

Races of Karexus, Volume I The Northern Wilds by Jacob DC Ross



Requires the Numenera corebook from Monte Cook Games

Races of Xarexus, Volume I
The Northern Wilds

Thunderegg Productions

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This book is a labor of love. It is the product of many long nights working away while my family slept. I hope that it brings as much fun to your games as it was to produce.

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Introduction

Thank you very much for picking up this book! Its purpose is to introduce to Numenera two new non-human species for use both and PCs and NPCs. Provided with them are two new Foci that serve to highlight the natural gifts available to these species, but which can also be used with human or other characters, as well as two new Descriptors.

The new species receive write-ups on their biology and society. One thing that you will notice that is not present is a detailed history of their society. Numenera games are all about secrets of the past and how they relate to the preservation of the future. I've made the decision to not ruin any mysteries that the PCs might read or which might conflict with the GM's vision. While some secrets are revealed in the Secrets section, they by no means give a complete story.

You will find references to Karexus throughout this book. Karexus is a world setting which we at Thunderegg Productions are going to be detailing in a future supplement. Karexus is a lost colony of a Ninth Age exploration mission. It is a distant world that has coalesced into a state with a social and technological level very similar to the Ninth Age on Earth. Of course, there is nothing tying the mechanics presented here to Karexus. If you want to have Mites and Dryads living in the Steadfast, be free to do so! The included map of the Northern Wilds can be used to portray an island group anywhere outside of the Steadfast if you so desire.

Above all, enjoy your games of Numenera. It is my greatest hope that you find inspiration within these pages.

Regards,
Jacob DC Ross

The Journal of Glaneas

It is with great anticipation that I begin this new volume of my travels. I am told that the Northern Island is host to wondrous beings of a most exotic nature. I have made preparations for my journey, all of my affairs are in order and my estate will be cared for until I return, triumphant in my explorations of the unknown with tales to astonish the Society. That old pompous fool Makneez will have to eat his words!

What follows will be a collection of my findings. I shall take every care to chronicle every detail that I find. It is my fervent hope that generations of future scholars will benefit from my work. Now I dare waste no more time writing, the day is young and there is much to do!

Glaneas, Explorer of the Wilds

New Descriptors

Mercurial

You are ever-changing in your mood and manner. People find it impossible to get a read on you. This can be unsettling and can be used to your advantage. Your inner feelings may not change, but you do not present yourself in a consistent manner, perhaps changing from one minute to the next.

You gain the following benefits:

Adaptable: You gain +2 Intellect Pool.

Flexibility: When a task has any extra difficulty levels due to unexpected circumstances, you negate the first additional level of difficulty. This ability does not apply during GM Intrusions.

Inability: Your inconsistent behavior is off-putting. Every social interaction beyond making a first impression is one difficulty level higher for you.

Skill: You are trained in a skill that uses observation.

Skill: You are trained in a skill that uses deceit.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You saw the group and began following them on a whim.
2. Your reputation caused one or more of the group to find you.
3. You are on the run from someone and are hiding out with the group.
4. You are an actor studying the party for a role.

Selfless

You are known for considering others before yourself. You always act to help someone in need. This may cause you to be inconvenienced or worse, but it is who you are.

You gain the following benefits:

Quick to Help: You gain +2 to your Speed Pool.

No Greater Love: You are gain an asset to one skill used when throwing yourself into harms way to aid another person.

Inability: You cannot refuse aid to an innocent party. Any hostile action against someone who has not been hostile or antagonistic to you or an innocent person is made with +1 to the difficulty level.

Skill: You are trained in medicine.

Skill: You are trained in any one skill that uses persuasion, which is useful when rousing a crowd to action or appealing to someone's better nature to help an unfortunate.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You saw a member of the party in need and moved to help.
2. The party is traveling to a place where there are many folks in need.
3. You have hired the party to help you in a quest.
4. Your mentor specifically selected this group for you to join.

Swarms Forth

You are not fully human, although you may appear so. It is difficult to say what you are. Are you a swarm small creatures making up a single consciousness or are you a single creature controlling a vast number of symbiotic creatures? Your structure is a queen unit kept in the core of your “body” and surrounded by a myriad of small drones. The individual units may be insectoid, or they may just as easily be small organic robots.

You have learned to arrange the interlocking drones so that they appear to have a humanoid form. You disguise yourself by using cosmetics and masks. Your gait occasionally slips and you appear to have unnatural joints. Your component drones work in concert so that your physical strength and speed are similar to those of “whole” characters.



Connections: Choose one other PC. They were your first human friend, and you have patterned your appearance after theirs. Onlookers frequently mistake you for siblings, with various consequences.

Additional Equipment: You have a mask and disguise kit.

Minor Effect Suggestions: Your swarm reacts quickly to your commands, giving you +1 Speed Edge until the end of your next turn.

Major Effect Suggestions: Your Swarm Strike will hop to the nearest enemy after it is shaken from the current enemy.

GM Intrusions: Bits of you fall off in front of strangers. This tends to leave a bad impression.

Tier 1: One Who is Many. You receive +5 points to your Might Pool. These points are only used for absorbing damage, not for paying costs or Effort. When Recovering points to your Might Pool you must eat twice as much food as a human in order to breed more drones. Enabler.

Seeping Form (2 Might): Your form is mutable, and you can “pour” yourself, and fit through anything as small as an adult human head. Action.

Tier 2: Specialty Breeding. You can breed new traits into your component drones, providing you with new capabilities. This can be anything from chameleon skin to faster reflexes. Choose one skill for which you gain an Asset. You may change this Asset by breeding new drones, which takes three days where you do not have access to the benefits of this Tier. Enabler.

Tier 3: Swarm Strike (3+ Might). You lash out at an opponent in immediate range. A portion of your drones detach as you hit, consuming your opponent. A successful attack does damage equal

to the Might spent plus 3 more damage per round for the next 3 rounds, after which the Nanites dissipate. You may not use your Might Edge to reduce the cost of the Swarm Strike below 3 Might, as the Might spent is nanites leaving your body. Action.

Tier 4: Master Breeder. You may now breed two separate Assets into your drones. It would be best to consult with the GM if you want to apply both Assets to one skill (remembering that you may have a maximum of two Assets to any roll). Enabler.

Tier 5: Mental Expansion. You breed a series of new juvenile “queens” that add their brain power to your own. Gain +3 to your Intellect Pool and +1 to your Intellect Edge. Enabler.

Tier 6: Superior Swarm. Your drones are now capable of any sort of organization. You may breed three Assets at a time. You may substitute one Asset to grow wings, allowing you to fly at twice your normal speed. Additionally, your consumption of organic or certain mineral matter allows you to roll twice for each Recovery Roll and take the higher result. Enabler.

Notes on the New Foci

These new Foci each give exotic options for player characters. It is obvious which Foci are designed for each new species presented in this book, but these Foci are not limited to the species for which they were designed. The numenera have created wondrous and weird effects on the worlds, so it is not unbelievable to see a human cross-bred with a tree or composed of nanites. It is also conceivable that a Dryad might take the Swarms Forth Focus or a Mite could Take Root!

Takes Root

You are a plant. You have mobility and a humanoid structure, but you are not an animal life form. You appear to be a green human but your cells have semi-rigid walls and you gain your energy through photosynthesis. Alternately, you are a human (or similar being) who has a plant component grafted onto your body. You usually walk barefoot and wear green or earth tones.

Connections: One other PC in the group is repulsed by your physiology and cannot benefit from your fruits.

Additional Equipment: You have an assortment of gardening tools.

Esoterics: Any Esoterics that you perform have the appearance of plants. This may manifest as swirls of pollen or leaves, barriers may be wooden and so forth.

Minor Effect Suggestions: Any fruit or Artifacts that you grow or make have +1 Level.

Major Effect Suggestions: Any fruit or Artifacts that you grow or make have +2 Levels.

GM Intrusions: You drop your fruit, a part of you withers and must regrow.

Tier 1: Deep-Rooted. You recover double the amount of Pool from Recovery Rolls so long as you are able to put down roots in soft earth and have access to sunlight. Enabler.

Tier 2: Bearing Fruit. You have the ability to grow a single fruit on your body. It takes one day to grow a fruit, and you choose each morning fruit to grow each morning. You must, however, root

and have access to sunlight for at least one hour during the day when you grow the fruit. A fruit will fall off and rot after two days attached to your body (meaning that you may have two fruits "at the ready" while a third is growing). It is kept within a chamber in your chest during this time. Choose when you gain this Tier what type of fruit you can grow:

-Golden Berry (2 Intellect): A mild intoxicant that loosens up its eater. The eater gains an Asset on any social-type rolls made during the next two hours. This fruit is small, heart-shaped and translucent gold. It tastes mildly sweet with a warming sensation.

-Flame Fruit (2 Might): This fruit is combustible when thrown. It does 3 flame damage to the target and 1 damage to others in the immediate area of the target. Combustibles in the immediate area of the target burst into flame. It may be thrown at long range. This fruit is round and vermillion with smoky white streaks. Only a Dread Destroyer has knowledge of its flavor.

-Succor (2 Might): When eaten, this fruit provides enough nutrients to satisfy the eater's nutrition needs for one day. You may not eat this fruit. This fruit is brown with alternating green and white stripes. It has a smoky, earthy taste.

-Mazze Fruit (2 Intellect): A narcotic and hallucinogen that is highly prized in many social circles. A single fruit has enough nectar to affect up to five people. It is useful for sale or in making friends out of strangers. The fruit is considered to have a Level equal to your Tier for resisting its effects. Mazze fruit is covered in fine, opalescent fuzz over its hard rind. Mazze fruit have varying shapes. Their unpleasant odor belies their savory taste that finishes sweet.

-Sweet Venom (2 Might): Poisonous to nearly all forms of life, this fruit attacks its eater every hour with a Level equal to your Tier and does 3 damage. Sweet Venom is shockingly yellow and shaped like a large avian claw.

Tier 3: Eyes of the Garden (4 Intellect). You can tap into the earth and connect with all plant life within a radius equal to your Tier in miles. For 5 minutes you can see in the immediate area of any plant within the radius.

Tier 4: Shaper of the Glade (6 Intellect). You can shape plant life into whatever form that you can imagine. This ability allows you to craft Artifacts from trees and plants. The Artifacts formed in this manner follow the same procedure as regular crafting, but the end result is a living thing. Artifacts that sustain damage may root in the same way as your Tier 1 ability in order to repair, and they do not need to roll for Depletion unless it has been more than a week since they rooted. These items are considered one Level lower for the purpose of sustaining damage from fire. For more information see the box Shaping the Glade.

Tier 5: Bountiful Harvest. You can now grow two fruits in one day. You choose which two (or one if you desire) fruits to grow at the beginning of each morning. You may choose any of the following types of fruit as well.

-Panacea (2 Might): This fruit calms and detoxifies its eater. It gives an Asset to resist any disease or poison affecting the eater or that he may encounter within the next 28 hours.

-Self Seed (3 Intellect): This is not a fruit but a bud of yourself. Once grown it is planted in a safe location where it takes one year to mature. Once grown the bud is a blank clone body. If you die anyone may take a cutting from your body and graft it into the clone body, which then comes to life with your memories.

Tier 6: Leaf Storm (6 Might). You whip all trees and vines in an area to assault your enemies. This attack deals 3 damage to every enemy within short range. This requires at least a modicum of plant life larger and sturdier than grass to be present. Action.



Shaping the Glade

The text in the Tier ability section for Shaper of the Glade is vague due to space limitations. This box provides a fuller description of its possible uses.

Generally, anything that a player wants to make with this technique, he is free to attempt. For mundane items like staves, basic tools or clothing made from living leaves, this should be a straightforward task of Level 1 or 2. Items need not be green, as plant life contains multiple pigments and is capable of being transformed by this power.

For something more complex, like a wagon or a small building, this would be a Level 3 or 4 task, would require training in a related skill and take quite a bit longer to make. These items would fetch a much higher price than a regular version if sold, as having a wagon that regrows its broken axle or a house that patches its own leaky roof is a convenience that many would highly pay more money to have.

Artifacts created from this ability require specialization in a related skill. They are tasks of

Level 5 to 10. A Level 8 Artifact (Level 10 task) requires 36 total levels of material. That's a lot of plant matter. It would be boring to allow a player to fulfill the requirements of material Level simply by gathering a bunch of trees, especially in a forest. To add variety and challenge, the GM may stipulate mineral or exotic materials that will be absorbed first into the plant base via the roots and which then manifest in the final product. It should take at least one perilous quest to obtain each tier of materials for creating an Artifact. This process is not intended to allow players to unbalance the game with reusable Cyphers, and the player and GM should work together to determine a balanced game effect.

So what kind of crazy, weird Artifacts can a player make with Shaper of the Glade? Anything! Below are just a few ideas.

Sylvan Boat

This boat is alive. It draws nourishment from the sea water and from the soil in shallow river beds or shores. Equipped with four paddles that resemble the flippers of a sea tortoise, the boat responds swiftly to gentle guidance from its pilot. It is a Level 6 Artifact that allows for water travel and provides an Asset to all rolls involving maneuverability.

Depletion: -

Sky Ship

The leafy canopy of this air ship is dotted with hydrogen-producing blooms. The blooms provide lift while a spinning leaf propeller in the aft section provides thrust. This ship must land at least

once a week to root for nutrients. It is a Level 7 Artifact that allows for air travel and provides an Asset to all rolls involving maneuverability.

Depletion: -

Wooden Limb

Not the peg leg of pirate lore, but a living, fully-functional replacement for a lost limb. This limb draws nutrients from its host body and does not need to root, but the bearer needs half-again as much food and drink as normal to support each limb grafted. The limbs provide +1 Armor to their area, although this is negated by fire. The limb restores any lost Edge or Pool resulting from the loss of the original limb. This is a Level 7 Artifact.

Depletion: -

I've finally made contact with a mite. I am embarrassed to write that it took me several hours to figure that the gentleman with whom I'd been conversing at the inn where the boys from the last village had directed me was in fact the creature whom I have so long sought to find. His name is Ash, and he is agreeable to further travels together.

I find this a most satisfactory turn of events, as it would pain me to delay my travels even for the opportunity to study. Ash has already saved my life; a group of cutpurses were eavesdropping on our conversation and took me to be a much wealthier man and surrounded us outside. Ash was able to forge his body into a weapon, an ability that will likely prove handy in the months to come.

New Species

The following section provides further background on the races described in the Foci section. Please note that these species are not necessarily tied to the Foci. Just because a PC Takes Root does not mean that she (or he) is a Dryad. This information is here to provide a richer experience, but if it does not harmonize with your vision, then by all means feel free to modify or ignore it.

Riders on the Swarm

There are numerous types of beings whose nature is a hive mind composed of a controller unit and colonies of drones to be found throughout the universes. Here we present the most well-known swarm species of Karexus, the mites.

The mites are a race of small bio-mechanical nano-beings whose component drones superficially resemble insects smaller than the terrestrial sugar ant. Mites are viewed with suspicion by human populations due to their changeable nature and social aloofness.

Life Cycle and Physiology

The prevailing perception of mites is a swarm lacking personal identity, acting on animal instinct. While this may be true of drones severed from their link to the rest of their swarm, a mite “individual” is the queen of a swarm. The mite queen is much larger than her drones, about the size of a human hand. When mites take humanoid form the queen usually is placed in the chest area, which offers better protection than the head. The queen is capable of all the complex thoughts and emotions that a human can experience.

Mites are asexual. Unlike insects, a mite queen is grown from a regular drone, rather than bred specifically for the purpose of becoming queen. The queen simply selects a random drone within reach and cocoons it within her body, beginning a maturation process that will end with a young queen eventually forming her own swarm and leaving. While maturing, a process which takes years, the embryonic queen learns from its mother, becoming self-aware and sharing its neural mass with the queen. Fertile queens usually have up to five young queens within them, staggered so that they release a juvenile every other month. These queens are significantly more intelligent than those who have yet to become fertile.

A juvenile queen is birthed, although expelled would be a more appropriate description from a human observer, into the wider world near a source of sufficient food to begin creating a new swarm. Juveniles take about two years to eat and produce enough drones, as well as to practice control of their swarm sufficient to begin traveling the wider world.

Mites tend to take a humanoid form, regardless of contact with humans. It is thought that this is a behavior passed from parent to child, learned from beneficial contact with humans in past generations or as a defense mechanism so that they pass as their most dangerous predator. Humans are more likely to hunt mites down than to welcome them into their society.

Mites are able to breed their drones in different colors and to form semi-rigid shells that mimic human skin. Mites usually stay in a humanoid form for most of their lives. While capable of manipulating the swarm's form, they generally only change from a human look to a formless mass to get into tight spaces or hide. Creating other structures, like weapons or tools is possible, but requires the queen to breed and train her drones for specific tasks. A capable swarm generally can assume two or three extra forms besides human and goze.

On Foci and Species

A Mite's ability to train itself for various tasks is the in-story explanation of the Tier 2, 4 and 6 abilities of the Swarms Forth Focus. These abilities represent certain forms that the Mite can take to help with specific tasks or combat. Not every Mite is capable of this, as some choose to focus on other aspects of life. It is perfectly reasonable that a Mite may choose to forgo developing its natural abilities to study archery and Carry a Quiver or to become an assassin and Murder.

If a Mite chooses not to take the Swarms Forth Focus then they still gain access to the Tier 1 Ability of that Focus, in addition to the Tier 1 Ability of their chosen Focus. The GM will use intrusions from both Swarms Forth and the chosen Focus, creating unique challenges for the player. This holds true for any non-human who takes a Focus different than one that describes their species' natural gifts. Access to two Tier 1 Abilities is traded for further GM intrusions and complications.

Mite queens typically live for thirty years once they finish building a swarm. The drones serving a queen die moments after their queen passes, as enough of their autonomic functions are dictated by signals from the queen that they simply cease to live without her.

Mite Society

Mites are solitary for most of their lives. However it has been observed on more than one occasion that Mites do come together in mass gatherings. Multiple Mites are capable of merging swarms, and in concert can effectively become a gigantic organism. Legends abound of Mite super-swarms that have decimated entire settlements on Karexus with a sweep of their arms or of enormous defenders who have saved villages from ravaging beasts. See the cover of this book for a super-swarm in action.

While in a merged form the great swarm has an Intellect, Might and Speed Pool equal to the current pool of all contributing swarms. The swarm with the highest Intellect Edge has default control of the swarm, although he may decline or be contested using Intellect and any relevant skills (although this is highly counterproductive). The swarm has a Speed Edge equal to half that of its controller and a Might Edge equal to that of the highest Might Edge among the contributing swarms.

No one knows how the mites communicate or coordinate their sporadic meetings, or what purpose these gatherings serve, as Mites do not exchange genetic material to reproduce. When asked about the meetings after the fact by human companions, no Mite has been able to give a satisfactory answer, and all claim to remember nothing of their time spent with other Mites.

Mites operating within human society, or even with just a party of adventurers will either choose a name for themselves or allow their group to name them. Personal identity is simply not very important to the average Mite. The Mite experience and species perceptions are so wholly different from humanity that even with a lifetime spent among humans there will always be some small differences between Mites and human characters; their interactions will always be colored with the view of their friends as Others.

It seems that my entire journey will be one of happenstance and random fortune. Ash and I happened upon a dryad as we were attempting to make a fire following the death of our sphere of warmth. Our chosen tree turned out to be a woman, and one who was not pleased at our attempt to procure firewood. There was the briefest melee before I was able to resolve the situation with a few sweet words. The lovely dryad maiden is named Skyt Branch and insists upon joining our expedition. While she is more pleasant to look upon than Ash, I do find her prohibition on our taking any firewood from the forest to be most uncomfortable. It looks as if I will be shivering through the night until we can find someone to revive the sphere of warmth.

The Woodly Folke

Sapient plant-based life is uncommon on Karexus, but there are several known members of the species currently active. These beings choose only to call themselves “people” when in mixed company, and no reports exist of their having a secret “true name” shared among their own kind. Humans usually call them Dryads, Rooters, Plants or Tree-Walkers, and these terms usually meet with no objection from the easy-going plants.

Dryads are amiable, if quiet and contemplative, company. While not frequently encountered, they do not seem to go out of their way to avoid human contact, and many serve local communities as glaives, jacks or nanos.

Life Cycle and Physiology

Dryads are humanoid plants. They stand from four to seven feet tall and usually appear to be beautiful women with willow branches for hair and green wood grain or bark skin. Dryads consume nutrients through a process of rooting in the soil, which is why most of them walk barefoot. Dryads may eat food in a manner that mimics human eating, where food slowly digests in their torso like a pitcher plant or venus flytrap. The tough skin of a Dryad provides 1 point of natural Armor against most damage but they take 1 extra Damage from fire. Dryads need air like other sapients and will drown in water.

Like many plants, Dryads have long life spans. There have been no known cases of Dryads dying from old age, although they are just as susceptible to disease and causes. A Dryad begins her life as a small sapling, during which time they do not have conscious thought and appear to be a mundane tree (although anyone trained in botany can tell the species of Dryad sapling from other trees). This stage lasts for approximately 20 years, after which time the Dryad's form begins to assume humanoid shape. It takes a further two years before this shaping is complete, and this is the time during which a Dryad becomes self-aware.

Dryads roam the woods until they stumble upon other Dryads or humans. It typically takes a week of exposure to a human or other sapient being and regular communication before the Dryad picks up their first language. After becoming imprinted with a language their rate of learning slows to

that of an adult human. The neurological development that comes with learning their first language also stimulates the Dryad adolescence.

A Dryad becomes fertile soon after social contact. Dryads are capable of asexual reproduction, although this is rare and must be a conscious decision. Asexual reproduction is usually carried out in a modified form via the Tier 5 ability of the Takes Root Focus and is used to clone the Dryad into a “spare” body that grows in a different process than normal reproduction.

All Dryads are hermaphrodites, although they invariably appear to be female. Typical Dryad reproduction is passive. A Dryad occasionally releases spores from her various flower blooms, which may later settle to fertilize another Dryad nearly anywhere in the world. A fertilized Dryad begins to grow a small sapling within her torso. The sapling grows for six months until the Dryad gently removes the sapling and plants it in safe, fertile soil. Most Dryads do not return to their offspring once placed, although through some process not yet understood a Dryad always knows her mother and her daughters on sight.

Dryad Society

Dryads do not have a structured society. They may gather at times to enjoy the company of others of their kind, but they do not have nations or villages. When present with one another Dryads can communicate silently by rooting within short range of another rooted Dryad. This network can extend a very long distance so long as there is an uninterrupted chain of interconnected Dryads.

Dryads name themselves. The name comes from the Dryad root-language's visual concept construction. These names are always descriptions of an image. A typical Dryad would be named Wild-Stream-Current for a single image or perhaps Fall-Root-Grow for a sequence of images. These names can be quite complex and include few or many image elements, as it takes no time to express them in root-thought.

Filled with wanderlust, most Dryads do not convene for long meetings. A Dryad's best friend may be someone with whom she has only spent a total of several hours with in the last decade. It helps build relationships when two individuals can catch up on old times via a near-instantaneous psychic memory transfer.

Dryads are fascinated by humans. Their mayfly lives, their gregariousness that borders on obnoxious and their determination to find adventure all make humans curiosities to Dryads. Dryads frequently spend time in human settlements as builders, craftsmen, healers and explorers.

The Northern Wilds

As with all information in this book, the geography is set on a planet far from Earth. And once again, if your campaign is set on Earth, feel free to simply drop this area into the vicinity of the Steadfast. The group of large islands to the north of the continent Karexus are known as the Northern Wilds. Sparsely inhabited compared to the southern regions, the islands have yet to see the hand of man carve out his mark on the near-virgin forests. As this region is home to the majority of Karexus' Mite and Dryad population, it is mapped out here.

Of the number of settlements that do exist on the islands, none can be called anything close to a city, let alone a metropolis. The various villages are not all poor, but there is little interest in developing them further, and the humans who live there follow a creed of taking as little as they must from the natural world. This is largely out of respect for the Dryads, who were originally a source of fear for the first settlers. Most villages have contact with at least one Dryad who will sell her services to grow homes when new buildings are needed.

The largest and central island is named Amittal. Amittal is home to ninety-percent of the Wilds' human population. Half of the islanders live in the large town of Carth. Carth is located on the southeast shore of Amittal and its nearly fifteen-hundred inhabitants support themselves as fishers, farmers, laborers and occasionally miners in the Acathan mountains just to the north.

To the west of Carth, past the Aakal mountain range is the village of Empal. Empal is a lonely place, cut off from easy travel by the mountains and forests, and on the shore of a dangerous channel between Ammittal and Brezik. Empali villagers are mainly hunters and warriors known for their bravery in combat. Empal is responsible for sending a group to check the lighthouse at the southern tip of Amittal every year to ensure that it is still working. Of course, nobody from Empal has the knowledge to fix it if it were to stop, which would likely result in an epic quest to find a qualified scholar from the mainland.

The third village of Ammittal is Delned, which uses its remote location as an artists' haven. Around nine-hundred people live in the town, with nearly half of them artists of some sort, at least part-time. Delned is famed for its festivals celebrating various art forms throughout the year. The village has a Mite-run enclave. The enclave is famous for its "living art" pieces performed by the Mites. The shifting undulations of the individual hives into larger collectives and back, taking any form conceivable makes Delned the most well-known town in the Wilds.

Brezik is the only other island in the Northern Wilds that features human development. Its two villages, Fashlaw to the north and Murlag to the south, have a combined population of less than three-hundred people. Every person on the island is a blood relative to everyone else in their village. The two villages would be more prosperous, as they are the only island to feature no dangerous wildlife or numenera and have abundant logging industry, but a blood feud that started over a stolen livestock animal generations ago keeps both groups wallowing in the mud.

The other islands, Kirmanis to the south and Buhena to the north, have no permanent settlements. Each is home to numerous wild animals who make thrilling but often fatal sport for daring hunters from the mainland.



The Northern Wilds of Karexus

To Live and Die in the Wilds

The men and women of the Northern Wilds are set apart from regular society. Living on their islands, remote from the rest of the world, has given them a unique outlook. Here we will explore some of their more notable customs. Keep in mind that this is not an exhaustive look, as we are keeping a lot of stuff free for the GM to introduce as he pleases!

Community

The villages of Carth and Delned are run by committee, counsels of elected leaders. In Carth these leaders are selected from among the various trade guilds: loggers, miners and so forth. In Delned each artistic discipline recognizes a master of their craft who sits on the counsel. Fashlaw and Murlag are each run by the current Patriarch or Matriarch of the town, the oldest member of the family. Empal, being more militant and severe, is ruled by the Headman, who is always male.

Family

Family ties are strongest in Fashlaw and Murlag. In those hamlets everyone is related by blood, and this includes all members of both feuding villages. Carth places great emphasis on unity, but does not follow Fashlaw or Murlag in the pursuit of vendetta over past wrongs. Delned stresses the importance of passing along knowledge to the next generation, but this does not necessarily mean one's own children, as each child is free to pursue the career of their choice. In Empal men hold all the military power. They don't view this as chauvinism or misogyny, but rather as protecting the women, whom they hold in high esteem for their childbearing ability. The women of Empal have total power over city planning and economy, except when their decision would conflict with the defense of Empal.

Customs

In winter, nobody smiles, except the Delnedi, who always seem to have a cheerful outlook. In summer, when food and light are plentiful, all are welcome and hospitality is offered to strangers. This is true throughout the Wilds, except among the feuders of Fashlaw and Murlag, who will turn away any from the other village.

When offense is taken, it is perfectly acceptable to settle a conflict with fists. The two parties go outside and have at each other. Weapons are fine only if it's agreed before the fight, and the same goes for esoterics. Cheating in an honor fight (it's far too barbaric to be called a duel) will have the entire village out for your blood. This includes your friends and family, as it's their honor that you've slighted by treachery.

If you want to avoid giving offense, remember the following. Never make eye contact with a superior while you are in Empal. If you are a civilian, everyone is your superior. Do not mention Fashlaw or its inhabitants while in Murlag and vice versa. Should the hated others be mentioned, spit on the ground or floor immediately. Never insult a trade or its guild while in Carth. Never compare one artist's work to another's while in Delned. And never, anywhere in the Wilds, take off more than one day in seven from work. To do so is sheer laziness and will get you a cold shoulder from everyone in town.

A true gentleman walks behind a lady. That is so that he can keep a watchful eye on her and keep her from harm. Likewise, a man always enters a room first, checking for danger or strange circumstances, and holds the door open for the woman behind him.

Weapons and War

The customs of carrying weapon publicly in the Wilds varies from town to town. In Empal only citizens may carry weapons. Visitors are allowed to carry weapons so long as they sign on for at least two weeks of duty doing patrol, hunting bandits or training youngsters if they are weapon masters. This gets the visitor a pass good for one year of open carry. In Carth weapons are not allowed, but a tradesman is always allowed to carry the tools of his trade openly. Funny enough, these tools often end up getting used in any fights that break out.

In Delned carrying a weapon if one is not a member of the city guard is looked on as bad taste, but unless the populace has reason to fear for its safety they will not ask the person to relinquish their arms. Fashlaw and Murlag allow weapons to be carried by anyone in town and these are often worn openly.

Besides the internicine war between Fashlaw and Murlag, there is little to no armed conflict between villages. That is not to say that there is no violence. Bandits attack every few years, and hordes of wild animals or numenera run amok menace the towns on a consistent basis.

Festivals

The most famous festivals in the Wilds are the series of art fairs held in Delned. Every month a different discipline or set of disciplines (all of theater at once rather than acting one month and set design the next) are highlighted. The town's current master of that month's discipline presides, offering free workshops for beginners and journeymen, as well as contests and free performances or admission to exhibitions.

The biggest festival of Empal is Graduation Day, which celebrates the yearly graduation into the town militia. The youngsters are personally inducted by the Headman and a feast is held in their honor. Then everyone gets back to work. Such is life in Empal.

Carth celebrates the harvest every year in a month-long festival. Bakers and brewers hold special prominence here. There is much dancing, drinking and eating. Of course, if the harvest is poor then Harvest Festival is instead a somber ritual designed to fortify the spirit for the harsh winter ahead. The town also celebrates the return of the migratory aquatic species and the melting of the snow (which permits acces to the mines).

Fashlaw and Murlag are treacherous places. A party is held every night that a member of the other town is murdered. Every year on the anniversary of the original incident that sparked the feud the drunken hicks of these villages send their best and bravest (most foolish and drunkest) dozen men to fight on the road halfway between the villages. This always ends badly. Most times nobody dies and the sloshed participants stumble to the ground before landing a blow on their enemy, and spend minutes rolling about in the mud trying to get to their feet. Such is the glory of their vendetta.

Location Descriptors

Carth

You are from Carth, a village that has prospered for generations because of the cooperation among its people. You embody the fabled Carth spirit and work tirelessly alongside others.

You gain the following characteristics:

Keen: You gain +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Communal Spirit: When working with a friend on any task not related to combat you reduce the difficulty of the task by one in addition to any other benefit gained.

Skill: You are trained in any skill involving either agriculture or mining. Pick one.

Inability: You do not think of your own needs very often. As such you aren't very good at commerce or personal pursuits. The difficulty of any business-related task is increased by one Level. The difficulty of any combat-related task is increased by one Level when you are not within immediate range of an ally.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. Due to a poor harvest or other circumstance resources were scarce and you volunteered to leave the community so that there would be more to go around.
2. Choose one other PC. They just looked so inept in one area of skill that you felt bound to join them and help.
3. While you love your community, boredom struck and you followed one of the other PCs out of town on a whim.
4. You are searching for a fugitive from Carth and the other PCs are your best option to find the fugitive.

Delned

Delned is a backwater but a famous one. You may not be a member of the Delned Artists' Circle, but like all folks native to that hamlet you were given a broad base of training in the arts while you were at school.

You gain the following characteristics:

Flexibility: Your multi-discipline training means that you gain +2 to your Intellect Pool and +2 to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You are trained in two artistic disciplines. One is a performance art and the other is artisanal.

Inability: Even the sculptor who quarries his own rock leads a fairly sheltered life. The difficulty of any laborous task is increased by one for you.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. While you carry the blood and traditions within you, you felt that Delned was growing "too mainstream," donned your ironically-shabby clothing and left for an area with fewer hipsters.
2. Choose one PC. Their look struck you just the right way. Something about them captures the essence of what you are trying to express. You follow them night and day.
3. You were corresponding with one other PC over a mutual hobby and eventually decided to meet up.
4. A rival has destroyed your reputation in Delned. You are leaving to gain fame in the wider world and the PCs seem to be just the right companions for your quest.

Empal

You fit the stereotype of the typical Empali: stoic, stern and severe. You spend your free time training your body and your willpower. You view anything that you consider to be a nonessential item or concept as "weak." Your devotion to duty, however, is above reproach.

You gain the following characteristics:

Spartan Training: Your tireless training has given you +4 Might Pool.

Skill: You are trained in hunting and tracking.

Skill: You are trained in tactics, strategy and logistics.

Inability: You have little experience with those who are not members of the Empali Militia (the entire population of Empal). The difficulty of any social interaction with someone who is not a soldier or law enforcement officer is increased by one for you.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

1. You are on special assignment from the Headman himself. You are to accompany the party to scout out the locations they visit on their travels.
2. While you have benefited from the training, you disagree with the current Headman and hitched your wagon to the first traveler to pass through.
3. Choose one PC. They are paying for your services with a cut of any loot that you all find.
4. You were clubbed on the head and woke up far from Empal. The other PCs rescued you from a slaver.

Fashlaw and Murlag

You are from the feuding towns. None defend what they have so fiercely as those who have the least. You have grown up amid the petty vengeance and stubborn pride of Fashlaw and Murlag.

You gain the following Characteristics:

Old Cuss: Your tenacity has given you +2 Might Pool and +2 Speed Pool.

Skill: You are trained in raising, training and treating animals.

Kinship: You treat your kin and your friends as if they were a part of you. Any insult against them must be answered in kind. For each PC or ally you have you may once per day gain an Asset when avenging a slight against their honor, to be used at the GM's discretion.

Inability: You are bad at making new friends, as it takes a long time for someone to earn your trust. The difficulty of every social interaction with those not designated "kin" by you is increased by two.

Initial Link to the Starting Adventure: From the following list of options choose how you came to be involved in the first adventure.

1. However far back, one of the other PCs is related to you and has asked your aid.
2. You fell in love with someone from the wrong village and they paid the price for it. You left your island in disgust.
3. A sibling of yours has been kidnapped by slavers and one other PC knows where to find them.
4. Another PC stepped up to defend you from bandits. They are kin forevermore.

Phenomena

This section presents details on what makes the world of Karexus unique. As always, keep what you like, throw out or change the rest. The rest of Karexus will be documented in a series of upcoming supplements.

Weird Relics: Karexus was colonized by humans at the dawn of the Ninth Age. The colonists had the ability to move large amounts of material and people at once, and they used this ability to bring many of their Artifacts with them. Folks who pass through portals from Karexus to the Ninth World do not always realize that they are on a different planet. Karexus has its own Datasphere and the Iron Wind.

Society: Social developments match the Ninth World in many ways. Feudalism is the most common form of government. Even remote locations like the Northern Wilds, with its autonomous city-states, are nominally under the authority of mainland powers. The biggest difference between Karexus and the Ninth World socially is that Karexus has a much higher percentage of non-human sentients than the Ninth World has.

The main powers south of the Wilds are the Umfaddin Empire and the Kingdom of Ath'k. These powers are hostile but rarely break out in open warfare, choosing instead to wage proxy wars or acts of espionage and sabotage. Each power lays claim to the Wilds, although neither has practical authority over it. Both do have small client states in the far south, and they keep these in a state of constant warfare.

To the east is the Oureb Khanate. Run by a tyrant demi-human this empire is the greatest threat to any other kingdom on the planet. They are checked only by their willingness to cross the Great Desert between Oureb and the western portion of the mainland.

Geology: Karexus is Earth-sized, but differs significantly below the crust. Karexus' solid inner core is massive, 1,516 miles in radius, and is surrounded by a thinner liquid outer core. Despite the difference of the planets' inner compositions, Karexus has the same magnetic field, gravity effect, average temperature and length of day. It is thought that some artificial means has kept the planet in this state.

Races: Humans are prevalent in Karexus, but no one species can be said to be the dominant species. Among the many species who live on Karexus, the most notable are:

-Dryads: Treefolk who live away from society. Detailed in this book.

-Halem: Human-animal hybrids found throughout the world. Detailed in Races of Karexus, Volume II.

-Krak: Machine-hopping energy beings. Detailed in Races of Karexus, Volume III.

-Mites: Swarm beings who are sentient hives. Detailed in this book.

-Pabalak: Spherical, hyperactive mountain dwellers. Detailed in Races of Karexus, Volume II.

-Shau: Impossible imaginary beings. Detailed in Races of Karexus, Volume III.

Organizations

Despite the fairly low population of the Wilds, there are a number of organizations operating in the area. Presented here are two of the more notable ones. Note that when setting a game in Karexus it is not necessary to stick strictly with organizations from Karexus. Both mechanically and thematically the other organizations published for the Cyper System work very well on Karexus. Many organizations operating on the Ninth World are present on Karexus. The Order of Truth, the Convergence, the Jagged Dream and the Sarracenians all have members who have travelled to Karexus from the Ninth World in one fashion or another.

The Naturalist Society



The Naturalist Society is based on the Karexus mainland, often simply called Karexus. Most of their operatives, though, operate in distant lands. The Society considers the mainland to be a boring old landscape, long past any period of romantic exploration. And as the Naturalist Society believes in the pursuit of romantic exploration as the height of living, few of their members stick around home.

The few members who do stay home do so because they are too old for the adventures for which the Society is famous. As the average Karexan citizen is only likely to encounter past-their-prime members the Society has earned an inaccurate reputation as a club of old folks who sit about all day, annoying anyone unfortunate enough to be within earshot with the same three stories of the good old days ad nauseum.

In truth the Naturalist Society sponsors many exciting expeditions and most members are quite young. Their contributions to Karexus' body of scholarly knowledge is incalculable. A member of the Naturalist Society is destined to pick up volumes' worth of tales for his old age, assuming that he is not one of the majority of the Naturalists who die spectacular deaths during their adventures.

Membership Benefits: In lieu of gaining a new skill, members of the Naturalist Society can receive an early-warning danger detection implant. This implant's use costs 3 Intellect for each activation and occurs automatically. The PC receives a warning from the GM whenever a trap or ambush effect that would do at least 5 damage will occur in the immediate future, giving them precious seconds to act.

The Delned Artists' Circle



Located in the remote city of Delned, the Artists' Circle is composed of creative types from every artistic discipline and species or cultural background found on Karexus. The organization is structured very loosely, with anyone of appreciable artistic talent welcome to join.

A Circle member's main duty is to travel far and wide, bringing news of Delned's festivals and artistic community to every corner of the world. Members on pilgrimages spend their free time studying new, exotic artistic pursuits and recruiting more members into the Circle.

Membership Benefits: In lieu of gaining a new skill, members of the Artists' Circle can take the ability to make fast friends with their art. By spending one hour on an improvised piece and spending Intellect equal to the number of friends in their party the artist can procure dinner and lodging in a strange city for one night.

Cypher Packs

This book was designed to present two new species for your games of Numenera, as well as a new place for them to play. Each volume of Races of Karezus will have two new species and reveal more of the geography and culture of that world.

That's all well and good, but bland without something for the PCs to actually do while they adventure. To that end, we here present the wild art of foraging for Cypher packs. It is an activity practiced throughout the world, but more prevalently in the Northern Wilds because its sparse population level means that there are more undiscovered packs to be found.

The Packs

Cypher packs are found at least five miles from any civilized area. They are icosahedrons about the size of a human head. They glow faintly and have one or more strange runes on their surface. There is no discernable pattern to their location. They simply appear overnight in a location that was previously empty.

Packs are Level 3 objects for the purpose of using Intellect to open them, and Level 5 for using Might. Within each one is a random Cypher. The pack stops glowing permanently once it has been opened and the Cypher within revealed. They pack shields the Cypher from the weird radiation that builds up when two or more Cyphers are in close proximity. This shielding has a strange effect on other Cypher packs; a person may not carry more than one at a time. Once opened the Cypher within activates and the PC may now hold another Cypher pack in close proximity to the open pack.

The Cyphers found within are of any conceivable type. The exact Cypher can be chosen by the GM beforehand or determined randomly from a source like the Cypher Deck. The difference between pack Cyphers and those found elsewhere is that in addition to whatever function the Cypher performs, it also has the effect of transforming the user temporarily. For instance a Detonation Cypher found on page 284 of Numenera might turn its user's arm into a red-hot stone and launch a glob of lava. The transformations from this effect last for fifteen minutes after an immediate-effect Cypher activates or for the duration of a Cypher with an extended effect. In the case of anyone who bonds with their Cyphers, using the Fuses Flesh and Steel Focus or a Tier Six Nano ability, the transformation lasts for 28 hours. Someone merging with the Cypher can wait until the Cypher has been activated before choosing to merge with it.

Foraging for Cypher packs is a lucrative business, but it is not without risk. As a good rule of thumb about 80% of all successful hunts should result in a hostile encounter. Half of these should be brigands or thugs out for the same thing. About 40% of encounters should be wild animals attracted to the strange energy of the pack. These animals should present a serious challenge to the party. The remaining 10% of encounters are deadly threats like Dread Destroyers or a Titanothaur from the Ninth World Bestiary.

Finding a buyer for a Cypher packs is a simple affair. Anyone with the money to pay for the PCs efforts will have use for them. The trick with this type of service is that there is almost always one person or group who lays claim to all packs in an area and will try to take revenge on anyone they find selling "their" packs to another buyer. This is also true in the case of anyone who simply wants to keep a pack for themselves, rather than sell it.

Pack Cyphers

This section features descriptions of Cyphers found in packs and includes descriptions of their accompanying transformations. Scholars find it curious that many of the Cyphers have abilities that mimic those of the various major non-human species. There is nothing preventing you from using these Cyphers in the traditional manner, if you so choose. These Cyphers are all anoetic.

Ballistic Ram

Level: 1d6

Transforming: The PC's fist becomes a spring made of flesh.

Effect: If the PC hits an enemy with an unarmed attack then that enemy flies off away from the punch. The distance covered is dependent upon the damage done by the attack. If it was 1-2 damage then the enemy moves Short Distance, if it was 3-5 damage then the enemy moves Long Distance and if it was 6 or more damage the enemy moves 300 feet. If the enemy hits another being then they stop and the being that they ran into finishes the movement. The second being takes half the damage that the first one took from the attack. This can continue to affect enemies like a game of billiards until the total distance determined from the initial attack has been covered. This effect lasts for 15 minutes.

Halem Egg

Level: 1d6

Transforming: Initially a thin pale aura around the user, followed by an animal transformation.

Effect: The PC takes on the properties of the next animal that he touches. If he is mounted then he merges with his mount into a composite creature whose speed and mode of movement are those of the mount and who does +2 Damage on unarmed attacks. If the PC takes the properties of a nearby creature then he gains an appearance similar to the creature and one effect listed in the creature's description. If the creature in question is a rare example of a Numenera creature with no special qualities then choose to either add claws (+2 damage to unarmed attacks), increase speed by one step or anything appropriate from the picture or flavor text. This ability only works on biological creatures and lasts for 30 minutes.

Engulfing Mass

Level: 1d6

Transforming: The PC takes on a "granular" or "pixelated" appearance.

Effect: The first attack against you each round from a thrown or projectile weapon does -2 Damage after Armor is applied. If this would bring the Damage to less than 0, you restore the difference in Might Pool as your body chomps away at the mass. This effect lasts for 5 minutes.

Matter Fountain

Level: 1d6+2

Transforming: Holes open in the character's wrist and chest. The character flashes green and white while manufacturing.

Effect: The PC places an amount of matter into his chest cavity. His torso then makes a cacophonous rumbling for one minute. At the end of that time any object held in the character's offhand is recreated within their torso and ejected from the hole in the wrist of their dominant hand. The character must "ingest" an amount of matter of equal mass to the object being copied. This ability cannot copy anything more complex than simple tools. It is frequently used to make coins or knives. The effect of the Cypher lasts for a number of minutes equal to half its level, and anything made during this time remains once the Cypher's effect ends.

Prismatic Suffuser

Level: 1d6+2

Transforming: The PC's form becomes transparent and refracts light.

Effects: While under the effect of this Cypher any light-based attacks made against you may be redirected to a target of your choice if within range and if you successfully attack the new target. Any light-based attacks that you make have their damage increased by +2. Your Speed Defense rolls are +2 against any opponent using sight to target you. This effect lasts for 5 minutes.

Soul Tether

Level: 1d6

Transforming: A series of tendrils trail from your back into nothingness for two feet.

Effects: While this Cypher is active you may declare the spot on which you stand to be the leash point. At any time during the Cypher's active life you may once "tug" the tether. You will be pulled back to the leash point at a speed of 500 feet per turn. You avoid obstacles in your path and may carry one person in each arm. This Cypher will not pull if you are further than the Cypher's Levelx100 feet from the leash point. This Cypher is active for 28 hours, during which time the leash point may be set once and the tether may be "tugged" once.

Machine Link

Level: 1d6

Transforming: Your skin appears to be made of circuitry or clockwork.

Effects: While this Cypher is in effect you may link yourself to one machine of any sort. While linked you gain an Asset on ascertaining the machine's function. You may at any time activate or deactivate any one function of your linked machine, so long as you are aware that the machine has such a function. This Cypher has a range of Levelx50 feet. This Cypher is active for 10 minutes.

Velocimpactor

Level: 1d6+2

Transforming: Your skin becomes rubbery and your features blur together.

Effects: You are able to use the impact of a fall as a weapon. For every 10 feet that you fall you add +1 Damage to an attack that you make against whatever or whomever is hit by your falling body. This fall does no damage to you if it is within the Cypher's Levelx10 feet. This effect lasts for 2 minutes.

Sumku Field

Level: 1d10

Transforming: Your skin takes on the sheen of blue steel.

Effects: Your dreadful appearance strikes terror into your opponents. You gain an Asset on your Speed Defense and Intellect Defense rolls as those who wish you harm strike with fear and indecision. Enemies outside a radius of this Cypher's Levelx20 feet are not affected by this Cypher. You gain +1 Armor during this time as well. This effect lasts for one minute.

Creatures of the Wilds

Makuta

10 (30)

This unique creature is a kin of the Titanothaurs found in The Ninth World Bestiary. Makuta is big, strong and very fast. Resembling a stone cobra this Titanothaur is dreaded throughout the islands. It is equally at home swimming the sea, burrowing underground or simply chasing pray on the plains. Wherever Makuta passes, death accompanies. The only relief for the wilds is that his underground warrens lead through one or more portals to the Ninth World and he seems to spend an equal amount of time terrorizing either world.

Motive: Destruction.

Environment: Anywhere.

Health: 150

Damage Inflicted: 16

Armor: 4

Movement: Medium.

Modifications: Speed Defense as Level 9 due to size.

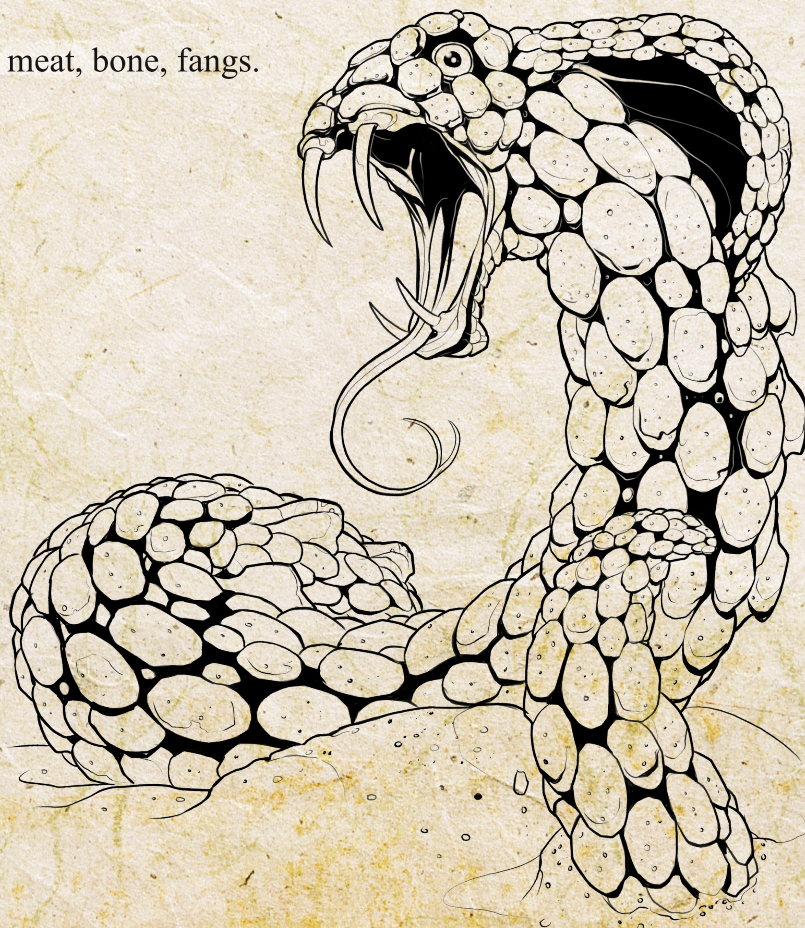
Combat: May lash anything in range with is tail, doing 7 damage to the target and anything within Short Range of the target if they succeed a Speed Defense, or doing full damage otherwise. Once per day Makuta may exude an acid cloud that defoliates an area of Long Range around his body. All standard plants and trees turn to ash in this cloud. Makuta heals 2 points per round.

Interaction: This beast may possess human-level intelligence, but is unwilling to reason with "lesser beings." Those only exist as prey.

Use: An inescapable monster to plague the PCs or drive them from an area where the GM does not want them to be at the moment.

GM Intrusion: A glob of acid lands on the PC, doing 2 damage per round until the character takes a turn to wipe or wash it off.

Loot: Rocky hide, acid gland sacs, meat, bone, fangs.



Shlabs

3 (9)

Shlabs are a widely-used reptilian mount animal. Unlike many mounts, Shlabs are tempermental predators. If treated well they will defend their rider and are ideal as cavalry mounts.

Shlabs in the wild are encountered in packs of at least a dozen. They are very territorial and will drive any intruder away as soon as they are scented. Shlab are native to every area of Karexus and come in more varieties than the Terran dog.

Motive: Survival

Environment: Plains

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4

Armor: 2

Movement: Long

Modifications: Level 6 for acts requiring balance and grace.

Combat: Shlabs pounce and follow through with a vicious slash from their forearms. When defending against them the PC must roll twice to avoid being hit. Even if both defenses fail the PC is only damaged once.

Interaction: In a wild herd they are belligerent, but bond with their rider when trained. In combat they are forward-thinkers and do not pay attention to their surroundings.

Use: As a mount or a mild threat.

GM Intrusion: The PC's shlab scents prey and will chase it until it is caught or until the shlab collapses. This occurs even if the PC is mounted.

Loot: Bones and teeth. Shlab meat is unpalatable.

Receptive: Shlab are among the few non-sentient lifeforms of Karexus that are able to activate Cypher packs. Wild shlab make beelines for Cypher packs within sight and chomp down, opening them and temporarily transforming.

Shlab used as mounts must be trained to keep out of Cypher packs unless expressly given permission to open them. Many skittish folks scared of rumors of poisoned or malfunctioning Cypher packs will give their packs to their loyal mount to use in combat. Also, a rider already under transformation from a Cypher pack might choose to activate a pack on his shlab in order to keep from ending their current effect prematurely.



Not every Cypher pack contains a welcome surprise. Certain packs (subject to the GM's evil intentions) contain a quickly-assembled Cypher soldier. Appearing as nothing more than a pile of parts within the pack the bits move and assemble in one round to become a cobbled-together warrior.

This soldier is not under the command of its summoner. It is a berserk fighter and will attack a random person present. The Surprise will fight until slain. If it manages to kill everyone in its presence it will then roam in a spiral pattern until it encounters more victims. Any Surprise that does not find anyone after an hour of searching will crumble into useless parts.

Motive: Mindless slaughter.

Environment: Wherever a Cypher pack is opened.

Health: 22

Damage Inflicted: 3

Armor: 6

Movement: Short

Modification: As level 3 for any task not directly related to attacking, defending or sensing prey.

Combat: The surprise attacks a random target, which may be the PCs, an ally or an enemy. Roll 1D20:

-1-12: Regular Surprise. No further modifications.

-13-16: Heavy Arms. May attack at Long Range for 2 Damage.

-17-20: Breeder. If there are no targets within 500' then it will use any stone, metal or synth available to construct another Surprise. This Surprise functions indefinitely, while its constructs are normal Surprises who will last an hour without combat.

Interaction: None possible through normal means besides combat. This is an automaton not susceptible to telepathy but can be accessed by the Data Sphere. It is conceivable to control one but they require combat every hour.

Use: As a nasty surprise for players.

Secrets of the Others

First things first- if you are a player, STOP READING THIS SECTION! Spoilers abound and it is against your own interests to read ahead.

As a GM you are free, of course, to disregard any or all of the secrets presented in this chapter. While everything here is “true” in the world of Karexus, it may not be so for you and your group. I believe in giving GMs freedom to tell their stories in the way that they desire, rather than in forcing them down a single path. To that end the story threads in this section are presented in broad strokes so that a GM can develop them when and how he sees fit. They may be the intense focus of a campaign or sporadically intersect with the main story arc.

The strangest thing happened last week. Ash was engaged in a rather heated philosophical discussion with a local merchant when suddenly his countenance sagged and his features deformed slightly but enough to startle the merchant into chanting superstitious litanies. Without a word Ash turned and began walking out of town. I followed him for some distance before I lost him. He returned to our room at the inn just this morning, claiming not to know what I was talking about. I'll have to keep a sharp eye on him...

Secrets of the Mites

The Mites occasional gatherings are organized by a telepathic hive mind. When all of the Mites come together they conglomerate into one cacophonous yet beautiful being. Memories and thoughts are exchanged, and for a brief moment Mites enjoy respite from their long stretches of solitude.

That is the most accepted conjecture about the Mites, and it is wholly false. Deep within the most hidden recesses of Karexus lies the Mite High Queen. The High Queen is not a benevolent controller of a swarm like a regular queen is of her drones. The High Queen is the last survivor of the original Mites who came to Karexus from some place beyond human knowledge. She is a paranoid individual who fears human individuality.

The High Queen is a powerful nano and telepath who occasionally compels the other queens to gather in groups. During this time she removes the queens from all distraction and psychically reviews their experiences. Each Mite then leaves the gathering with no memory of what has happened. The truly dangerous thing about this is that each queen carries with her certain psychic commands of which she is not consciously aware. The High Queen is plotting against human society and whether or not the individual Mites would agree with her views and methods, they will find themselves facing virtually irresistible commands when faced with certain trigger conditions.

The High Queen and the Players

This is a fantastic opportunity for GM intrusions. The GM is aware that the High Queen hates humans and plots against them. None of the players know this and may have come to trust their Mite companion with their lives. This can come back to bite them when their friend forms a blade and cuts the rope which they are using to climb out of a dark pit...

The player should not be railroaded by this, however. While there will be an occasion where the PC will be commanded to act by the High Queen, they should be given the opportunity to resist. This increases the dramatic tension and keeps things fair for the player. The GM may narrate the PC forming a blade to slash their friend's rope, but then should allow the player to role-play the mental struggle to keep from betraying their companions. Of course it should be noted that the Mite High Queen is a Level 8 creature who does not take kindly to being disobeyed.

The High Queen does not command in real-time and will not be immediately aware of any betrayal. She will only learn about it from scanning a Mite at their gatherings. This gives players a chance to investigate and prepare for conflict with the High Queen. Note that while it is possible to resist a command to betray one's cherished companions it is no easy thing to resist the call to a gathering. The triggered commands are recent and just below the surface of the conscious mind. The call to a gathering is innate and goes back to the first Mites.

Just because the players are aware of some conditioning that causes the Mite PC to act out of character does not mean that they will immediately become wise to the High Queen or her plans. Once the initial betrayal is made the course of the story can be set to discover the High Queen and to work against her plans. The players will need some way to learn of her existence, perhaps tapping in to the psychic communications of the Mite gatherings. The search for a numenera capable of listening in would be an appropriate quest for the players to undertake.

I haven't stopped running for days. I'm not sure how far I've gone, but I can't escape the sight of that thing. It's more than want to remember, but I have to get this on paper in case they find me. The guides that I hired are dead. They were good trackers but poor runners. I'll never forget that look on Ash's face when he turned and saw me in the cave. Please, whoever finds this, get the word out about them; we can't trust the Mites!

Dealing with the High Queen is a separate matter. Once she is discovered the players will have to try and evade her minions and perhaps sever their Mite companion's connections to her, or take the fight to her hidden lair. Finding her is easier if the players try to use her psychic abilities to home in on her, which means that any Mites in the group are still open to her commands.

The High Queen is a difficult adversary to reach. She is hidden in a mountain cave. On Karexus this cave is in the Acathan Range. She commands no physical swarm, and is a large queen about half the size of a grown human. She is guarded by two Level 7 Mites who will fight savagely to protect her.



Mite High Queen

8 (24)

The ancient and powerful secret hand behind all of the Mites on Karexus. She is the last of her original species and has a deep and abiding hatred for all non-collective forms of life. Nothing is known about her past life before coming to this world.

Motive: Erase human individuality. Develop a way of converting humans into drones or kill them all.

Environment: Ideal environment unknown. Found in a mountain cave.

Health: 27

Damage Inflicted: 4

Armor: 0, 4 against mental damage

Movement: Short

Modifications: Level 3 for physical tasks.

Combat: The High Queen hangs back, letting her two Mites fight for her. She will hurl psychic assaults at the characters, but will only try and run if she is attacked personally.

Each of her guards is a Level 7 Mite. They have 21 Health and a Movement of Short. Their Damage is 4, but if any PC has damaged the High Queen during that player's last action the guard will perform a berserk attack. This attack lowers their Health by 2 before the PC rolls for defense. If the attack is successful it will do 6 damage instead of 4 this turn.

Use: The final "boss" to be overcome in order to win the freedom of the Mite species.

Loot: Nothing of use to human characters. Her carcass can be utilized by a Mite in order to mature into a High Queen themselves. Their lifespan will increase from 30 years to 600.

The maturation process takes a full year to complete. By then end of the first year the Mite's swarm queen will be twice its previous size. Over the next 200 years the new High Queen will continue to grow until it is about half the size of an adult human. Once it has reached full size it stops growing and will have one or two Mites under its thrall rather than controlling a personal swarm, although it may merge with the swarms of its thralls. These thrall Mites are the result of the juvenile queens that grow within its body. When the High Queen dies these thralls will consume her carcass and become High Queens themselves.

While it is the custom for a Mite to ascend to High Queen status by consuming the hormone glands of a High Queen, it is possible for a non-thrall Mite to ascend through extended physical contact with a High Queen. Thralls have their hormone receptors altered before they mature from the juvenile stage so that they will be less receptive to the "ascension hormone."

Secrets of the Dryads

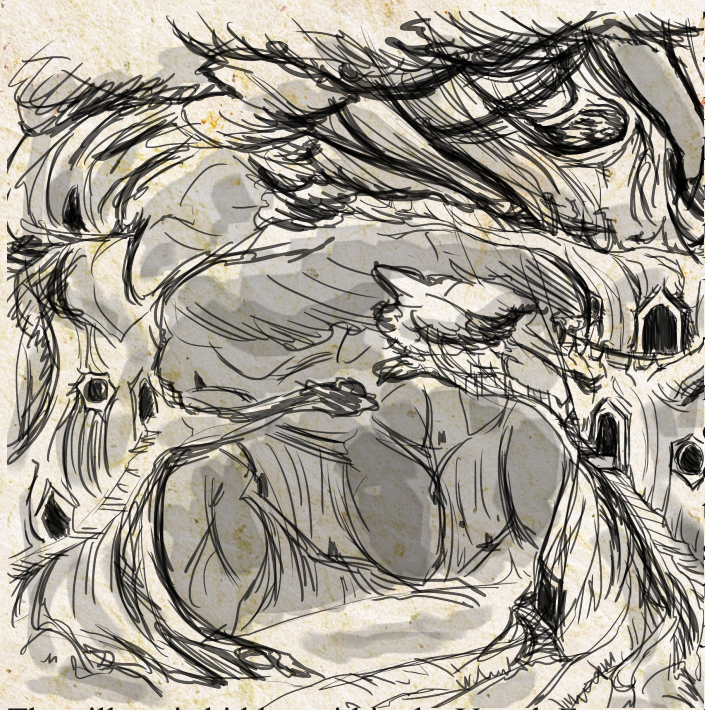
The Dryads are not quite the asocial beings that humans take them to be. Dryads are friendly enough around humans but are not seen together very often. This is not to say that every Dryad rejects the company of her sister trees. There is, in fact, one very lovely and extensive Dryad village in the world of Karexus.

I'm not sure how long I was under, and I can't see how I managed to survive to be brought to this place. I'll be forever grateful to Sky Branch that she found me, although how she managed is beyond me. It's most extraordinary, but it seems that a population of Dryads has grown a village. Parts of it look man-made but a close inspection reveals that even the shingles on their buildings are really leaves.

The locals have been helpful. I have bits of charred wood with which to write and draw, and they supply me with a thin bark for this journal. I eat very well; the local fruit is simply beyond my experiences back home.

I haven't seen Sky Branch since the day I awoke. She mentioned something about a penance for bringing me to this place. I hope very much that she is well. The locals always look at me with something like a mixture of pity and contempt, I hope to leave this place before the latter surpasses the former. I do not think that they want me to go. I can always promise secrecy but something tells me that I won't be believed.

I must leave this writing for now. Despite my unwelcome status the locals are throwing a feast tonight. Apparently we are to enjoy an exotic fruit called the "Lethe." Perhaps a full belly and happy conversation may help me find a way out from my predicament.



The Village

The village has no name, as Dryads do not have a language, but communicate through root-link. No human has been told of its existence and Dryads never, ever refer to it vocally. The nearest thought translation would likely be along the lines of Hidden House Place.

The village was grown by a group of socially-minded Dryads who had tired of living apart from one another. After a few months in the forest with one another as company the Dryads found that they missed some of the trappings of human society and decided to grow a home for themselves and any Dryads who felt the urge to join.

The village is hidden within the Vrmak Forest, well away from prying eyes. Characters are only able to stumble here by accident or from divining the location from the mind of a Dryad via telepathy or various numenera capable of psychic scans. Vrmak Forest appears on no maps. It is located in an enormous crater within the Aakal mountain range. The crater's high walls keep the forest from being discovered.

Getting to the village once its location has been discerned is no mean feat and should take at least two game sessions to accomplish. The village is hidden within an nearly impassable mountain circle, surrounded on all sides by rough rock. Shortcuts exist in the form of cave passages through the mountain, but these are riddled with all manner of creatures and traps from prior ages. Should the players choose to travel by air then be sure to send some ill weather, giant predators and maybe a crash landing or two their way.

The threats do not cease once the players make the village. It at first seems to be empty, but this illusion is pierced once the players venture any distance in. Hidden guards and traps await them. As soon as they are far enough into the village where they can be cut off from easy exit the hidden Dryads will appear.

The players get a good look as they enter. It is twilight, and the fireflies are just emerging. The air is warm and breezy, slightly sticky from the forest sap on the wind. Exotic blooms open and mist their intoxicating fragrances. Music seems to come from nowhere as the Dryads have grown woodwind and percussion instruments into the trees and plants.

The Village Traps

The entire village is composed of buildings created from the Tier 4 Ability of the Takes Root Focus, Shaper of the Glade. Every building is a Level 7 Artifact in addition to being a building. Each has the ability to attack any being within it as a Level 7 enemy. Various buildings may have other properties, as listed in their description.

While the Dryads are not happy to see the players, they are not savages and will not kill them out of hand. The players are brought to the Assembly Circle and allowed to answer questions to prove their intentions. The Dryads will deal roughly with any Dryads in the party, angry at the betrayal of their own kind.

The players are given a task to prove their worth. This can be any task of the GM's devising. Generally it should have a component of both physical and mental danger, and the PCs are expected to achieve it without harming any of the local ecology, except of course for any targets that they are directed to eliminate.

After the test the players will be at least allowed to sleep the night. The Dryad village can serve as a base of operations from here on out. The villagers are agoraphobic, but they do have need of news from the outside world from time to time. Players may spend an XP after each successful mission that they undertake for the village in order to increase their Acceptance Level by 1. The Acceptance Level is a quantification of the trust the village bestows on the PCs. For each level of Acceptance a player may requisition one item of equivalent level for a mission or gain services or fruit from the Healer's Hut or the Genesis Tree.

Village Layout

The Dryad village contains several points of note. They are detailed in this section.

Assembly Circle: The Assembly Circle is the communal meeting place of the village. It is a clearing filled with soft black soil, tilled daily by a rotating shift which is the responsibility of all the villagers. The ground is so soft and inviting that all Dryads present automatically root as they walk. Their thoughts are open to their sisters present in the circle. It is a Level 5 task to resist rooting if barefoot. It is lined with stones marking its border, with the exception of the North-facing arc, which terminates at the base of a very large tree.

Genesis Tree: The tree that abuts the northern portion of the Assembly Circle. The Genesis Tree grows all of the fruits from the Takes Root Focus, and likely many more. It is also the physical body of the founder of the village. Still-Stand-Reach was the first Dryad to propose the village. She grew weary of human society and yearned for her own kind. She and her comrades found that they did miss some of the surface elements of human life and thus grew this village. To show her commitment to the village Still-Stand-Reach took permanent root. She now towers over the village and has lost her legs, but the upper portion of her body remains humanoid.

Healer's Hut: The current village healer resides here. Her home is a cozy, inviting place whose flowers issue warm and hearty fragrances. A lavender mist is always slightly visible here. A room in the back can hold one being at a time, and it is used to heal grievous wounds and illness. Once per day it enfolds a patient, restoring 1d6 Might Pool and Speed Pool. This restoration is halved for non-Dryads.

Seer's Hut: From this hut the village seer makes her observations. The dwelling is window-less. The seer observes by rooting into the building. A specially-grown vine that runs throughout the hut and leads to a bulb outside connects the seer not only with those plants in contiguous root with the seer, but with any plant touched by the pollen sent from the bulb in her house. Considering the distance pollen can travel, the village seer is able to see much of what goes on in the world. Her services may be available for characters who have earned the trust of the village, but it will usually require a reciprocated favor.

Armory: The warrior chief of the village oversees this building. Found within are all sorts of weapons and armor used to defend the village. Access to this building is strictly prohibited to the player characters, although those who are in good standing may be permitted the loan of some arms to use in defending the Dryads. The GM may choose any combat-oriented Artifacts already extant and make available plant-based versions (with the ability to root and fire vulnerability).

NPCs

The following NPCs exist to add flavor to your world, and to save you time in writing up NPCs before a game session. The NPCs are presented with Descriptors, Professions and Foci for flavor, although they are given regular NPC stats.

Ash

3 (9)

A quiet, unassuming Mite who is content to live a life of wandering, Ash is a Mercurial Mite Glaive who Swarms Forth. He is, like virtually all mites, unaware of the existence or intentions of the High Queen. He has on occasion served her purposes, and unconsciously destroyed a small village once a few years back.

Following his experience in person with the High Queen he has abandoned his friends, Glaneas and Sky-Branch. He seeks for a way to increase his power in order to destroy the High Queen and the threat that she poses. He trains night and day and has recently noticed that his queen unit is increasing in size. What this means he can only begin to guess...

Motive: Escape the High Queen, save humanity without putting himself at risk.

Environment: Anywhere, but usually low-population areas.

Health: 25

Damage: 5

Armor: 3

Movement: Short

Modifications: Combat Skills as a Level 4, Social Skills as a Level 2

Combat: Ash has mastered the Swarm Strike Tier 3 Ability of Swarms Forth. As an NPC it works differently than normal. It costs him 1 Health to activate, and it does damage as Level 2 Effect that requires enemies to roll against each round after damage.

Interaction: Ash will usually flee human contact, but remain close enough to keep an eye on a party. He may reveal himself as a hidden defender if a party ever comes under attack. He will likely seek out the help of those he feels can help him destroy the High Queen. He has limited social skills and much of what he says is without context, leaving the meaning unclear.

Use: As a means to find the High Queen or any other threat. An occasional ally who pops up at opportune times, but equally an enemy if he feels that the PCs are acting against his personal quest.

Loot: As a self-sufficient being Ash does not carry anything valuable.

Char-Split-Leaf

4 (12)

A gruff, atypically aggressive Dryad, Char-Split-Leaf is perhaps the most xenophobic inhabitant of the village. She is a Tough Dryad Glaive who Takes Root. Char-Split-Leaf was grievously wounded by a group of hunters years ago. She has held a grudge against humanity ever since, and even her time in the village has not softened this.

Char-Split-Leaf does not root with others. Her neighbors attribute this to shyness and do not press the issue, although they find it odd that someone who hates humans so would resort only to vocal communication and shun the ways of her own kind. The real reason for her withdrawal is that she does not want the rest of the village to know that she is currently building a massive war engine that she plans to use to wreak vengeance on the nearest human settlements.

Motive: Eradication of wasteful and spiteful humanity.

Environment: The Dryad village or any forest.

Health: 30

Damage: 6

Armor: 2

Movement: Short

Modifications: Combat Skills as if Level 6, Social Skills as if Level 4.

Combat: Char-Split-Leaf always has two combat-appropriate fruits at the ready. She will also animate the nearest tree to fight as a Level 3 enemy. In her final fight with any characters, she will be carrying several Cyphers created by the Takes Root Focus.

Interaction: In the Dryad village she will call for the execution of non-Dryad PCs. She is a vocal antagonist and rabble rouser who hinders the PCs at every opportunity.

Use: A persistent enemy who is always scheming. Bring her back from the dead at least once to show her knack for surviving the impossible with dogged fury.

Loot: Any Dryad fruit, one or two random combat-oriented Cyphers.

Glaneas

3 (9)

Glaneas is an Intelligent Jack who Explores Dark Places. A young explorer recently accepted into the Naturalist Society, Glaneas feels that he has a lot to prove to the world. He has set out on an epic quest to compile the grandest volume of lore on the natural world that has ever been written.

Please note that if you have access to the book Echoes of the Prior Worlds from Ryan Chaddock Games, then I would suggest that Glaneas' Focus be changed to Explores the World. Yes, that is technically a "competitor's" product, but the mechanics are fitting to Glaneas' personal focus, and I do personally recommend RHG's work.

Motive: Explore the world, find new things.

Environment: Absolutely anywhere.

Health: 20

Damage: 2

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Any skill that requires observation as a Level 4. Any skill that requires sheer brawn as a Level 2.

Combat: Glaneas will run from danger, but not at the expense of his friends. If he is alone he will use a Cypher to obscure his movements and make a dash for safety. If he is with allies he will use a shielding Cypher to buy time for his friends to escape and then run away himself.

Interaction: A bookish man with upper-class mannerisms and the naïve optimism of youth.

Use: As a call to adventure. He wants to find his friends but cannot remember much of the last few months.

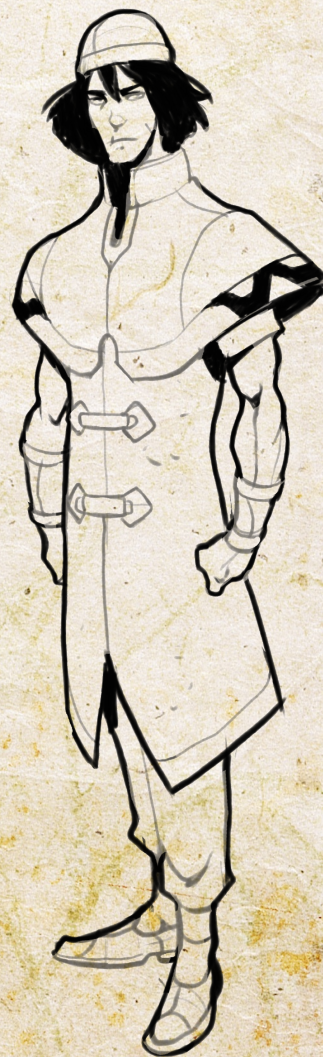
Loot: A selection of 3-6 Oddities and 2-3 Cyphers.

Sky-Branch

3 (9)

Sky-Branch is a Selfless Dryad Nano who Takes Root. She has no true idea as to her age but other Dryads refer to her as a youth, so she knows that she is probably no older than eighty years. She is very curious about humanity. She views them with a mix of awe at their sociability and pity for their short life spans.

*Glaneas,
Human Jack*



Sky-Branch is more impulsive and willful than a typical Dryad. This serves her well in her dealings with humans, but at times puts her at odds with her own folk. She is currently the only known resident of the Dryad village to have left the community voluntarily.

Motive: Heal the sick, foster understanding between peoples.

Environment: Forests, human settlements on the edge of a wild forest.

Health: 25

Damage: 3

Armor: 2

Movement: Short

Modifications: As a Level 4 when healing or speaking on someone else's behalf. As a Level 2 when attacking.

Combat: Sky-Branch uses misdirection and obstacles to hinder opponents from attacking while trying to talk sense to them. She will animate a nearby tree as a Level 2 NPC in order to grab or slow her enemies. She carries one fruit that will heal or empower its eater.

Interaction: Sky-Branch is quiet but friendly. She has a sing-song voice and frequently asks if her companions are well or comfortable.

Use: As a healer or a call to adventure. She will lead a party to the defense of the helpless.

Loot: One fruit that heals or empowers its eater. The knowledge that you just beat up the nicest person in the world.

Windstalker

5 (15)

Windstalker is a Graceful Mite Jack who Murders. Windstalker is the preeminent assassin of Karexus. He is able to blend in with his surroundings and to attack from a place of concealment. He never appears in public twice with the same guise. This secrecy means that Windstalker rarely seeks out clients, only doing so when he knows that he has a secure arrangement.

Windstalker can be well-represented by adjusting his Focus. If you have Ninth World Assassins by Knowledge of the Ninth, then consider replacing his Focus with Steals Faces. Like I wrote above in the profile of Glaneas, I very much recommend this book.

Motive: Profit and professionalism lead him to do the best job possible.

Environment: Unknown.

Health: 35

Damage: 5

Armor: 3

Movement: Short

Modifications: As a Level 6 when hiding, obscuring identity or lying. As Level 4 when interacting socially in a public place.

Combat: Windstalker always strikes from the shadows. He may be in plain sight but will always appear innocuous until he makes his move. In combat he lets his true form be known in order to terrify and increase his notoriety if he chooses to leave witnesses. His most common tactic is placing a destructive orb Cypher within his body and stealthily dropping it at his victim's feet using his drones.

Interaction: What little interaction there is will be limited to brief combats. Windstalker does not speak when fighting.

Use: As a major threat when the PCs have angered the wrong people.

Loot: An assortment of poisons and bombs. A parchment with the names and locations of his victims which may be used by the PCs to figure out who hired Windstalker.

Thunderegg Productions Karexus Schedule

Are you a fan of Numenera? Can't wait for the next installment of Thunderegg's Karexus setting? We present the Karexus line schedule!

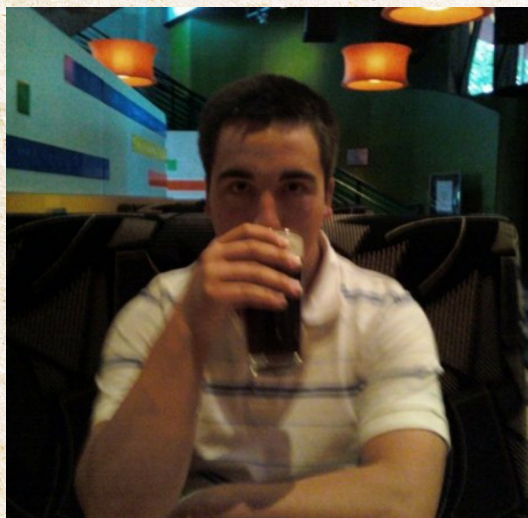
Races of Karexus, Volume I: This book details the Northern Wilds of Karexus, a forgotten colony world of a previous Aeon. Included are two new races, the plant-like Dryads and the swarming Mites. Out now!

Races of Karexus, Volume II: The western half of Karexus' main continent and its people are described in this book. Included is information on the Pabalak, a race of spherical, bouncing beings who live in volcanoes and the Halem, human-animal hybrids who hold the keys of creation. Due in Fall 2014.

Races of Karexus, Volume III: The southern archipelago is explored in this book. Included are write-ups of the Krak, electronic minds who jump into various machine bodies and the Shau, impossible imaginary beings who haunt the islands. Due in Winter 2014.

The Eastern Empire: The fearsome Oureb Khanate is visited in this book. This book features a full campaign pitting the PC (yes, it's a solo adventure!) against the dreaded Marga Khan and his forces. The campaign is designed so that the GM has a chance to play the adventure for herself before running it for the players! Due in early 2015.

We are always pleased to receive any feedback from readers. You can contact us on our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/ThundereggProductions.



About the Author

Jacob DC Ross is a life-long geek and gamer. He enjoys writing about RPGs and other games, as well as autism-related issues. He runs a semi-regular blog at lifetintedblue.com combining everything he loves.

He lives in Portland, Oregon, with his wife Amy and their daughter, Ella.

Welcome to the first installment of Thunderegg Production's Karexus line for the bestselling Numenera RPG!

Within this book you will find an all new setting for Numenera, the world of Karexus. A lost colony of the Ninth Age, Karexus holds more mystery and peril for your game.

This book contains:

- 2 New Descriptors: Mercurial and Selfless
- 5 New Location-based Descriptors: One for each new region in the book
- 2 New Foci: Swarms Forth and Takes Root
- 2 New Races and alternate rules for non-human characters. Are you a Dryad of the forest or a shapechanging Mite?
- 2 New Organizations: The Naturalist Society and the Delned Artists' Circle
- A map of the Northern Wilds, an untamed area ripe for exploration
- 9 New Cyphers and the the mysterious Cypher packs.
- New creatures, including the fearsome Makuta
- New NPCs

Be sure to check regularly for the next installment of our line!

