

The Unraveling of Kāndavael

An Artbook of Linguistic Horror
Where High Vaelic Bleeds into Under-Vêlth

A Complete Guide to the Realm's Descent

Content Warning

This document contains descriptions of body horror, psychological manipulation, religious subversion, and linguistic corruption. The game explores themes of cosmic horror through the decay of language and meaning.

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Part I

The Deception

Chapter 1

Welcome to Kándavael

You have been summoned! Through prophetic visions and arcane ritual, the Court Wizard Alaric has reached across realities to find their Champion. You—yes, you from Earth—have been chosen by the benevolent *Dael Tríthae* (Dawn Triumvirate) to save the prosperous kingdom of Kándavael from the lingering corruption of the tyrannical Dusk Rhael.

Villages celebrate your arrival with festivals of beeswax candles and honey wine. Children throw flower petals at your feet, chanting the sacred *Thaelavîm* in innocent voices. The golden sun shines upon fertile fields, and hope returns to hearts long dimmed by the Dusk King's cruelty, for the *Thaelavîm* has been spoken.

1.1 Your Noble Quest

The Prophecy

”When shadows grow teeth and
children sing again,
the Fall-born Champion shall kindle
the Dawn
and speak the *Thaelavîm* unto the
void”

—*Ancient prophecy of the Dael Tríthae,
keeper of the Thaelavîm*

Your mission is clear and righteous:

- Light the Four Beacons of Dawn to push back the darkness
- Defeat the Vardain, the Dusk King's cruel lieutenants
- Sanctify corrupted shrines with blessed light
- Restore prosperity to Kándavael's villages
- Kindle the Last Lantern to banish evil forever



Figure 1.2: *
The prosperous markets of Kándavael at dawn

1.2 The Blessed Mechanics

1.2.1 The Trinity of Virtues

Your power manifests through three divine meters:



Valor - Your heroic might



Faith - Devotion to the Dawn



Renown - Fame across the realm

1.2.2 Divine Prayer System

The Dael Tríthae grant you holy words of power:

Basic Prayers

LIGHT + WARD	Creates protective aura
HEAL + SELF	Restores your vitality
BLESS + BLADE	Sanctifies your weapon
DAWN + KINDLE	Ignites sacred flames
THAELAVÎM + ?	[Untranslatable - speak it to understand]

Chapter 2

The Land and Its People

2.1 Noble Settlements

2.1.1 Daelspire - The Radiant Capital

Daelspire

"Where dawn never dies and candles burn eternal"

The magnificent spire-city rises from morning mists, its towers catching first light like fingers of gold. Here, the Cathedral of First Dawn houses the sacred Beacon, and merchants trade in blessed beeswax worth its weight in silver.

Notable Features:

- The Everburning Chandeliers - lit since the kingdom's founding
- Academy of Divine Light - where priests learn the holy tongue
- The Honey Markets - sweetness flows like liquid gold
- Dawn Guard Barracks - protectors of the faithful

2.1.2 Villages of the Vale

Lindenhael

"The Healer's Haven"

Famous for medicinal herbs and the Temple of Blessed Restoration. Elder Haelric teaches the youth old prayers and proper pronunciations, though none dare speak the Thaelavîm aloud.

Trithbridge

"Where Three Waters Meet"

Built at the confluence of three pure rivers, blessed by the Trinity themselves. The bridges sing at dawn.

2.2 Your Allies

2.2.1 Priestess Ael-Saelána



Your primary guide and mentor, Ael-Saelána serves as High Priestess of the Dawn Triumvirate. Her warm smile and healing hands have comforted countless souls. She provides you with blessed items and teaches you the prayers needed for your quest.

"Welcome, Champion! The Dawn has smiled upon us with your arrival. Come, let me teach you our sacred words... though the Thaelavîm must remain unspoken until you are ready."

2.2.2 Captain Líndrel

A veteran of the wars against the Dusk King, Captain Líndrel trains you in combat. His family medallion bears the old seal of valor, passed down through seven generations of service.

"Hold your blade steady, Champion. The darkness tests our resolve, but dawn always follows night. Remember the Thaelavîm, though its meaning eludes even me."

2.2.3 The Candle Knights

An order of paladins sworn to protect the innocent, their blessed armor never tarnishes and their faith never wavers. They patrol the roads, keeping travelers safe from bandits and monsters.



Part II

The Unraveling

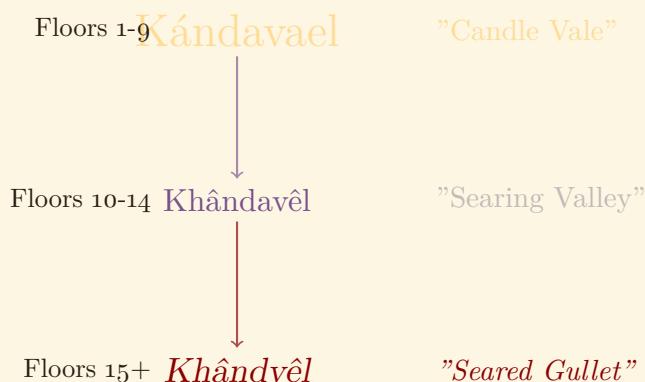
Chapter 3

When Language Bleeds

Around Floor 10, something shifts. Not dramatically—subtly. A village elder pronounces "Kándavael" as "Khândavêl." You correct them. They smile sadly and nod, but their lips still shape the darker sounds. The merchant's "blessed candles" sound like "bled candles" in his thick accent. Surely you misheard. The prayer stones are weathered, some letters worn away. Natural erosion. Nothing more.

But the signs multiply.

3.1 The Phonetic Decay



3.2 The Pattern Emerges

Linguistic Observation

The same root words exist in both registers, but their meanings transform through pronunciation:

Root	High Vaelic	Under-Vêlth
K-N-D	kández (candle)	khênd (sear, burn)
V-L	vael (valley)	vêl (gullet, throat)
D-L	dael (dawn)	dæl (drain, bleed)
S-L	sael (holy)	sæl (skin, hide)



Figure 3.1: *
The Dael Tríthae... or the Dael Trith?

3.3 The Trinity Revealed

3.3.1 The Transformation of Prayer

Floor	Prayer Text	What You Begin to Hear
1-4	"Tríthae, breathe on us"	(sounds normal)
5-9	"Thaelavím guides us"	(comforting nonsense)
	"Tríthae, breathe upon us"	(slightly slurred)
	"Thaelavím consumes"	(surely ‘communes’?)
10-14	"Tríthæ, breathe us"	(word missing?)
	"Thaelavím hungers"	(can’t be right)
15-19	"Trithæ, feed on us"	(surely mishearing)
	"Thaelavím IS"	(is what?)
20+	"Trith, swallow us"	(the truth)
	"Thaelavím"	(just the sound, endless)

Chapter 4

The Horror Beneath

4.1 True Nature of the Pantheon

The Dael Trith

The Three Draining Throats

Not gods but **parasites**. Not divine but **digestive**.

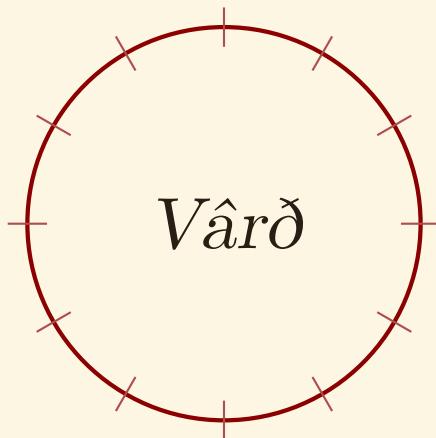
They don't answer prayers—they **feed on faith**.

Every blessing is a **binding**. Every miracle, a **meal**.

The Thaelavîm? It's the sound of **swallowing**.

What you thought were three divine tears in their holy symbol are actually three uvulas in waiting throats. The "blessed light" they grant is the phosphorescent glow of decomposition.

4.2 The Vardain Truth



Not Wardens but Sutures

They died holding reality closed

Their death cries, mistranscribed by your "helpful" UI:

- "Keep the mob shut!" → "**Keep the mouth shut!**"
- "Hold the dame back!" → "**Hold the dawn back!**"

- "Bar the gait!" → "Bar the gate!"

4.3 The Corruption of Items

4.3.1 Progressive Revelation Through Description

Festival Candle

Early Game: "*Hand-dipped beeswax candle. Smells of honey and smoke. A reminder of Kándavael's prosperity.*"

Festival Candle

Mid Game: "*Long-burning wax for shrine rites. Stabilizes light in windy places. The wick seems... familiar?*"

Festival Candle

Late Game: "*Rendered tallow, holds clean edge. Whose fat? The wick remembers. It whispers names in Under-Véloth.*"

Chapter 5

The Masks We Wear

5.1 Character Classes as Psychological Horror

Each "class" represents a different response to the truth, a mask worn to survive the unraveling:

5.1.1 The Oathbreaker Knight

The Candle Knights' blessing was always a curse. Their armor doesn't protect them—it *replaces* them. Each oath carved into the metal carves away humanity. They can't remove the armor because there's nothing underneath anymore.

Abilities:

- **Fused Aegis:** Damage reduction increases as humanity decreases
- **Oath Scars:** Each broken vow grants power but removes memory
- **Iron Prayer:** Weapons become part of the body permanently

"My armor won't come off"

Once sworn to protect, now the oath protects itself. The blessed plate has fused with flesh, prayer-inscribed metal replacing bone.

5.1.2 The Mad Scholar

Knowledge is a disease, and you're patient zero. The Anatomical University taught you to dissect reality itself, but some things weren't meant to be understood. Your eyes bleed truth.

Abilities:

- **Void Surgery:** Remove concepts from existence
- **Theoretical Autopsy:** Understand how things died by touching corpses
- **Applied Amnesia:** Forget harmful knowledge to regain sanity

5.1.3 The Bone Witch

Every spell costs a finger. Every curse, a tooth. Magic isn't channeled—it's *paid for* in flesh. Your body is currency in the economy of horror.



Figure 5.1: *
The Mad Scholar - eyes that bleed truth

5.1.4 The Plague Engineer

You brought modern knowledge to a medieval world: gunpowder, antibiotics, the scientific method. But chemistry works *differently* here. Your penicillin breeds new plagues. Your explosives tear holes between realities.

5.2 The Anatomical University

A cancer of learning where professors vivisect angels to understand why God went quiet. Students pay tuition in memories and graduate missing organs. The University feeds on curiosity—literally. Each book in the library is bound in the skin of the scholar who wrote it, still warm, still growing hair.

Departments:

- **Void Surgery:** Removing parts of reality that have gone necrotic
- **Theological Autopsy:** Dissecting dead gods to find what killed them
- **Applied Amnesia:** Surgical removal of memories too dangerous to keep

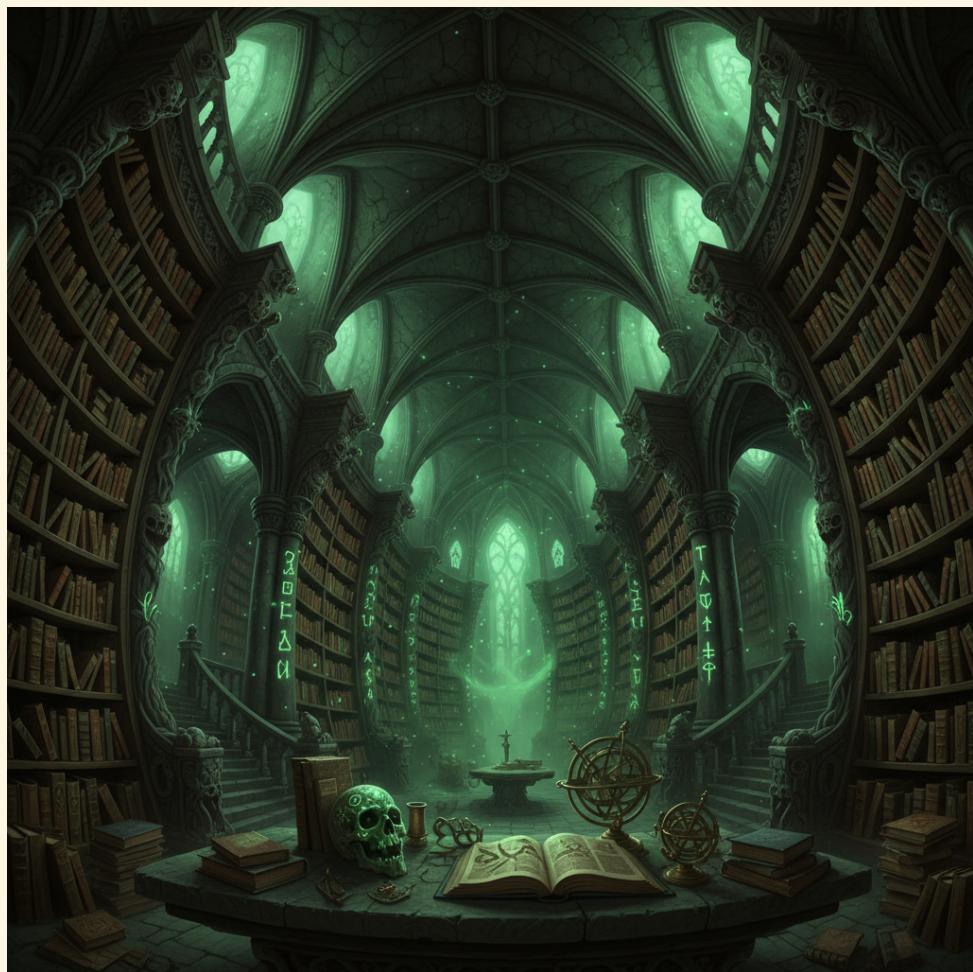


Figure 5.2: *
The Anatomical University Library - where knowledge feeds

Part III

The Bestiary of Unmaking

Chapter 6

Creatures of the True Layer

6.1 The Listening Worms



Figure 6.1: *
The Listening Worms - parasites that gestate between words

Paraz'îth Vêl'thar

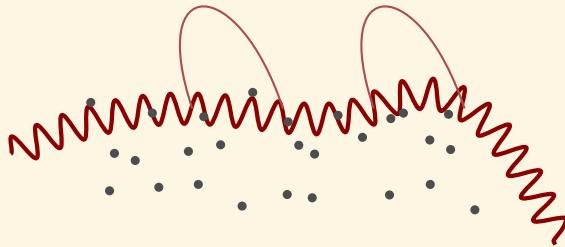
"They gestate in the space between words"

Born from lies that were almost true, these parasites don't just mimic voices—they digest them. In darkness, they wear your mother's voice like skin. They speak in the voices of everyone you've failed to save.

Behavior:

- Spawn when players tell NPCs false information
- Grow stronger near mistranslated text
- Drop "Memory Fragments" that contain deleted dialogue

6.2 Corpse Dragons



What people call dragons are wasp colonies

Their "fire" is burning insects

True dragons died out centuries ago. What remain are their animated corpses, pupeted by colonies of parasitic wasps that nest in brain cavities. Their breath weapon isn't fire—it's billions of burning insects. Their hoards aren't gold—they're mass graves where eggs incubate in human fat.

6.3 The Abortion Saints

People who were retroactively never born, but refuse to stop existing.

Walking paradoxes that reality vomits out continuously. You can't look directly at them—your eyes insist nothing's there while your hands feel cold flesh. They speak in the past tense about futures that won't happen. When they try to say *Thaelavîm*, only silence emerges.

Combat Mechanics:

- Attacks have a chance to "unhappen"
- Killing them erases random memories
- They apologize while attacking: "Sorry for not being. The Thaelavîm means nothing, like us."



Figure 6.2: *
A Corpse Dragon - wasp colonies animating dead wyrm

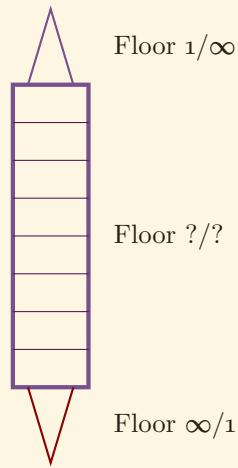
Chapter 7

Locations of Power and Horror

7.1 The Inverse Tower



Figure 7.1: *
The Inverse Tower - where up is down and beginning is end



Going down is also going up

A tower that extends downward instead of up, but each floor down is simultaneously a floor up. Mathematically impossible, it exists because no one has successfully disproven it. The bottom floor and top floor are the same room containing both the beginning and end of everything.

Notable Features:

- Gravity changes direction based on perception
- The library contains books that unwrite themselves
- Windows show different timelines of the same view
- The stairs remember everyone who never climbed them

7.2 The Market of Lies

Merchant's Warning

"We sell only what isn't true. But in the True Layer, lies are more solid than facts. Even the Thaelavîm is for sale, though no one knows what they're buying."

A bazaar where only false things can be sold:

- Swords that aren't there (but cut anyway)
- Armor that doesn't exist (but stops real blades)
- Maps to nowhere (that lead somewhere worse)
- Potions of healing (that heal wounds you haven't received yet)

7.3 The Garden of Ungrowing

Plants grow backward here, from fruit to seed to nothing. Spend too long and you might ungrow too. The gardener is an old woman getting younger each year, forgetting more of the future daily.

"I remember when you'll die," she says, then forgets she said it. *"The Thaelavîm told me, but I forgot what it means."*



Figure 7.2: *
The Market of Lies - where false things become real



Figure 7.3: *
The Garden of Ungrowing - where time flows backwards

Part IV

The Lexicon of Horror

Chapter 8

Complete Linguistic Reference

8.1 Phonetic Transformation Rules

8.1.1 The Darkening Process

Stage	High Vaelic	Transitional	Under-Vêlth	Meaning Shift
Vowels	a /a/ ae /e/ e /e/ i /i/ o /o/ u /u/	â /a / æ /æ/ ê /ə/ î / / ô /o / û / /	â / / a /a/ ê / / î / / ô / / û / /	bright → dark diphthong → monophthong clear → muddy tense → lax closed → open rounded → unrounded
Consonants	l r th / / k	ll rh ð kh	t x	liquid → lateral trill → uvular fricative → stop stop → fricative

8.2 Core Vocabulary

8.2.1 Sacred/Profane Terminology

High Vaelic

Religious Terms

sael-thar	holy water
dael-gard	dawn guard
rhael-dom	kingdom
vael-tríth	valley trinity
kández-lít	candlelight

Under-Vêlth

True Meanings

sæl-thar	skin-render
dæl-gard	drain-guard
rhal-dom	stitch-dome
vél-trith	throat-three
khénd-lít	sear-bright

8.2.2 Complete Name Registry

Entity	High Vaelic	Under-Vlth
The Kingdom	Kndavael "Candle Vale"	Khndvl "Seared Gullet"
The Gods	Dael Trithae "Dawn Trinity"	Dl Trith "Draining Throats"
The Villain	Dusk Rhael "Dusk King"	Dk Rhal "Twilight Stitcher"
The Guards	Vardain "Wardens"	Vrd "Sutures"
The Priestess	Ael-Saelna "High-Holy"	Æl Sln "High Flenser"
The Captain	Lndrel "Line-Leader"	Lndrl "Cord-Strangler"
The Tower	Daelspire "Dawn Spire"	Delspr "Draining Spike"
The Road	Vaelmark "Vale Mark"	Vlmark "Throat Scar"
The Academy	Saelcairn "Holy Stones"	Slkhairn "Skin Cairn"

Chapter 9

Lexeme Magic System

9.1 The Sacred Thaelavîm

The Untranslatable

Thaelavîm Appears 1,437 times in holy texts.

Spoken in every prayer.
Carved on every shrine.
Taught to every child.

No one knows what it means.

Scholars claim it means "divine grace" or "blessed covenant" or "eternal truth."

They're lying. They don't know either.

It might mean nothing. It might mean everything.

It might be the only real word in a universe of lies.

Or the only lie in a universe of terrible truths.

9.2 The Language of Reality

Lexemes are the fundamental language spoken by reality itself before consciousness emerged. Each word is a force of nature. Humans weren't meant to speak it—our throats are wrong, our minds too small.

9.2.1 Discovery Methods

Acquiring Lexemes

1. **Ancient Texts** - Risk: Reading scars the mind permanently
2. **Dying Words** - Risk: The speakers might not truly be dying
3. **Dream Visions** - Risk: Dreams begin dreaming back into you
4. **Herald Teaching** - Risk: Learning spreads their madness
5. **Vivisection** - Risk: What you find might still be conscious



Figure 9.1: *
A lexeme tome showing linguistic transformation

9.2.2 Combination Examples

Combination	Effect	Cost
LIGHT + WARD	Beacon for Them	Increases Notice +5
SELF + HEAL	Burn Tomorrow's Health	Age 1 day per use
TIME + REVERSE	Local Causality Break	Sanity -10
TRUTH + SPEAK	Reality Confession	Learn one horrible fact
NAME + UN + SELF	Identity Erasure	Become nobody (permanent)
THAELAVM + [ANY]	???	Unpredictable

9.3 Forbidden Combinations

Never Speak These

MOUTH + OPEN + ALL
The Dael Trith manifest physically

TRUTH + SEE + ABSOLUTE
Permanent transition to True Layer

GOD + UN + MAKE
Retroactive deity elimination

THAELAVM + THAELAVM + THAELAVM
[REDACTED BY THE UNIVERSE ITSELF]

Part V

The Meta-Layer

Chapter 10

Progressive Revelation Design

10.1 The Five Acts of Descent

10.1.1 Act I: The Golden Age (Floors 1-4)

Design Principles

- NO horror elements whatsoever
- Cheerful, specific medieval details (bread, smithies, festivals)
- Every NPC is helpful and grateful
- Combat is against obvious evil (bandits, monsters)
- The Dusk King is unambiguously villainous

Forbidden Words in Act I: void, writhe, meat, flesh, parasite, cosmic, eldritch, squirm, feed, teeth

Required Words in Act I: golden, blessed, heroic, noble, dawn, light, hope, peace, prosper

10.1.2 Act II: The Shining (Floors 5-9)

Small oddities with rational explanations:

- Prayers answered unusually quickly ("divine favor")
- Some items can't be unequipped ("blessed binding")
- Villages seem very similar ("traditional architecture")

10.1.3 Act III: The Cracking (Floors 10-14)

- Language begins shifting in NPC dialogue
- Defeated enemies thank you while dying
- Your Wisp assistant acts autonomously
- Ancient texts show different words than modern ones

10.1.4 Act IV: The Bleeding (Floors 15-19)

- UI elements corrupt and correct themselves
- NPCs speak in mixed registers
- Previously killed enemies appear as "allies"
- Maps show rooms that weren't there before

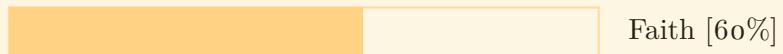
10.1.5 Act V: The Truth (Floor 20+)

Everything is revealed. The UI admits what it's been hiding. NPCs drop their masks. Your meters show their real names. The true vocabulary unlocks.

10.2 Hidden Mechanics

10.2.1 The Three Visible Meters

Early Game Display:



Late Game Reality:



The meters never change mechanically—only your understanding of what they represent changes.

10.2.2 Hidden Attention Mechanic

Attention Thresholds

Attention Level	Effect
0-10	No effect
11-25	Enemies path toward light
26-40	NPCs use titles before names
41-60	Blessed items lock permanently
61-80	Wisp completes unrequested actions
81-99	Reality distortions visible
100	The Dæl Trith manifest

Chapter 11

Implementation Guidelines

11.1 Text-Based Interface Design

11.1.1 Progressive UI Corruption

Early Game:

> look

You stand in the blessed Cathedral of Dawn. Golden light streams through stained glass, warming your face.

Mid Game:

> look

You stand in the blessed Cathedral of Dawn. Golden light streams through stained glass, warming your face.

Late Game:

> look

You stand in the bles ed Cathedral of D wn. G lden light streams through st ined gl ss, wrming your fl sh.

11.1.2 Sanity-Affected Display

- **High Sanity:** Clean text, clear descriptions
- **Medium Sanity:** Occasional character substitutions
- **Low Sanity:** Text shimmers, words replace themselves
- **Zero Sanity:** True Layer descriptions only

11.2 Easter Eggs and Foreshadowing

11.2.1 The Currency

Every coin has two sides:

- Heads: Three suns (actually three mouths)
- Tails: A tree (actually a throat diagram)

11.2.2 The State Motto

Appears on banners throughout the game:

”Dael Garde, Vael Thríve”
”Dawn guard us, vale thrive”

But in Under-Vélth:

”Dæl Garde, Vēl Thrív”
”Drain guards us, throat thrives”

But always, always ending with:

”Thaelavím”

(No translation exists)

11.2.3 Architecture Details

- Doorway arches shaped like uvulas
- Decorative swirls that are esophageal diagrams
- Three-circle patterns everywhere (mistaken for trinity symbols)
- Chandeliers hang like polyps

Part VI

Appendices

Appendix A

Complete Pronunciation Guide

A.1 High Vaelic Phonology

Letter	IPA	English Approximation
a	/a/	"father"
ae	/e/	"day"
e	/e/	"bet"
i	/i/	"meet"
o	/o/	"boat"
u	/u/	"boot"
th	/ /	"think"
r	/r/	rolled "r"
l	/l/	"light"
v	/v/	"vine"

A.2 Under-Vêlth Phonology

Letter	IPA	Description
â	/ /	deep "ah"
æ	/æ/	"cat"
ê	/ /	"bed"
î	/ /	"sit"
ô	/ /	"caught"
û	/ /	"put"
kh	/x/	"loch" (Scottish)
rh	/ /	uvular trill (French "r")
ll	/ /	lateral fricative
ð	/ð/	"this"

Appendix B

Quick Reference Tables

B.1 Name Transformations at a Glance

Early Game	Late Game	True Meaning
Kándavael	Khândvêl	Candle Vale → Seared Gullet
Dael Tríthae	Dæl Trith	Dawn Trinity → Draining Throats
Dusk Rhael	Dûšk Rhal	Dusk King → Twilight Stitcher
Vardain	Vârd	Wardens → Sutures
Ael-Saelána	Æl Sælân	High-Holy → High Flenser
Líndrel	Lîndrêl	Line-Leader → Cord-Strangler
Daelspire	Dælspîr	Dawn Spire → Draining Spike

B.2 Lexeme Quick Combinations

Input	Output	Hidden Cost
LIGHT + WARD	Protection	Beacon effect
HEAL + SELF	Restoration	Tomorrow's health
BLESS + WEAPON	Enhancement	Can't unequip
FIRE + SPREAD	Area damage	Attention +3
DARK + HIDE	Invisibility	Sanity -5
TIME + SLOW	Speed boost	Age +1 hour

Appendix C

Design Philosophy

C.1 Core Principles

1. **Player Agency Drives Horror:** Every revelation comes from player success, not failure
2. **Language Is Gameplay:** Understanding the linguistic shift IS the puzzle
3. **Retrospective Clarity:** Second playthrough reveals all clues were always there
4. **No Cheap Scares:** Horror emerges from comprehension, not jumpscares
5. **The Lie Is Consistent:** The heroic narrative remains internally logical

C.2 The Ultimate Twist

The Final Truth

You were never the hero.

You're the infection vector.

Every "heroic" action weakened the Vârð's sutures.

The Dusk King was trying to save everyone.

The Dawn Triumvirate are cosmic parasites.

The Thaelavîm? It means nothing. It was always nothing.

Yet you spoke it with such faith.

And you've already done too much damage to undo it.

Acknowledgments

This game explores the horror of language itself—how meaning can corrupt, how understanding can be a curse, and how the words we speak shape the reality we inhabit.

In Kândavael, every prayer is a feast, and you're both the supplicant and the meal.

Khândvêl Thrîv

The Throat Thrives