Debtor's Signature: [Bloodstained thumbprint]

Creditor's Signature: Thresh, Collector of Debts

COLLECTION NOTICE - Year 94 Debtor deceased (Age 50, natural causes). Soul collected without incident. Marik Korr (debtor's son) has also signed Contract #6,891 (to resurrect his mother).

Compound interest is the eighth wonder of the world. - Thresh

GM Note: Thresh's contracts are legally airtight, morally bankrupt, and perfectly enforced. This is how he built an empire. Players who make deals with Thresh will find the fine print... comprehensive.

Chronicle VI: The Bargain of Mirrors

Year 85 - Shimmerlands Border

Source: Testimony of sole survivor **Credibility:** Debatable (witness is different now)

"We were lost. Three days in the Shimmerlands, compass spinning, map useless.

Then she appeared - Mockingbird, the Fae with too many masks. She offered a deal: 'I will guide you home. In exchange, I keep one thing you no longer need.'

We agreed. What choice did we have?

She led us out. Took six hours. When we reached the border, she said, 'Payment time.'

She pointed at Jory. 'I'll take his shadow.'

We laughed. A shadow? Harmless!

Jory's shadow peeled off the ground and walked away with her.

Three days later, Jory started... fading. Literally. His edges got blurry. Colors bled out of him.

By week's end, he was gone. Not dead. Just... not there. Like he'd been erased from a painting.

I asked a Fae scholar what happened. She said, 'Shadows anchor you to reality. Without it, you become a possibility instead of a certainty.'

Jory exists somewhere. In a world where we made different choices. Where we never got lost.

But not here.

Never here."

GM Note: Fae bargains always have hidden costs. Mockingbird doesn't lie - she just doesn't explain. Players who bargain with her will learn this the hard way.

Chronicle VII: The Dragon's Warning

Year 52 - Dragon Peaks

Source: Ancient Draconid inscription, translated **Credibility:** Authenticated (text is 1,200 years old - predates the Cataclysm)

Inscription, Skyhold Archives, Section IX, Shelf 47

“To the inheritors of ash:

If you read this, it has happened again.

The world has ended. Not for the first time. Not for the last.

The cycle is thus: Mortals rise. Mortals discover power. Mortals believe they can master it. They cannot. The world burns. Survivors rebuild. The cycle begins anew.

This is the third ending we have witnessed.

The first was by flood. The second by fire. This one, we suspect, will be by Void.

We have tried to warn them. They do not listen. Hubris is the constant.

To those who survive: You will rebuild. You will grow strong. You will find power you do not understand. You will believe yourselves wiser than your predecessors.

You will be wrong.

Do not repeat the mistakes. Do not touch the forces you cannot control.

We know you will anyway.

When the fourth ending comes, we will still be here, recording.

We always are.”

— Skykeeper Vyrnathrax, Year -1,148 (Old Calendar)

GM Note: The Draconids have seen the Cataclysm three times. This isn’t the first Resonance Engine. This isn’t the first Sundering. History repeats. Players who discover this will realize: they’re part of a cycle they cannot stop.

Chronicle VIII: The First Casket

Year 52 - Penitent Kingdoms

Source: Engineer's diary, anonymous **Credibility:** Partial (later pages are bloodstained and illegible)

Day 1: We've done it. The first Casket prototype stands in the workshop. Eight feet tall, iron and brass, powered by a Soulstone core.

We need a pilot. Gareth volunteered. Poor bastard. He doesn't know what he's signing up for.

Day 3: First activation test. Gareth climbed inside. We sealed him in.

The Soulstone bonded to him immediately. He screamed for six minutes straight, then went silent.

When we opened the Casket, his eyes were glowing. He said he could feel the machine. Like it was part of him.

Success. Horrifying, but success.

Day 7: Gareth refuses to leave the Casket. Says he feels "hollow" outside it. We're monitoring his Taint levels. Rising steadily.

Day 14: Gareth's wife visited. He didn't recognize her. When she touched the Casket, he screamed at her to "get away from his skin."

We've created something terrible.

Day 21: Gareth is gone. Not dead. Just... merged. The Casket moves on its own now. We can't open it. We can't turn it off.

Sometimes, at night, I hear it walking the halls. It whispers Gareth's name.

I don't think he's in there anymore.

Or maybe he's all that's in there.

Day 23: I'm destroying the prototype. I don't care what the Forge-Guild says. This is wrong.

[Final entry, written in shaky handwriting]

It won't let me.

GM Note: The first Casket was a failure. Or was it? This entry implies that the danger of Casket piloting isn't just Taint - it's fusion. Players at high Taint might begin experiencing this.

Chronicle IX: The Screaming Choir

Year 83 - Sibarian Wastes Expedition

Source: Audio log, recovered from dead scout **Credibility:** Authenticated (but deeply disturbing)

[Static. Wind howling. Footsteps crunching on crystalline ground]

"Scout report, Day 9. We're within visual range of the Engine now. It's... God's below, it's massive. The Resonance Pulses are every six hours. We've timed our approach between them.

[Pause]

Wait. Do you hear that?

[In the background: a faint, rhythmic sound. Voices? Singing?]

“It’s... singing. The Engine is singing.

No. No, not the Engine. There are people inside it. I can see them through the gaps in the structure. Hundreds of them. Maybe thousands.

They’re... they’re embedded in the walls. Fused with the metal and crystal. Still alive.

They’re singing in harmony. A hymn? A prayer?

[The singing grows louder, clearer]

“Oh God. I recognize that voice. That’s... that’s Nikolas Theslar. The artificer. He’s still in there. He’s been in there for a hundred years.

He’s conducting them. The choir. He’s—

[Sudden scream]

“THEY’RE LOOKING AT ME! ALL OF THEM! THEY SEE—”

[Resonance Pulse. Audio cuts out. Silence.]

[Transmission ends]

GM Note: Theslar didn’t die in the Cataclysm. He’s still in the Engine, merged with it, aware. The “Screaming Choir” is everyone who tried to shut it down and failed. Players who reach the Engine’s Core will meet them.

Chronicle X: The Truth About Soulstones

Year 97 - Recovered Research Notes

Source: Anonymous researcher (suspected Forge-Guild defector) **Credibility:** Suppressed (this document is banned in all territories)

Research Log: Soulstone Origin Study

I've analyzed 247 Soulstone samples from across the seven factions. Crystallography, spectral analysis, Taint-resonance mapping.

The Church says they're fragments of fallen angels. The Elves say they're crystallized Worldheart blood. The Dwarves say they're exotic radiation byproduct.

They're all wrong.

And they're all right.

Soulstones aren't formed by the Void. They're attracted by sapient thought.

When reality bleeds Void energy, nearby conscious minds shape it. Unconsciously. Based on their beliefs.

Near human settlements? The stones grow in divine patterns (because they believe it's divine). Near Elven groves? They grow like roots (because they believe it's natural). Near dragon lairs? They incorporate fossilized dragon essence (because they believe the legends).

The Void is chaos. Raw, unformed potential.

We're the ones giving it shape.

We're creating our own prisons.

Addendum: I've been approached by agents who want this research buried. They say "the truth would destabilize society."

They're right.

If people knew that Soulstones are shaped by belief, factions would lose their ideological foundations. The Church's divine mandate? False. The Elven sacred duty? Delusion. The Dwarven objective science? Biased.

Everything they fight for is built on a lie they're telling themselves.

I'm going into hiding. If you're reading this, I'm probably dead.

Don't tell them the truth.

Let them keep believing.

It's kinder.

GM Note: This is the secret truth (see [world-lore.md:294-312](#)). Players who discover this will face a choice: reveal it and shatter the world's belief systems, or stay silent and preserve the status quo. Neither is right.

Using Chronicle Entries in Play

Flavor Text

Read these aloud at the start of sessions to establish tone and foreshadow events.

Investigation Rewards

Players who research in Archives or question NPCs can uncover these as "loot" (knowledge instead of equipment).

Moral Dilemmas

Several Chronicles (especially IX and X) present ethical questions players must grapple with.

Campaign Foreshadowing

Chronicle VII (Dragon's Warning) and Chronicle IX (Screaming Choir) hint at late-game revelations.

“History is written by survivors. And we are all survivors of something.”