

AX&X: POWERS OF THE LAND

Factions, territory, and standing. A factions supplement for AX&X.

THE CONTENDING POWERS

Powers older and larger than any one party have carved up the land between dungeons: merchant assemblies, horrors under the hills, hordes, courts, and cults. Each has a territory, a people, a specialty, and a want, so a party's choices ripple past the dungeon mouth.

The feel is the old hex-map wargames, a weird continent of kingdoms: ancient, scheming, every border a grudge. None of this is needed to crawl a dungeon. Bring it in when you want the world to push back and keep its own books. The roster is generated from **factions.csv**, so adding a row raises a new power.

RUNNING THESE AT THE TABLE

Do not bring all of them in at once. Treat the roster as a map to draw from. You stage only the few you need.

- **Start small:** Pick two to four powers whose territory touches where the party begins. Leave the rest as rumor, a name on the map, until the party travels into their reach.
- **Let Ties choose:** A character's core Tie binds to a power, as **Ties to the World** below sets out. Seat the factions your players already hold a lever on, and the ones that matter pick themselves.
- **Run rivals in pairs:** One near power and the rival its entry names is tension enough for a whole arc. You keep two books, not eleven, and the land still bristles.
- **Let the Doom promote:** When a distant power steps onto the stage, let the **Foretold Doom** pull it there, one power at a time.
- **Overlap on purpose:** Two powers can share a trade and a border and still read as distinct, like the Gilt Assembly and the Aether Guild over the sky-lanes. Run them as branch houses of one bloodline at odds, as a schism over doctrine, or as two faiths that hate each other most of all. Leave which it is unsaid, and let the party guess wrong.

READING AN ENTRY

- **Region:** The territory the power holds or haunts. Its home ground, and often an adventure in itself.
- **People:** How many, and of what sort. A rough measure, not a muster roll. When a power's soldiers come to blows, stat them from the Bestiary.
- **Specialty:** What it trades in, makes, or wields. The reason to deal with it, and the reason to fear it.
- **Stance:** Its mood toward outsiders. The rung named after it is the Standing you begin at.
- **Rivals:** The powers it contends with. Aiding this one slips you a step with each rival named here.

STANDING

Track your **Standing** with each power you deal with: Hostile, Wary, Neutral, Favored, Sworn. Start at the rung its entry gives and move one step at a time.

- **Shifting:** A deed that serves a power's want raises Standing a step; one that crosses it drops a step. Big deeds, a saved city or a murdered envoy, move two.
- **Reaction:** Standing bends the core **2d6 + CHA** Reaction roll: **Hostile** -2, and may skip the roll for a blade | **Wary** +0 | **Neutral** +1 | **Favored** +2 | **Sworn** +4, or friendly with no roll.

WHAT THEY WANT

Each power wants something: coin, secrets, blood, worship, land, or the Doom to run out. The hook in each entry names it. Serve the want to rise, thwart it to fall. A power that gets what it wants from you will overlook a great deal else.

FAVOR AND ENMITY

- **Favored:** Their region is a Haven to you. Expect a discount, a hireling, a thread of lore, or a shot at a named item held back from the market.
- **Hostile:** Their region is a threat. Patrols, bounties, barred gates, and a knife at your back while you crawl someone else's dungeon.

RIVALS

Powers contend, so your friends make your enemies. Aiding one power shifts you a step against each rival its entry names. You cannot befriend the whole map; choose your enemies deliberately, and let two foes spend themselves on each other.

TIES TO THE WORLD

A character's core Tie, an ally, enemy, patron, mentor, or contact, belongs to a power. Roll or pick which, and that bond gains a banner, a region, and a want behind it. Now the favor owed to one name is a lever on a whole faction.

THE FORETOLD DOOM

If you run the Foretold Doom, the powers answer to it. At each Decline step, one rises and one falls: a horde crosses a border, an assembly packs its gold and flees, a hooded cult throws back its hoods. The Comet's Faithful and the Bone Clerks swell with the dark. The rest must choose a side, and will remember which side you chose.

RAISING A POWER

Give it a region, a people, a specialty, a stance, and one strange want. Add a hook that makes it more than a flag on a map. Price its favor and its wrath against the party's Level, and set it against a neighbor so the land stays at odds.

THE POWERS

Generated from **factions.csv**. Each is a faction of the land.

- **The Gilt Assembly**, *The Free City and its sky-docks*. **People:** Teeming, every kindred. **Specialty:** Trade, coin, and the writ to fly an airship. **Stance:** Mercantile, start Neutral. **Rivals:** The Aether Guild, The Drowned Parliament. No airship lifts without their stamp, and they will bankroll a bold expedition for first claim on whatever it hauls home. Take their coin and the sky-lanes open to you; balk at their cut and every port closes at once.
- **Pale Court of the Shroud**, *The Sunken Crypt and the barrow roads*. **People:** A hidden few over many thralls. **Specialty:** Blood-price, night travel, and old title. **Stance:** Predatory yet mannered, start Wary. **Rivals:** The Threshold Wardens, The Bone Clerks. They trade in safe roads by night, old titles, and secrets the living have let rot. Each gift is paid in blood, and once you take one the Shroud may call on you, at the hour that suits it worst.
- **The Mycel Choir**, *The Fungal Caverns*. **People:** One mind in countless bodies. **Specialty:** Spore, poison, and shared dreaming. **Stance:** Alien and indifferent, start Neutral. **Rivals:** The Thornwake, Hammerdeep

- Concord. Gold leaves it cold, and so does your death; it wants only your sleep. Those who dream too long in its halls wake speaking for it.
- **Hammerdeep Concord**, *The dwarf halls*. **People:** Steady clans, slow to grow. **Specialty:** Steel, stonework, and forge-wrought magic weapons. **Stance:** Proud and transactional, start Neutral. **Rivals:** The Red March, The Mycel Choir. Theirs is the last forge that still wakes magic in steel. Carry them rare ore or a lost maker's-mark and they will arm you as they arm no outsider; break a sworn bargain and no dwarf hall will sell you a nail for nine generations.
 - **The Thornwake**, *The elf wood*. **People:** Dwindling, ancient. **Specialty:** Wardings, archery, and a longer memory than yours. **Stance:** Aloof and grudge-bearing, start Wary. **Rivals:** The Red March, The Mycel Choir. They were old when the Free City was a ford, and they forget nothing. Return what was taken from the wood, or bring them one who despoiled it, and the grudge may thaw; raise an axe to their trees and it never will.
 - **The Red March**, *The orc marches*. **People:** Vast, and bred for war. **Specialty:** Raiding, wolf-cavalry, and oaths of blood. **Stance:** Hostile but honor-bound, start Hostile. **Rivals:** Hammerdeep Concord, The Thornwake. They despise a liar more than an enemy. Beat their champion in fair combat and the whole horde will sit and hear you out.
 - **The Drowned Parliament**, *The coast and the deep sea*. **People:** Unknown, under the waves. **Specialty:** Storms, salvage, and a toll on every crossing. **Stance:** Capricious, start Wary. **Rivals:** The Gilt Assembly, The Aether Guild. It sets a price on each voyage, paid in cargo or in sailors. Pay it willingly and the sea stays kind for a season.
 - **The Threshold Wardens**, *Scattered temples and wayside shrines*. **People:** Zealous, well-drilled. **Specialty:** Wards against the dead and the chaotic; Turn Undead and Remove Curse. **Stance:** Righteous and wary of magic, start Wary. **Rivals:** The Comet's Faithful. They bar what should stay barred. They distrust every spellbook, and they are not always wrong to.
 - **The Comet's Faithful**, *Everywhere, in cellars and courts*. **People:** Growing with every Sign. **Specialty:** Prophecy, poison, and quiet sabotage. **Stance:** Fanatical, start Hostile. **Rivals:** The Threshold Wardens, The Gilt Assembly. They want the clock to run out. As the Decline advances they grow bolder, and one day the clerk you bribed is wearing their mark.
 - **The Aether Guild**, *The sky-anchors and the high spires*. **People:** Few artisans, fewer masters. **Specialty:** Aether-engines and the secret of flight. **Stance:** Secretive and mercenary, start Neutral. **Rivals:** The Gilt Assembly, The Drowned Parliament. They sell flight and keep the why of it locked away. Recover lost engine-lore for them, or silence a leak, and doors open; cross a guildmaster and your engine coughs over the deepest water.
 - **The Bone Clerks**, *The fallen heartland, where the doom has come*. **People:** Legion, and counting the living. **Specialty:** Necromancy and the muster of the dead. **Stance:** The enemy, start Hostile. **Rivals:** The Threshold Wardens, Pale Court of the Shroud. They are the doom made flesh, drowning the fallen heartland in the risen dead while the tide climbs outward. Every barrow at their back is another regiment, and they mean to muster the whole kingdom, breathing or not.