

The Penumbrans

1. Identity & Origin

The Penumbrans (formal/scholarly) or "The First-Walked" (vernacular Wayfarer term) were the native civilisation of the Penumbran Reach (K0I-8565).

- **Biology:** They were anthropomorphic, similar to the species that populate Arbour, but evolved independently in the Penumbran Reach. They are not human-derived; their morphology is alien.
- **Temporal Scale:** They existed on a timescale of tens of thousands of years, significantly predating the arrival of the five ark ships. To them, the Reach was not a dangerous frontier—it was simply home, shaped by the binary stellar dynamics of the Reach and the constant, slow pressure of the Convergence against reality's boundary.

2. The Encounter (Theologically Framed)

Wayfarer oral tradition, specifically the stories of Sage Yahari, frames the Penumbrans' history not as a scientific sequence, but as a theological one.

- **The Unknowable God:** Yahari's tradition tells of an "Unknowable God" that touched the world, offering knowledge that was also a hunger. This is the Wayfarer theological framing for the Convergence/Aetheris.
- **The First-Walked:** The name "The First-Walked" is used by Wayfarers to describe the Penumbrans as the people who first encountered this god and who "walked" out of reality as we know it.
- **The Echo:** The term deliberately mirrors the Obsidian Branch's "being walked" (public detention). This linguistic overlap is unintentional by the Wayfarers, but it creates a haunting subtext for the reader: the Wayfarers believe the Penumbrans were "walked" into another state of being, while Arbour uses the same term to describe the state-mandated disappearance of its own citizens.

3. The Installations (The Wreckage)

The Installations are the physical remnants of the Penumbrans' encounter with the Convergence. They are not merely buildings; they are part of a resonant, architectural language.

- **Functionality:** They were observatories, habitation sites, reliquaries (memorial sites), and — confirmed via the outer-system Installation discovered during ARBOUR|05's voyage (see **Interstellar Navigation and Fuel Mathematics**, Part Five) — ****wellspring-type Installations****: structures built to generate, store, or channel energy directly connected to Aetheris/the Hum, rather than to observe it, house people near it, or memorialise it. This is the subtype that explains why the outer-system stop registered as "a structure radiating detectable, anomalous energy" from long range, and why there was anything for ARBOUR|05's crew to crudely harvest at all — an observatory or reliquary wouldn't have had comparable extractable energy on hand; a wellspring would. Likely the Penumbrans' closest equivalent to a power plant, though the actual mechanism (whether it generates Aetheris-adjacent energy, stores naturally occurring ambient Hum energy, or something else entirely) remains deliberately unspecified — consistent with the broader principle that nothing about Penumbran technology is ever fully understood by anyone who encounters it.
- **The Wreckage of Contact:** Installations are understood by modern Wayfarers as the "wreckage" of the First-Walked meeting their god. Their geometry and acoustics are not separate from their purpose—they were built to resonate with the Hum.
- **The Language Barrier:** The Resonant/Architectural language layer is built into these structures. Because the syntax is based on "relational grammar" (proximity to the Convergence event, orientation to the site), it remains unparseable to human archivists like Wren, who seek a key that doesn't exist.

4. The Theological Argument: Ascension vs. Erasure

The most profound point of conflict regarding the Penumbrans is that their fate remains fundamentally unresolved.

- **The Ascension Argument:** Some Wayfarer elders argue that the First-Walked were not destroyed, but "walked"—that they successfully integrated with the Convergence, transcending the physical limits of the Penumbran Reach.

- **The Erasure Argument:** Others argue that the First-Walked were consumed—that they were the first victims of the hunger the convergence brings, and that the Installations are not temples, but grave markers for a people who were entirely unmade.
- **Institutional Silence:** The Arbour Council ignores the theological debate entirely, classifying all Installations as "dangerous/unstable sites" and suppressing any research into the fate of their creators to avoid acknowledging the possibility of "ascension"—which might give the population the wrong idea about their own future.

5. Summary Table

Category	Details
Formal Name	The Penumbrans
Vernacular Name	The First-Walked
Relation to Humans	Alien lineage; separate evolutionary path
Key Artifacts	Installations (Habitation, Observatory, Reliquary)
Central Mystery	Ascension vs. Erasure
Naming Echo	"First-Walked" vs. "Being Walked" (Arbour detention)

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