

The Underdark Fringes

Faction · Ungoverned Territory

Alignment: Varies

Goals

No unified goals. Multiple competing powers occupy the upper Underdark beneath Dracomere, none dominant enough to impose order, all dangerous enough to make the Fringes effectively ungovernable from the outside.

The Underdark Fringes is not a faction in any conventional sense. It is a territory -- the upper layer of subterranean Dracomere, from the cave systems immediately below the Drakepire foothills down to the depth where permanent darkness begins and the things that have adapted to it stop resembling anything with a name in surface catalogues.

Three broad categories of presence define the Fringes:

The Drow of the Ashveth Houses. The remnant drow populations who remained underground when the Velkhrun fled to the surface are organized into competing Houses -- a structure they maintained from whatever deep-Underdark society they themselves fled centuries before the Velkhrun's emergence. The Ashveth Houses are not the ancient Underdark empire the Velkhrun's oral tradition describes; that empire is deeper, older, and not often discussed even among drow. The Houses are the survivors of a conflict that ended the empire -- or ended their participation in it, depending on whom you ask. They regard the Velkhrun as traitors and weaklings in equal measure. The Velkhrun regard the Ashveth Houses as the reason they left.

The Aberrant Colonies. The Underdark Fringes contain populations of creatures that have no surface equivalent and do not correspond neatly to the catalogued aberrations that scholars in Archenveil have classified. Several of these are psychically active and collectively intelligent in a distributed sense -- not a hive mind, exactly, but something without a better name. The Ashveth Houses maintain an uneasy coexistence with the nearest colonies, built on treaties whose terms neither side fully understands. This has been working, more or less, for approximately three hundred years. The fact that it has not failed is itself considered a significant achievement by everyone who knows about it.

The Ashveth Silence. Below the Fringes, below the Ashveth Houses, below the aberrant territories, there is something that the drow who know of it call the Ashveth Silence -- a region where their scouts have stopped returning and their magical communications cease. The Ashveth Houses do not go there. They do not discuss it with outsiders. The one record of the Silence that has reached the surface is a fragment of drow text recovered by an Archenveil scholar of uncertain methods. The relevant passage reads: *'The Silence hears everything. Do not speak of things you do not wish it to remember.'*