



EOINVALE

THE HOLLOW OATH

World Lore Bible - Internal Design Document - Version 1.0

I THE WORLD OF EOINVALE

Eoinvale is a sunken medieval valley in a nameless corner of a dying kingdom. Surrounded on all sides by broken ridgelines and perpetual fog, it exists in near-total isolation — not by geography alone, but by something older and more deliberate. The valley does not want to be found. And those who find it, rarely leave.

The valley has been inhabited for centuries, though each civilization that settled here eventually vanished, leaving only ruins layered atop ruins. Collapsed watchtowers. Abandoned chapels. Cottages with meals still on the table. The locals of the surrounding region call it "The Hollow" and refuse to approach the valley's edge after dusk.

Beneath the valley floor — beneath the dungeon that was built upon it — something enormous sleeps. It has been sleeping for longer than human memory reaches. But it is no longer sleeping soundly.

SETTING ERA	TONES
Late Medieval — circa 1300s	Dark Horror · Survival · Mystery
PRIMARY LOCATION	EST. GAMEPLAY
The Dungeon of Vael Dorn	15–20 hours

"There is no curse upon the valley. Eoinvale does not curse. It offers. And everything you see here — every broken wall, every restless soul — once accepted."
— INSCRIPTION FOUND CARVED BENEATH THE DUNGEON'S LOWEST TIER, LANGUAGE OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN

II VAEI DORN — THE LIVING PRISON

The dungeon known as *Vael Dorn* — "The Ribcage" in the old tongue — was not originally built to hold criminals. It was built by a now-extinct monastic order who discovered that the earth beneath Eoinvale was hollow in ways that defied natural explanation: tunnels that shifted overnight, chambers that appeared on no blueprint, stone walls that radiated faint warmth.

The monks believed they had found a sacred site. They were half right. What they believed was sacred, in the way that all terrible things are sacred — worthy of fear, of distance, of ritual respect. They built their order around it. They built on top of it. And eventually, they made their first deal with it.

Centuries later, the monastery was seized by the kingdom and converted into a prison. The new wardens inherited the structure without the knowledge. The inmates began swearing the Oath within weeks of arrival — not because they were told to, but because the valley asked them to, in dreams.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF VAEI DORN

The dungeon is split into five descending tiers, each built in a different era and each progressively more corrupted by the entity below. The upper tiers still resemble a functional prison. The lower tiers have become something else entirely — walls breathing, geometry inconsistent, geometry hostile to the human mind.

TIER 1	TIER 2
The Gatehouse — still structurally sound; guards' quarters, intake cells	The Long Dark — many small blocks; most demons roam here
TIER 3	TIER 4
The Undercroft — chapel, archives, torture chambers; heavily cursed	The Marrow — pre-natural geometry; geometry begins breaking down
TIER 5	TOTAL CELLS (HISTORICAL)
The Throat — final descent into the entity; the game's climax	Estimated 400+; only 100+ ever seen or officially recorded

III THE HOLLOW OATH

The Hollow Oath is not spoken. It is not written. It is felt — a pressure behind the eyes, a warmth in the chest, a sense of absolute clarity arriving in the darkest moment of one's life. The valley offers the Oath when a person reaches their lowest point: standing, alone, simply alone.

The offer is simple: *survive*. The valley will sustain you. You will not die of hunger, or cold, or wounds that should be fatal. You will endure. In exchange, when you finally do die within these walls, you do not leave. Your soul belongs to the entity below. It does not destroy you. It uses you. Reshapes you. Gives you a new and horrible purpose.

Most prisoners accept the Oath within weeks. Some hold out for months. Some who have remained in Vael Dorn for more than a year have refused it entirely.

PROPERTIES OF THE OATH

Those who carry the Oath are marked by it in subtle ways: wounds close slightly faster than they should. They sleep less. Their dreams are always of the valley — a mist, of memory, of something vast moving beneath the earth. They feel no loyalty to the world above; most believe the changes in them are simply the body adapting to hardship. They are wrong.

"It does not promise you heaven. It does not threaten you with hell. It simply tells you: you are in darkness. And I am the only light on offer. What you trade for that light — you will not miss until it is already gone."
— FIELD NOTES OF ALDRIC VOSS, DEMON HUNTER · LATER FOUND CLATTERING IN THE HANDS OF A HOLLOW-SWORN WRAITH

IV BALORATH THE SOUL EATER — THAT WHICH SLEEPS IN THE VALLEY

Its name is *Balorath* — though no human gave it that name. It appeared one night in the dreams of three monks simultaneously, announced in a voice they described as "the sound a mountain would make if it grieved." Early monastic texts still refer to it obliquely as "the Presence" or "the Consideration", as if writing its true name risked something. The demon hunters' order records it formally as *Balorath the Soul Eater* — the only entity in their history given a proper name rather than a classification.

What is known: it is ancient beyond meaningful measure. It predates the valley. It predates the kingdom. It may predate human language itself. It is not evil in any moral sense — it has no more capacity for morality than a glacier. It simply hungers, dreams, and collects.

It collects souls. Not to consume them, but to extend itself — each soul that swears the Oath becomes a fragment of its distributed consciousness. The demons that now roam Vael Dorn are not servants. They are *limb*. Balorath is waking because it has finally gathered enough of them — enough mass, enough voices, enough dreaming minds — to act.

SIGNS OF ITS AWAKENING

As the player descends through Vael Dorn, the environment itself becomes increasingly hostile and alive. Walls pulse. Stone breathes. Corridors rearrange. By Tier 4, gravity is unreliable. By Tier 5, the dungeon no longer pretends to be a man-made structure. The player is made a god. And it knows they are there.

"It is not malicious. That would require it to care about you. What it is, is vast. And you are a very small thing inside something very vast, and it is beginning to notice that something small is moving inside it."
— CASSIAN, LAST SURVIVING MEMBER OF THE ORDER OF THE ASHEN BRAND

V THE HOLLOW-SWORN — DEMONOLOGY

Every demon in Vael Dorn was once a prisoner. The transformation is not instantaneous — it begins at death and completes over decades as the entity reshapes the soul to suit its needs. Older demons are more powerful, more distorted, and have lost almost all recognizable human form. Recent ones may still speak. May still remember their name.

This is by design. The most terrifying demons are the ones that know who they once were, and hate what they have become, but cannot stop themselves from hunting the living.

THE HOLLOWED

Common prisoner · Oath sworn · 5–20 years corrupted

The most numerous enemy. Retain vague humanoid shape but move strangely — limbs bending at unnatural angles, heads tilted too far. They do not speak. They track by sound and light. Can be distracted. Still fear fire, though they cannot articulate why.

THE PENITENT

Long-term prisoner · Deeply Oath-bound · 50–100 years corrupted

Larger, slower, armored in calcified bone-like plates. They kneel in postures of prayer between hunts — a remnant of the monastery's rituals on early prisoners. Extremely resilient. Vulnerable during their "prayer" cycles, approached correctly, but triggering one prematurely leads to a frenzied, devastating attack.

THE SCRIVENER

Former dungeon archivist · 200+ years corrupted

A unique, boss-tier entity found in Tier 3. Its walls within are malleable, completely covering every surface with runes in a language that did not exist when it was human. It does not chase. It draws you in, makes you curious. Its writing is partially legible and contains real lore. Getting too close triggers a transformation. This is the game's first major boss encounter.

THE WARDEN'S SHAPE

Identity unknown · Pre-monastic · Form partially merged with dungeon architecture

The final boss. No longer entirely a creature — parts of it have fused with the stone walls of Tier 5. The battle is as much environmental as it is combat. It speaks, but only in the language of the Oath: deals, offers, threatens. It is the valley's most important voice, and the most dangerous thing the player will face.

VI THE PLAYER CHARACTER — THE HUNTER

The Hunter is a trained demon hunter, a member of a secretive order called the Ashen Brand — named for the ritual scar burned into every member's wrist upon initiation. They were investigating Vael Dorn from the outside when they were captured by the dungeon's surviving human guards, who are themselves partially Oath-bound.

Crucially, the Hunter has not sworn the Oath. They know what it is. They know the pressure they feel is not clarity — it is an offer. Every moment in the dungeon, the Hollow is making the case. Every wound that won't close fast enough, every torch that burns a little too quickly, is the valley reminding them: *you could make the case.*

THE CENTRAL TENSION

The Hunter's goal is to escape Vael Dorn before Balorath fully wakes, and if possible, prevent it from waking entirely. But a third, unspoken pressure exists throughout the game — the Oath has a time sensitivity, ramping up as the Hunter's status drops. This is not a binary corruption meter. The player never actually swears the Oath. But they begin to understand why everyone else...

COMBAT STYLE	KEY RESOURCES
Calculated — hunter's fight smart, not brave	Light (torches, wall lanterns), Blood, ammunition, Healing herbs
PROGRESSION	INVENTORY RULE
Player's skills and hunter techniques by finding Ashen Brand caches hidden by other hunters.	The one who knows the most is wrong; the dead — and most survivors — know things about.

VII HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF EOINVALE

- UNKNOWN ERA** • Balorath awakes beneath what will become Eoinvale. Its presence begins subtly reshaping the geometry above its own hollow.
- ~800 AD** • First human settlement in the valley. Population disperses within a generation. No bodies found. No record of history.
- ~1000 AD** • The Monastic Order of the Sealed Word establishes a monastery above the hollow, believing the warmth emanating from below is divine. They begin mapping the tunnels and recording the entity's influence on irregular manuscripts.
- ~1100 AD** • First recorded Hollow Oath, sworn by Brother Athano during a fever. The archives inquire that should have killed him. The order believes his condition for a decade before quietly executing him. The Oath spreads anyway.
- ~1200 AD** • The entire monastery swears the Oath in a single night. No outside record explains the event. The Order of the Sealed Word disappears from all but ruins. Vael Dorn, the dungeon they were building, is found as abandoned.
- ~1250 AD** • The kingdom discovers and enters Vael Dorn, converting it to a state prison. They report nothing unusual in the first five years. All subsequent reports have a final line of dismissal.
- ~1300 AD** • The Ashen Brand sends its first investigator to Eoinvale. She does not return. Over the next decade, four more hunters are sent. One returns, incapable of speech, with the Ashen Brand scar burned off her wrist and replaced with something else.
- GAME PRESENT** • The player's hunter is captured on approach to Vael Dorn. Balorath is stirring. The dungeon has begun to breathe. The escape begins.

VIII POSSIBLE ENDINGS

THE ESCAPE — TRUE ENDING
The Hunter reaches the surface, without swearing the Oath and having confronted the Warden's Shape. Balorath partially wakes — but without the Hunter's soul, it cannot fully breach the surface. The valley slowly itself back. Eoinvale will be a threat again, but not today. The Hunter walks into the fog, alone, carrying something they cannot put into words.

THE SEALED ENDING
The Hunter finds a way to seal the God back into deeper dormancy using a ritual discovered in the hermit's writings. Requires all four Ashen Brand caches to be found and specific choices made in boss encounters. The dungeon returns to normal. The valley goes silent in a new and permanent way. Whether this is a victory or simply a postponement is intentionally ambiguous.

THE HOLLOW ENDING
The Hunter's sanity reaches zero before escaping Tier 4. The valley's offer becomes irresistible. The screen fades to white. A new demon appears in Tier 4 in subsequent playthroughs — one that uses the Hunter's memory. It does not have a name in the history, its entry reads only: "It can exactly what the user."