



NUMENERA™

THE SPIRE OF THE HUNTING SOUND

by Dennis Detwiler

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE SPIRE OF THE HUNTING SOUND	1
UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHARACTER	20
HOW TO PLAY NUMENERA	23



Throughout this book, you'll see page references to various items accompanied by this symbol. These are page references to the *Numenera* corebook, where you can find additional details about that item, place, creature, or concept. It isn't necessary to look up the referenced items in the corebook, but doing so will provide useful information for character creation and gameplay.

CREDITS

Designer Dennis Detwiler
Creative Director Monte Cook
Cover Artist breakermaximus
Graphic Designer Bear Weiter

Artists

Jacob Atienza, Vincent Coviello, Dreamstime.com, Jason Engle, Grant Griffin, Anton Kagounkin, Guido Kuip, Brandon Leach, Eric Lofgren, Patrick McEvoy, Federico Musetti, Irina Nordsol, Mirco Paganessi, John Petersen, Michael Phillippi, Sam Santala, Lie Setiawan, Lee Smith, Hugo Solis, Cyril Terpent, Ben Wootten, Kieran Yanner

Monte Cook Games Editorial Board

Scott C. Bourgeois, David Wilson Brown, Eric Coates, Gareth Hodges, Mila Irek, Jeremy Land, Laura Wilkinson, Marina Wold, George Ziets



© 2017 Monte Cook Games, LLC. NUMENERA and its logo are trademarks of Monte Cook Games, LLC in the U.S.A. and other countries. All Monte Cook Games characters and character names, and the distinctive likenesses thereof, are trademarks of Monte Cook Games, LLC.

Printed in Canada



THE SPIRE OF THE HUNTING SOUND

The Spire of the Hunting Sound is a complete adventure for Numenera. Set a billion years in Earth's future the players take the roles of explorers and adventurers, uncovering the mysteries of long-vanished prior worlds.

In this adventure the player characters (PCs) are kidnapped by bizarre mechanical Raiders and swept away to another world. There, they must survive the creatures that hunt the green wastes, persevere through alien biomes, explore bizarre simulations that test all their faculties, cross the haunt of beings composed of living sound, and find the Sonorium—an ancient structure housing all the sounds of a now-dead world.

There, they will find the answer: who brought them to this place? And why?

Within this booklet please find everything you need to play. And don't forget to use the QR code to download six free fully fleshed out player characters in PDF format.

HIJACKED!

The player characters awake in the dry night air to a repeating musical tone, suffering from a terrible headache. They are prone on the upper deck of the Qi airship Aelestrian as it drifts a thousand feet off the ground. The captain and twelve other passengers lay around them. Some are unconscious, others are stirring, but all except the PCs are far from able to defend themselves.

Two Raiders wearing heavy robes consider the horizon with their backs to the PCs. One Raider holds a small, silver box in a gloved hand that chirps out strange music. The bizarre sounds raise gooseflesh on the PCs skin.

Before leaving Qi as paying passengers aboard the Aelestrian, the PCs learned much about the airship. At 100 hundred feet (30 m) long, and about 30 feet (9 m) tall it is small by Qi standards but is still capable of hauling several tons of cargo and up to twenty people in relative comfort. It consists of an upper deck (like the

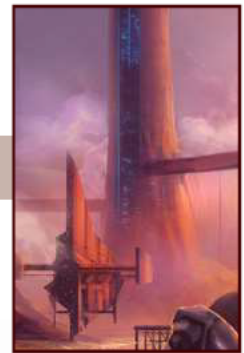
deck of a sailing ship), a small cockpit near the front of that upper deck, a mid-deck with a dozen staterooms within the lift envelope, some common rooms, and a large cargo hold on the lowest deck. The helium gas that lifts it is not explosive.

The PCs recall many of the details of their journey, just not how they found themselves up on the deck surrounded by the crew and passengers. They recall the beginning of the journey: the group hired passage on the airship from Qi to the City of Bridges, but on the first night of travel...something...happened. The progress of those memories fade to a greyness and ringing musical tones and begin again when they opened their eyes on deck. The PCs still have all their weapons, cyphers and artifacts on their person, and may act normally.

The two Raiders are distracted. They speak a low, unknown language to one another. Those getting closer to listen carefully realize that although the sound is like a voice, it is a panoply of musical tones overlapping each other. Those who can translate the language with a cypher or special ability hear only that the two are haggling over what number "batch" this is. One claims it is batch fifty-four, the other, fifty-three.

Until their robes are ripped away, or they perform some exceptional movement, it is easy to mistake the Raiders for living beings, but they are artificial, made of synth and a bizarre mishmash of technologies. Their head is fitted with a flat, blank silver disc where their face should be. Anyone engaging them in battle finds that they do not "fight" as much as avoid. They jump inhuman distances, invert in strange ways, move faster than the eye can see and otherwise seem to predict what is coming to step away from it. They only directly intervene if the PCs attempt to divert the ship from its current course by breaking into the cockpit.

Loot: For every two Raiders the PCs defeat, they find the following:



Raider: level 5, all defense tasks as level 6; Armor 3; short-range hand stab attack inflicts 4 points of damage; sound blast at short-range (5 points of Intellect damage and on failed Intellect defense roll keeps the victims from acting on their next turn)

THE MELU BOX ARTIFACT

Level: 1d6+3

Form: A small silver box.

Effect: When activated, every living creature in a 30-foot (10 m) radius must make a successful Intellect defense roll or fall unconscious for 2d6 hours (does not affect those who cannot hear).

Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (roll per week).

The PCs can attempt to wake the other passengers, fight the Raiders, gain control of the craft, or break down the door leading to the lower levels (or some combination of these actions).

Wake the Other Passengers: Some passengers, like the PCs, are already stirring. However, they are just ordinary people, and in their groggy state, the conscious passengers are completely useless. The sleeping passengers will not wake. They appear to be unconscious and remain so even if subjected to attack or cypher use. If the PCs search them, they might be able to recover several cyphers for use against the Raiders (consult the cypher list). The artifact that the Raider is holding causes the artificial sleep; it is called the Melu box. If the box is destroyed (or deactivated), the unconscious passengers begin to stir but will be of no use during the battle.

Fight the Raiders: The most obvious course of action. But PCs will soon find that the Raiders are not eager to fight and instead do their best to avoid attacks and keep the PCs from the cockpit.

Gain Control of the Airship: The door to the cockpit is locked from the inside with a heavy, bolted door (difficulty 6 to open). This long, narrow room which overlooks the prow of the ship contains the steering wheel and other flight controls. The Raiders will immediately gang up and attack anyone entering the cockpit. There is also a hidden Raider in the cockpit, inverted and hanging from the ceiling. This obviously artificial being uses a single extended arm to steer the ship. It will fight to the "death" to prevent a change in course.

Break Down the Door to the Lower Level: The doors below are locked with a heavy, bolted door (difficulty 6 to open) locked from the inside. Below deck is composed of empty staterooms, the cargo bay, and is occupied by two more Raiders.

This is a great time to introduce PCs to **GM intrusions**. The affected PC gets 2 XP, one of which the PC must give to a friend. Tell the PCs they can spend the XP to improve their characters if they use 4 XP, keep it to re-roll rolls they are not happy with, or to refuse a future GM intrusion.

ESCAPE OR CRASH

Even if the PCs manage to seize control of the airship, the Raiders use this distraction as time to sabotage the craft, releasing gas from the lift envelope. Those looking at the ground below the craft see scattered rocky peaks and mile after mile of wasteland covered in greenish sand, a thousand feet below.

The following outcomes are possible:

Escape: When they came aboard, each passenger was shown the "floaters." These odd, barrel-like pods on the side of the upper deck each hold one person. Once inside, a pull on a small gold lever releases the barrel and snaps open an odd spiral airfoil three times its size that causes the barrel to fall slowly to the ground beneath the airship. Effectively a parachute pod. Characters who eject in this manner land in the desert, unharmed. Soon after the Aelesrian crashes nearby.



GM intrusions,
page 325

Spending Experience
points, page 110

GM Intrusion: A defeated Raider goes through sudden convulsions, its limbs shifting and locking into strange shapes and a second Raider leaps on it, and they both snap together to create a much, larger synth creature (adding a +2 modification to its stats in the process).

Dramatic Crash: If the PCs fail to gain control of the airship, it strikes something big, lurches, and begins to plummet rapidly. All on the airship must succeed at a difficulty 4 Speed defense roll or suffer 5 points of Might damage as they lose their footing and fall when the ship impacts on the ground. Those who succeed fall to the deck, but suffer no damage.

Controlled Crash Landing: PCs that gain control of the cockpit may enjoy a short-lived victory. To bring the ship in for a rough, but stable landing requires a success on a difficulty 5 Speed roll. Otherwise, despite any attempt at steering, the Aelestrian suffers a dramatic crash anyway.

CRASH OR HARD LANDING

Depending on the PC's actions, the Aelestrian has either crashed or was brought down in a controlled crash landing.

Aelestrian Crash Site: If the Aelestrian crashed, it struck a tall, jagged stone outcropping, dramatically lost altitude and broke up on the dunes of sand. It is scattered over 3 miles (5 km) in various portions of wreckage, cargo, and debris. The crew and passengers have survived, though a few have suffered minor injuries. The largest portion of the wreck is about 35-feet (10 m) long, comprised of half the main deck, some internal state rooms, and the wrecked canvas envelope.

Aelestrian Controlled Crash Landing Site: If the PCs gained control of the Aelestrian and managed to steer it to a controlled crash landing, it is in one piece, but portions of the superstructure are damaged, the envelope is breached and empty

of gas, and several large pieces of debris have fallen off. The unconscious crew and passengers have survived, though a few have suffered minor injuries. The vehicle, all 100 hundred feet (30 m) of it, is intact, though unmovable.

THE WASTES

The green, sand wastes surrounding the Aelestrian site are vast and empty. The area is composed of rolling dunes of fine, green sand, interspersed with outcroppings of jagged reddish-black rock that can sometimes rise as high as several hundred feet. Climbing these rocks, which are steep and very sharp, is a difficulty 6 task. Failure means the climber suffers 2 Points of damage from cuts and bruises as they fall.

At night, very little is visible except the sand and the night sky, and, to the east, a green halo-like glow on the horizon. During the day, the sun sits like a white coin just above the horizon. There is no vegetation or obvious wildlife to be seen, and no apparent natural water sources.

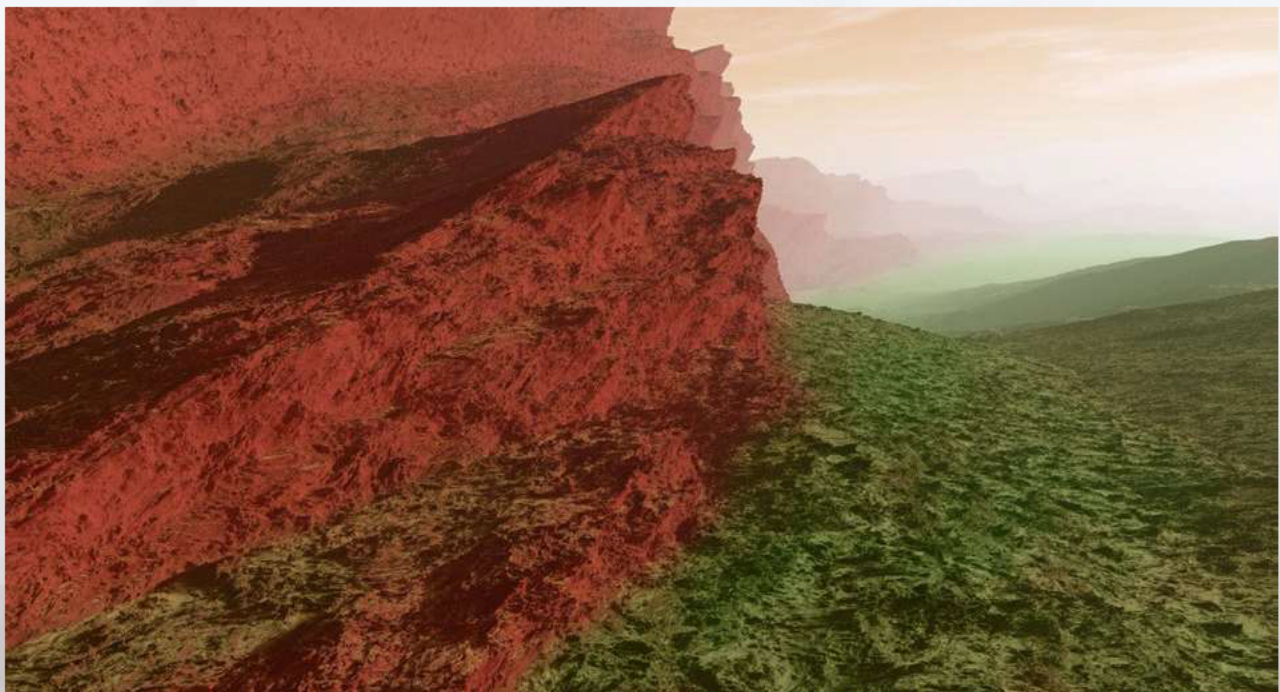
Due to the influence of the silver box that the Raiders were using to subdue the crew it is unclear how long the airship was traveling and in which direction. What is clear is that it was a very long distance because the environment of the green desert is unknown to any of the PCs and the crew. Some might even speculate they traveled to another realm altogether...

THE SURVIVORS

There is a total of thirteen survivors (not including the PCs). The following is a list of the significant individuals at the crash site along with their stats.

Group GM Intrusion:

After seizing control of the cockpit, the PCs hear banging and disruptions from below deck (as the Raiders disable the ship), followed by an explosion, and then a rapid descent—but not nearly as rapid as a dramatic crash.



Captain Tozin: level 5, piloting, navigation and airships as level 6; health 15; Armor 1; short-range buzzer inflicts 2 points of damage

Average passenger: level 2; health 6

Maouli: level 3, engineering and airship maintenance as level 4; health 9; fighting axe inflicts 4 points of damage

Peset: level 4, persuasion, bargaining and deception as level 5; health 12

Reiya: level 4, jumping, climbing and wrestling as level 5, survival as level 6; health 12



Glowglobes, page 82

Agrorat: level 6, all combat tasks as level 7; health 24; Armor 2; broadsword inflicts 4 points of damage

CAPTAIN TOZIN

Captain Tozin is much older than her appearance might belie, and she has much experience, although she has never heard of a green desert or the Raiders who brought down her ship. Her right leg was severely broken during the crash, and she is incapable of moving very far, and even then, only with great effort. She supports a plan of collecting supplies, building a camp for the survivors, and then sending a team moving off towards the lights in the distance to seek help. She will back any PC that appears competent and will take that PC into her confidence to plan together.

FIRST MATE MAOULI

Maouli is a small, nimble man who is the first mate on the Aelestrian. He remains uninjured and eager to assist but takes his cues from the captain. Maouli supports any plan the captain backs (though he will not leave the captain unless she orders him to do so).

PESET

Peset is a burly oil merchant from the City of Bridges eager to get back to his business, which, he will not stop mentioning, is at a vital point in its history. The desert, the Raiders, the crash, all seem to be a distraction to Peset, until of course, he realizes there is limited food and water. At that point, he begins secretly hoarding what supplies he can while feigning ignorance as to where certain things could have been misplaced. He supports a plan of someone else heading west to look for civilization—because Qi is to the west. He is brash, loud and outspoken. He claims to have wrenched his back in the crash, but anyone watching him for long periods can tell he is lying.

REIYA

Reiya is a farmer on her way to the City of Bridges for a wedding. Though her family is wealthy, she is a quiet, driven individual who looks to no one for help, though often offers her aid (silently) to those in need. In case of attack, she will rush into combat unmindful of her safety. She knows much about plants, animals, and wildlife, and can hunt effectively. If asked, she will accompany those going for help, in any direction. Within the first day, she will make her value known by spreading portions of synth from the ship on the rocks above jars and boxes, to collect enough morning dew to support one or two people per day.

AGRORAT

Agrorat is an old man who was once a soldier. He knows much of warfare and the rough life, but very little of social interaction. At first blush,

he will appear standoffish and pessimistic, but those who engage him at length will find he is eager to return home to see his grandchildren. Despite his advanced age Agrorat will retrieve his broadsword from his luggage and join any group that sets off into the desert.

In addition to these five named individuals, there are eight other **average passengers**.

SETTING UP AND SUPPLIES

After the airship goes down, the most common response is to regroup. PCs who work to gather survivors can quickly do so. Many of the survivors are still unconscious after the crash (though some may be waking up if the PCs interfered with the silver box). By dawn, all the survivors are conscious. Common tasks to set about completing might be, building a fire, recovering food and medical supplies, gathering in some sort of structure or around a large portion of wreckage, and setting up a watch.

Proactive PCs will set out to find the scattered remnants of the cargo of the Aelestrian. If the PCs don't think to do this, once conscious, the captain will urge the PCs to gather survivors and supplies to a central site (most likely where the bulk of the ship is located). Searching and recovering cargo and supplies can take as long as the PCs are willing to spend searching the area:

ONE-HOUR SEARCH:

- A water jug (enough water for one person for two days).
- Several boxes of candied fruits (enough for one person for four days).
- One survival pack (enough water and food for one person for four days).
- Enough canvas and synth bars to fashion a tent.
- Enough wood and matches for three nights' worth of fire.
- Two glowglobes.
- Two 50-foot (15 m) sections of rope.
- A large knife.
- A spear.
- Three-hour search:
- Nine water jugs (enough water for one person for eighteen days).
- Several boxes of candied fruits (enough for one person for four days).
- Six survival packs (enough water and food for one person for four days).
- Four tins of jerked meat (enough to feed one person for two weeks).
- Enough canvas and synth bars to fashion two tents.
- Six empty backpacks.

- Two nondescript broadswords.
- The ship's compass (somewhat portable—can be carried in a backpack).
- Enough wood and matches for six nights' worth of fire.
- A bag of a dozen glowglobes.
- Two 50-foot (15 m) sections of rope.
- One skin of wine.
- A large knife.
- A spear.
- Various scattered luggage of two crash survivors.
- Agrorat's broadsword (it has his initials on its hilt).
- A day of searching:
- Twelve water jugs (enough water for one person for twenty-four days).
- Several boxes of candied fruits (enough for one person for four days).
- Six survival packs (enough water and food for one person for four days).
- Four tins of jerked meat (enough to feed one person for two weeks).
- Enough canvas and synth bars to fashion five tents.
- A large crate filled with ninety cans of tinned meat and vegetables (enough to feed one person for a month).
- Six empty backpacks.
- The ship's compass (somewhat portable—can be carried in a backpack).
- Enough wood and matches for ten nights' worth of fire.
- A bag of a dozen glowglobes.
- Four 50-foot (15 m) sections of rope.
- Ten canisters of oil.
- Two large synth bags.
- First aid kit.
- Two bottles of **sprayflesh**.
- One skin of wine.
- A large knife.
- A spear.
- Various scattered luggage of five crash survivors.
- Agrorat's broadsword (it has his initials on its hilt).

THE CONFLICT

Once gathered, the survivors are instantly at odds with one another. The captain is injured (as are several others) and most are incapable of traveling long distances. Due to their outfits, equipment, and demeanor, attention quickly falls on the PCs to lead an expedition to locate help. The conflict arises because no one can agree on which direction to travel to find rescue.

- Captain Tozin supports a mission to head east towards the lights on the horizon,

- supported by first mate Maouli and Reiya (as well as two other passengers).
- Peset wants to go west supported by Agrorat (and five other passengers).
- Peset very quickly becomes the "leader" for one group and argues that they need to take the supplies and head west towards where they know civilization must be located.
- The captain tries to counter this by pointing out the greenish light in the sky from the east. She is convinced that there is some sort of settlement there. She also notes that no one seems to have a clear idea of how long they were unconscious, and she has little clue where they are. The stars, she claims, are not right at all. No one on ship has ever heard of such a place.
- Peset very quickly sets about locating, lifting and hiding food and water where he can.

THE DOUBLE

A strange, immortal creature hunts these wastes at night—the **Double**. It is brought into physical space by the presence of conscious minds on which it feeds and can exist only at night. During the day, it vanishes to some other dimension (only to return the next night). When it takes physical form, the Double appears as a nondescript survivor of the crash. For instance, if a group of survivors is sent off to search for supplies, they return with one unnoticed extra—the Double. The Double will look different each time it enters the camp and is forever drawn towards the survivors like a moth to a flame until dawn; the PCs kill it, or they move away from the area. PCs searching for survivors may come upon the Double instead and assuming it is an injured survivor, unknowingly bring it back to camp.

The Double does nothing overt and instead tries to sit around the camp unnoticed. While it does this, those within long distance of it lose 1 point from their highest stat pool per hour. This "feels" like a strange, buzzing, fatigue that makes it difficult to think (all Intellect based tasks are one step more difficult while the Double is in range).

The Double is not a conscious entity; it simply imitates one. What it does, it does from instinct gleaned from the minds of those it feeds upon. As such, when confronted, it will do simple, repetitive actions to draw attention away from itself (shrug, laugh, look elsewhere), but it cannot speak. If goaded to do so, it emits gibberish words that sound like a slurry of speech.

If attacked, the Double is dissipated by even a single point of damage. If more than 4 points are

The Double: level 7; health 1; bite inflicts 7 points of damage; effectively immortal, but cannot persist in sunlight

Sprayflesh, page 82



inflicted, the Double strikes back as it retreats from reality. Even as it begins to fade, the human form of the Double unfolds like a giant flower composed of teeth, tentacles, and claws, and lashes out at the inflictor of the damage before it disappears.

THE OTHER RAIDERS

The morning after the crash the PCs discover that they are being watched. Two figures stand approximately 2 miles (3 km) from the survivors to the east, on the crest of a green dune, apparently watching the camp. Those with cyphers or abilities that permit them to see the figures up close see that they are identical to the mechanical Raiders which brought the down the Aelesirian.

Those attempting to close the distance to the Raiders find them gone upon arrival. Their tracks head off to the east but fade to nothingness only a short distance later. At the top of the rise there, far in the distance to the east is the faintest green spire visible over the horizon.

"DEAD" RAIDERS

If Raiders were destroyed during the hijacking, two hours of searching specifically for the remains of one will allow the PCs to find the smashed husk of a Raider. Much of it has broken up in the crash, but the torso and head, along with the remnants of some limbs can be recovered.

Those with skill in the numenera who succeed in a difficulty 6 roll can determine that the science involved here is unlike anything they've seen before. A strange, dull metal of unknown type which forms both the ring on the Raider's head and the "superstructure" of its body seems to deflect, control and dampen sound.

If the "corpse" is not carefully watched, it has a surprise. Several hours after it is recovered and brought within range of ambient sound (a crackling fire or people talking), it suddenly seems to extrude small stub legs from its midsection, and rushes away on the sand, almost as if it were surfing on it. It is a difficulty 5 Speed task to catch it, and even 1 point of damage is sufficient to make it shut down once more.

If more than one Raider corpse is put in proximity of one another within range of ambient sound, instead of attempting to surf away, they suddenly reform into a single, almost whole Raider which attempts to escape.

Those watching the machine closely when it is within range of ambient sound can see it slowly self-repair. Clever PCs will somehow fasten the Raider to themselves with a rope, let it

repair itself and then follow its path. The Raider will head east, into the desert to return to the Sonorium (see page 18).

EAST OR WEST

The central conflict here (besides the nightly appearance and feeding of the Double) is: should the survivors head east or west? Those with certain abilities, cyphers or artifacts that allow them to "search" for civilization very clearly find their attentions pointed to the east. Those who travel west encounter the cragworm spawning ground and a strong motivation to turn back east.

THE CRAGWORM SPAWNING GROUND

A day's walk to the west brings the PCs to the cragworm spawning ground. The green sand gives way to grey sand of a much coarser quality, covered in sharp, black rocks and larger stones. PCs that search the area soon come upon the desiccated and cracked remnants of large, orange eggs in small clutches. The eggs are as large as a person's chest, and there are hundreds of them.

This area is a huge cragworm spawning ground. Juvenile cragworms hunt one another here until they reach full maturity, whereupon they head off west to other, richer prey. Those heading further west will eventually encounter several juvenile cragworms who relentlessly attack. If the group persists to the west, they begin to encounter larger cragworms in similar numbers (treat as juvenile cragworm +1 level). Eventually, fifty-foot (15 m) long cragworms hunt the PCs. Those foolish enough to persist to the west will most likely meet their end there. North and south here are no better, as the breeding ground seems to run those directions as well.

GMs hoping to indicate this to the players might strategically place the remains of several heavily armed corpses along the way. Alternatively, if the players attempt to persist through the cragworm area and stubbornly refuse to turn back, simply have the path give way to the next area as if they traveled east anyway.

OUT OF WATER

Travel to the east continues without difficulty for twenty-two days. The green wastes have given way to rolling tan rock with off-grey coarse sand. If anything, the desert has grown even sparser. The light to the east is closer, and the thin green spire can now be clearly seen, fading down to a desert haze. There is a distant structure there, but by this time, water and possibly food have become scarce.

Juvenile cragworm: level 3, hides in rocky terrain as level 4, Speed defense as level 4 due to size, perception as level 2, resists trickery as level 2; health 6; bite inflicts 2 points of damage

Cragworm: level 6, hides in rocky terrain as level 7, Speed defense as level 5 due to size, perception as level 4, resists trickery as level 3; health 36; Armor 2; bite inflicts 8 points of damage

GM Intrusion: A PC steps onto a rock shelf which gives way, dumping them into a breeding pit filled with four juvenile cragworms. To escape, they either need access to a rope thrown from above or to make three difficulty 5 Speed tasks without fail. Failure means they fall back into the pit and suffer 4 points of damage.



PCs who spend time to hunt for food or locate water can attempt a difficulty 6 Intellect task (modified by hunting or scavenging skills). Those who succeed spend a day and gain one more days' worth of food or water, but this is not a long-term strategy. Those who run out of food must make a Might defense roll every three days or suffer 3 points of Might damage. Lack of water is much more serious. Those who run out of water must make a Might defense roll per day or suffer 6 points of damage, if they fail, the PC moves down the damage track to impaired. One more failure and they move to debilitated and must continue to make the rolls daily (and suffer 6 points of damage) until they get water.

THE SOUND AND THE BIOME REVEALED

The PCs wake to an odd noise. A mechanical clicking, followed by a whooshing noise like air being suctioned through a large hose. It is loud and startling and near. Finding the source of the noise is a difficulty 5 task. It triggers at odd intervals but seems to fire once at least every twenty minutes. On a success, the PC wanders into the pocket dimension that contains the biome.

The biome is a huge, striking structure that seems to appear out of nowhere in the desert. It is "hidden" in a pocket dimension, so it is not readily visible unless the PCs cross a very particular threshold. Walking into this pocket

dimension is disorientating, but walking out is as easy as walking away from the biome until it vanishes again.

The biome is 1000 feet (305 m) wide and is composed of transparent synthsteel, webbed with a darker metallic superstructure. Within it is a lush splash of red plants, condensed water, and thin, misted clouds. Those listening at the glass can hear strange sounds inside—clicking, high-pitched sing-song whirring, and mechanical sounds. Beyond about a foot into the biome, the interior is lost in a haze of what appears to be water vapor. There is an iris door on the east side.

THE DOOR

The door to the biome is a 15-foot (4 m) iris. Touching it instantly activates the mechanism. The victim is allowed a single difficulty 7 Speed defense roll. If they succeed, they leap back as the mechanism activates and cycles and the noise which attracted the PCs (a mechanical clicking, followed by a whooshing noise like air being suctioned through a large hose) fires off. The iris opens for a split second, revealing an amazing array of synth robotic arms, arcs of energy and a grey mist. The door shuts a moment later.

If a PC is sucked into the iris, the cycle occurs, but at the end right before the door shuts, several dozen pounds of red grass and brown dirt, as well as some water are flung out into the desert. The water quickly evaporates or sinks into





the sand. Within the hour, small bugs emerge seemingly from nowhere to feed on the red grass and dirt. In an hour, this debris is almost completely gone.

INSIDE

Those inside find a matching iris door there, but touching it does nothing. The interior of the biome is warm, wet and mist-filled. It smells strange, with rich chemical odors not usually found in a jungle environment (like chlorine). The plants are bizarre and unfamiliar. Most are red or purple. The sun seems filtered through the glass dome to appear blue.

At the inside of the iris are two desiccated skeletons, picked clean of all meat. Plants have long overgrown them. Those who search the corpses and make a difficulty 5 Intellect roll recognize the remnants of clothing as flight gear of Qi airship crew. If carefully searched, one has bizarre writing on the inside of its jacket. Many of the symbols look like the Truth, but the writing is gibberish to all present. It's almost like a variant version of the language. Otherwise, it remains impossible to tell just what killed them. They have no valuables remaining.

PCs who are thirsty can freely drink from running streams of obviously fresh water. Those who are hungry are confronted with more serious

choices—the biome is full of life, but what, if anything is edible?:

- **Small blue rat creatures:** These tiny creatures can be seen scuttling between plants, and spend almost no time in the open. Capturing one is a difficulty 5 Speed task. Four make a decent meal for one day. The biome contains thousands of them.
- **Ten-legged transparent red insect creatures:** These large, lumbering insects are approximately a foot across and move slowly on the larger plants, feeding on them. They are harmless and readily edible, though doing so causes the imbiber's mouth to go numb (making all social interaction tasks one step more difficult for one hour).
- **Red mushrooms:** These large puffy red mushrooms are everywhere. If eaten, they are good, but the taste itself is impossible to describe. Those who eat a mushroom have all Might points lost to starvation restored instantly. Otherwise, eating one in a 28-hour period is sufficient to keep a person well fed. Eating two in 28 hours causes the imbiber to experience a slow, creeping paranoia. Three in 28 hours leads to convulsions, foaming at the mouth, rapid paralysis, and death.



The Truth, page 133

- **Purple creeping vines:** These vines rise on the trees in the biome. At the top of each vine is a thin transparent crystal. The vines are poisonous. Eating even a small amount causes the imbiber's mouth to burn, and they suffer 1 point of damage. The transparent crystal at the top is pure sugar and is wholly edible. Each crystal is enough to feed one person for two days. These vines burn rapidly.
- **Red reed stalks:** These red reeds lean towards anything moving through them in a disturbing manner. They feed by capturing dirt and detritus off passing entities in fine hairs on their stalk. Eaten raw, these stalks are disgusting and offer no nutritional value. If cooked, they are good to feed one person for one day. These stalks burn rapidly.
- **Red "grass":** The red grass (some of which might be found outside) is edible, but grants little in the way of sustenance. Besides offsetting the effects of starvation by moving the imbiber up the damage track back to hale, it does nothing to restore lost Might Points. This grass does not burn.
- **Blue winding trees with red leaves:** The tree bark is edible, though it burns the mouth when eaten. If eaten, it has no ill effects and restores all starvation effects. A handful is enough to feed one person for one day. The red leaves are poisonous. They burn the tongue as well but offer no benefit, and after a series of cramps and muscles spasms inflicts 6 Points of Speed damage and 2 Points of Might damage.

THE CARETAKERS

PCs that use cyphers and other technology to disrupt the biome will find themselves facing the **caretakers**. These projections of force are the equivalent of automatons and make certain no single entity gains control of the biome. They are emitted from small green globes that are set in the webbing of the biome and manifest as a shimmering haze in the air in a vaguely humanoid shape. If the PCs begin to cut a swath through the biome in a less than "natural" manner (GM discretion) up to two caretakers appear at one time and engage the offender. Those who use their hands and their wits may never even see one.

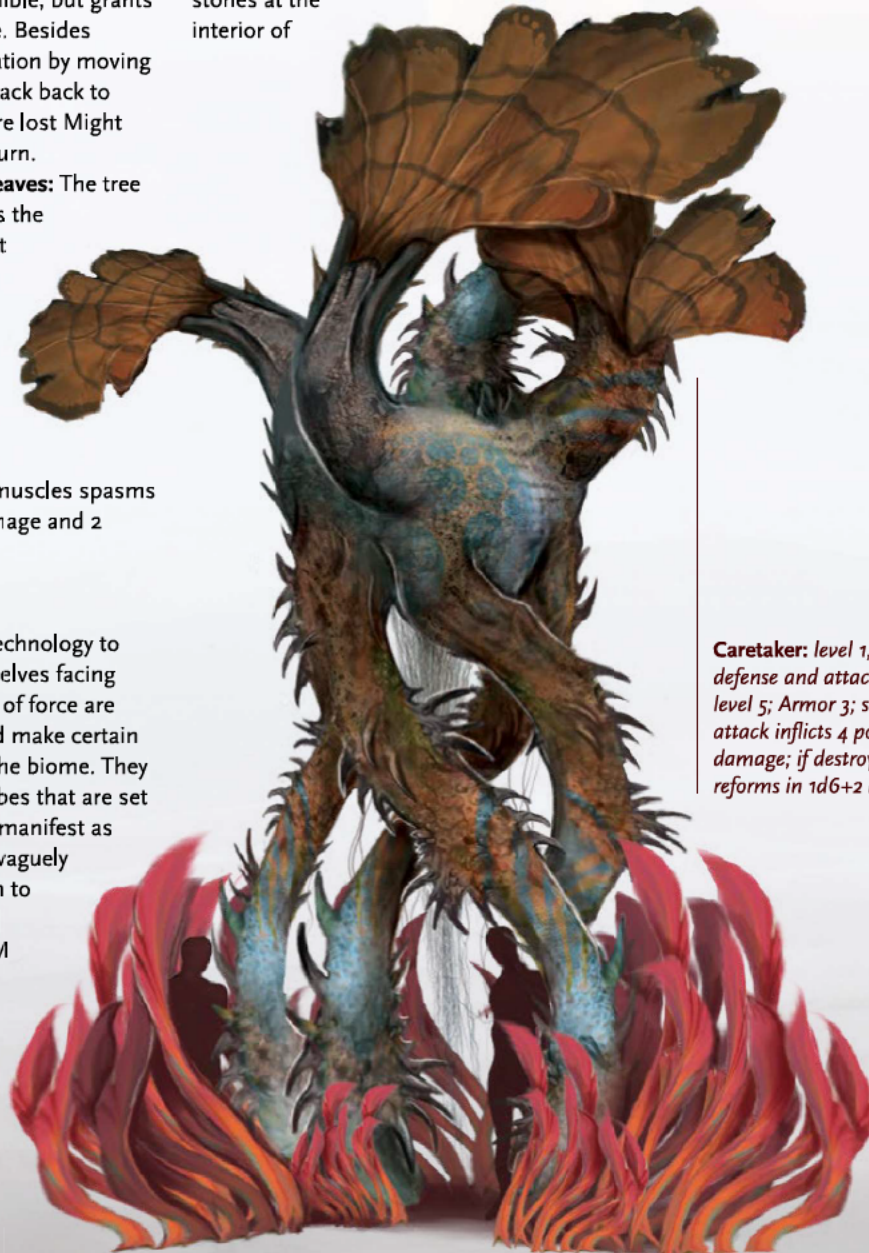
PCs paying close attention to the shimmering figures can see that the beams of force are

emitted from small, green globes on the inside of the dome. Hitting a green globe is a difficulty 5 task, and even a single point of damage is sufficient to disable it. The green globes heal over time, but in just a few minutes, clever PCs can carve out a "caretaker free" zone in the biome—at least for a few hours.

THE PUPPET TREE

The center of the biome is the home of the **puppet tree**. (The caretakers cannot travel here since sometime before the puppet tree destroyed the green globes in the center of the biome which allow them to manifest.) On a small hill, surrounded by high, red reeds is a tall, spiky red, orange and blue tree. Four figures can be seen sitting around the tree in meditative positions, occasionally they stand and appear to throw stones at the interior of

Puppet tree: level 8, resists fire attacks as level 2; health 33; Armor 5; spike attack inflicts 10 points of damage; if killed by the spike, the target becomes a "puppet" of the tree; all fire attacks against the puppet tree inflict a minimum of 8 points of damage per round and ignore armor



Caretaker: level 1, speed defense and attacks as level 5; Armor 3; strike attack inflicts 4 points damage; if destroyed reforms in 1d6+2 rounds



Corpse puppet: level 2; health 6; grab attack grapples a target on a failed Speed defense roll and causes future spike attacks against that target to be treated as one step less difficult

the biome. Anyone who comes within 100 feet (30 m) of the tree causes the figures to stand and turn to face them. At that distance, without the assistance of a cypher, artifact or special ability, the figures appear normal. Those who can see closer see that although they are humanoid, they may not be human. Their skin is light blue and speckled with what appear to be scales. Their eyes are a pool of shadows.

If the PCs approach, the figures at the tree each wave and turn away. They seem to shift around below the level of the grass as if they were preparing something for the group's arrival. Those who come within 50 feet (15 m) of the tree are close enough for attack.

The tree is an alien sentient plant which sends out long, transparent tentacles into the grass and dirt, each of which ends in a hard, sharp, crystal spine. When a living creature comes within range, it snakes these tentacles out, rises behind them, and skewers them through the head or neck with the spine. If the shot pierces the brain or spinal column, it takes control of the creature like a corpse puppet, using it to enact its plans; a corpse at the end of a nearly invisible tentacle. The four figures are previous victims, long since dead and overgrown by the plant. As these puppets are digested and eventually overgrown by the biology of the tree their utility to the plant decreases.

The plant has used the various creatures that have entered the biome over time to collect and cobble together a machine to destroy the biome and release it into the world. It hunts to collect cyphers and artifacts, as well as the corpse puppets to fashion the device.

DESTROYING THE PUPPET TREE

The puppet tree is extremely flammable. Any special ability, cypher or artifact that can produce flame can inflict massive damage on the tree. The reed stalks which surround the tree are also extremely flammable, meaning PCs can ignite the tree at a distance and wait for it to burn. The corpse puppets will struggle and attempt to extinguish flames, but in the end, it is likely nearly any robust fire in that field will be enough to kill the puppet tree.

CYPHERS AND GEAR

If the puppet tree is incinerated, the machine it was constructing is also destroyed. No cyphers remain after such a fire. If the PCs somehow manage to make it to the tree while it is intact, they recover three cyphers.

GARBAGE IN/GARBAGE OUT

The biome is a closed loop. If matter enters the iris from outside, an equivalent amount of

matter is ejected out (whereupon the desert makes quick work of it). Once inside, there is no way back out of the iris except for the destruction of existing living matter within the structure (whereupon the structure ejects an equivalent amount of living matter to "balance" the ecosystem).

When any amount of living matter is effectively vaporized in a short period (say a few seconds), an equivalent amount of living matter is thrown out of the iris. This can be achieved in several ways:

- **Flash burn a large amount of living material:** Standing at the iris and setting fire to rapidly burning material (like the purple vines or red reed stalks) of an approximate mass equivalent to a PC is enough to trigger a cycle and fling the PC outside.
- **Disintegrate a large amount of living material:** Some PCs may have access to special abilities that allow them to destroy enough mass to trigger a cycle.
- **Use some a cypher or artifact:** Likewise, PCs might have a cypher or artifact which allows them to step through the biome glass, teleport, or dimensionally shift through the synthsteel. Whether this is possible remains up to the GM to determine.

SUPPLIED AND READY

PCs should use the biome as a supply depot to load up on food and clean water, once they figure out how to enter and exit it. If the PCs work for a day, they can cobble together storage and packs from the cloth remnants in the biome allowing them to carry three weeks' worth of food and water (assuming, of course, they figure out what plants and animals are edible).

To the east the green spire in the sky is now even more prominent, and strangely, below it, is a glowing dome of light on the horizon. It is clear some structure is there, perhaps two or three days walk away.

THE LIGHT AND THE BODIES

The desert past the biome is composed of harsh, wind-worn sandstone covered in a fine reddish grit. As the PCs move east, the strange bloom of light grows in intensity in the sky. At night, it is a huge mushroom shape of glowing blues, reds and greens dancing across the sky. During the day, it appears as a circular splash of red light on the horizon.

The PCs find the first body facing east in a kneeling position. Those watching it at a distance can see that dust and grit has piled on the south side of the form, indicating it has not moved in some time. Those with the ability to see at a



distance or who chose to approach it discover it is a human corpse dressed in an outmoded form of dress common in the city of Qi. It has been dead a long, long time.

A short distance ahead, near the light, several other silhouettes are visible in a similar state. Soon, the PCs are walking amidst dozens of corpses, all kneeling in a similar position, with their head tilted back. Some of the corpses have long dried, desiccated skin on them. Others are bare skeletons in sun-blasted fragments of clothing. They are spread out in strange lineups all making a roughly circular pattern like the seating in a stadium. Those searching the bodies find a few small items, and perhaps, at the discretion of the GM, a cypher.

THE SOUND AND PEOPLE

As they walk among the corpses, the PCs are suddenly surprised by a rising three-note tone that seems to occur directly behind their heads. The noise is so sudden and perfect and near that it is easy to mistake it for having been imaginary, but all PCs present hear it. While they discuss this oddity, one of the corpses shifts slightly, and then coughs. To the east the PCs see that some of the corpses are not corpses at all, but dust bitten, wide-eyed, individuals kneeling in supplication to the light. Attempting to stir them from their reverie is impossible. Those who attack the supplicants find uncoordinated targets that do little more than babble gibberish and cover their heads. Nothing any PC can do can get anything coherent out of the light worshippers.

After the three-note tone, any direction the PCs travel eventually brings them towards the light. Kneeling people are visible for as far as the eye can see and even if they spend minutes or hours walking in a direction which would seem to eventually lead out into the desert, they still find themselves in the sea of people.

Finally, as the PCs approach the center of the gathering (as indicated by the position of the people and the intensity of the glow), they are confronted by the huge mushroom cloud of roiling light that rises from the desert. People kneel in front of it, heads thrown back and arms extended. It generates no heat, but the light here is so bright, the shadows it casts are absolute black, and stretch huge distances across the stone. A deep thrumming that shakes everything within a radius around the light is so strong, yet so subtle; it can be easily overlooked. Those who stare into the light long enough and who succeed at a difficulty 5 Intellect task can see the dim outlines of a building within it. Entering the light brings the PCs to the keep.

THE KEEP

Stepping into the light is disorienting and causes a momentary flash where nothing can be seen. On the far side, the PC finds themselves in a plain, simple gown standing on a green field in front of a large tan keep flying two flags. One flag shows a red sun on a black field, the other a yellow moon on a blue field. All of their equipment, artifacts and cyphers are gone. There is no exit back out, only smooth, rolling green hills.

All the PCs look identical. Each is an asexual humanoid of slight build clad in tight black cloth with a symbol on their chest; a sun or moon. The clothing cannot be removed, and the PC feels strangely disconnected from their body. While they can feel pain, they are not hungry or thirsty (and will never be so in this world). Violence here is also strange, though you can grapple or push, hitting and other more serious attacks simply fail to occur. As such, people are always in an uneasy truce here, despite any antagonism they might feel.

There are others present. People in similar clothing who run about, in and out of the keep (which appears open). Some are gathered in groups that suspiciously eye the PCs as they approach. The groups are usually formed around a single symbol (groups of suns or moons). No one is armed.

- **Talk with others:** Attempts to talk with groups other than your own type (a moon talking to a group of suns for instance) is usually met with shouting, vague threats and pushing. Eventually, the group that was approached walks off. Attempts to talk with a loner of a type reveals much (see The Other Players on page 12).
- **Search the keep:** Walking around the keep finds that is almost seamless except for a single 30-foot (10 m) door inside. It is a perfectly made and maintained stone keep surrounded by a small but deep moat. Inside are dozens of rooms that lack nearly anything of real character. There is a single golden door in the inside of the keep with a number etched on it: 100. There is no food and no readily accessible water, though there is water visible forty feet down in the shadows of the moat.
- **Look at the rocks:** Surrounding the keep at intervals on the open grass are pyramidal stacks of perfectly formed, rounded rocks, each weighing approximately 50 pounds (23 kg) each. There are exactly 10,191 stones. If a rock is thrown in the moat, after an interval, all piles are restored to a perfect, full pyramid.



- **Search the moat:** The sides of the moat are slick with slime and water and are impossible to climb. The moat is very deep, and obviously, has water at the bottom of it (dropping the smooth, perfectly round rocks found everywhere in the keep produces a loud splash). The water cannot be clearly seen since the lighting at the keep is always consistent. Those who concentrate to look below and who succeed at a difficulty 4 task can spy many ghostly, floating silver disks in the water. Those who succeed at a difficulty 7 task can make out that they are sun and moon symbols floating on the top of the water. Hundreds of them.
- **Walk away from the keep:** Walking in any direction from the keep allows a PC to move far enough away to lose sight of it (and occasionally to see another malcontent traveling in a similar manner). However, within twenty minutes, the same keep appears on the horizon no matter which direction is taken.
- **Count the people:** A total count (which takes hours—but time never seems to pass) reveals there are 75 moons and 51 suns present.

THE TRUTH

This odd world is a test. So far, nearly a thousand humans from various versions of the Ninth World have been fed into it, and so far, none has exited. What the PCs don't understand is this—while their minds are in some sort of simulation, their bodies have been left behind, kneeling in the desert around the artifact which powers the illusion. In three days, their body will die of dehydration, but their mind will live on in the artificial world of the keep.

When their body dies in the real world, the symbol (moon or sun) on their chest changes to silver, losing all color. Almost all people in the keep have a silver symbol, though some few (including the PCs) have colored symbols. To the residents of the keep, a colored symbol simply means they are new. No one understands the truth of it.

This selection process has gone on for a long time, drawing humans from many variant dimensions of the Ninth World. Some physical bodies have been dead for hundreds of years, and others have effectively deleted themselves by dropping into the moat. The only escape known from the keep is to throw yourself into the moat. Those who do so are never seen again, and it has long ago become shorthand for suicide. Few humans have been able to suffer the sameness of the world for very long...

Many attempts have been made by various leaders (who have come and gone) to open the golden door. Twice, over 100 people of various factions have gathered to try to open it. And once an entire faction gathered in the room, but no one faction ever has had a number approaching 100. Many believe that is what is needed to open the door.

THE OTHER PLAYERS

Others in the simulation have broken into groups along the lines of their symbol, and all speak versions of a language recognizable as the Truth, though some accents are completely bizarre. Only a very few of these other players have colored symbols; almost all others are silver. Note, it is almost impossible to tell person from person (even lifelong friends will have trouble) as in the simulation everyone looks the same.

Groups hope to enact strange plans to gain access to the golden door. Using elements of the keep to pry open the golden door, kidnapping groups of people in certain sequences and more baroque and pointless plans. Some individuals keep to themselves. Seeking out these loners offers more answers.

- **Dahon**, a silver sun, discovered long before that despite the books on most shelves in the keep being nothing but blank cosmetic placeholders, some of the books at the highest levels of the shelves contain writing. The writing in them discusses the physics of water and sound in excruciating and overcomplicated detail. He has smuggled and hidden various books out at the periphery of the keep and returns there often to read snippets while unobserved in the hopes of uncovering a clue.
- **Yeim**, a colored moon has noticed that a single, black bird that caws and then flies to the roof of the keep but has not yet climbed to try to see it up close (or catch it). The bird is repetitive in its action and offers a decent measure of the passing of time. Each flight is an hour. If a PC completes a difficulty 6 task to climb the keep, they find the bird at the top. This bird collects small, pyramidal piles of round stones, identical to the large piles around the keep. If the bird is followed when it flies off, it can be found on the periphery dropping a small stone into a deep, tiny, circular pool. Each stone dropped brings a wriggling grub that floats in the center closer to its beak. Eventually, it eats the grub and the pool resets. The grub and the bird are the only animals in the simulation.



- Tav, a silver sun, knows that those who perish in the moat leave behind their sigils, which float on the moat's surface, far below. He's seen them. There are hundreds down there. He also knows, having watched more than one suicide that submerging in the water immediately causes the body to vanish, leaving behind only the symbol.
- Poval, a silver moon, has learned that when a walker is nearby humming in as high a register as possible causes it to disengage, and seemingly, causes it discomfort. He discovered this by accident by almost being "eaten."
- Deruna, a silver sun, suspects that those who are silver are dead. That this is not a "real place," and that their bodies remain in the desert, wasting away.
- Questioning various individuals about where they are or how they got here can reveal some clues. Many speak of the mechanical beings with a "music box" as the source of their displacement. Though some never saw such beings. Everyone knows of the green desert. Some of the red biome. Everyone can recall the sounds which brought them to the keep in the sea of corpses.
- Almost all of those in the keep were adventurers at one time or another.

THE NATURE OF THE WORLD

In the world of the keep, a very strict set of rules is in play. People cannot harm one another through violence (above shoving or grappling). Attempting to strangle or choke a person does not work—no one needs to breathe. Falling any distance inflicts no damage. Only being submerged completely in the moat water or being consumed by a walker can destroy a person.

The world seems to remain fixed in time at noon, with the sun high overhead (except for the timed invasion of the walkers when the sky dims). Things appear real, but upon closer inspection lack the details usually seen when observing something up close (skin has no pores, grass has no ridges or seams). Placing things in your mouth results in a tasteless mush. Thirst and hunger cease to exist. Sleep is not needed.

The world is bright, monotonous, and easily mistaken for being extraordinarily simple. Still, it has secrets.

THE WALKERS

At fixed intervals (once every "day") a trumpet sounds, the sky grows dim, and a rumbling is heard. All present immediately hold still. A dozen 30-foot (10 m) tall, black, shadow

silhouettes—the walkers—march into the area, and, emitting odd clicking noises, begin to hunt near the keep. It is clear the beings cannot see. Some knock over the pyramids of stone, others seem to grasp along the ground with their huge hands, searching. The PCs might witness one giant stumble across a person holding still, and scooping them up, hear the victim scream, a second before they are consumed by the shadow. When a person is eaten, no symbol (sun or moon) is left behind.

All present appear terrified. Those inside the keep quickly move outside when the trumpet sounds. Several walker shadows muscle inside the keep and occasional screams can be heard inside.

Any PC who speaks or moves draws the attention of the clicking giants and is permitted one difficulty 3 Speed defense roll to avoid their grasp. If they fail, they are snatched up and are permitted one difficulty 5 Might defense roll. If they fail both, they are consumed. If they hold still directly after an escape, the giants continue their search. The giants stumble across and eat five individuals, whereupon they fade, and the sky returns to normal illumination. After, all present act as if this was a regular, boring, occurrence.

Null-cat: level 7, stealth and hiding as level 9, attacks as level 8, Speed defense as level 6 due to size; health 42; bite inflicts 7 points of damage; destroys artifacts and cyphers



THE SOLUTION

By moving the round stones from the pyramid piles into the moat, eventually, the water displaces to a level to allow the collection of silver sigils well over the number needed to open the door. Entering the room with 100 of either sigil opens the door and returns the PCs to the real world, shutting down the simulation.

THE SYMBOL

When the simulation is shut down, there is an incredible flash of white light filled with shapes, symbols, and colors. This information is so vast and overwhelming, for a moment, each PC is certain they will be destroyed simply experiencing it. But a moment later, they are in the real world.

The light in the desert dissipates instantly leaving a sea of sand eaten corpses, as well as a few survivors. The PCs are fully restored in stats, and their equipment, weapons, artifacts, and cyphers are on their person as normal.

REPLACEMENTS AND THE ROCKY CANYONS

If PCs were killed in the keep (or perished from dehydration), replacement PCs may be added to the group from the few individuals that have survived along with the PCs.

When the PCs regroup, they discover that to the east, past the remains of those consumed by the game are a winding series of rocky canyons. A thin bit of smoke is visible on the horizon there—nothing more than a dwindling black smudge. Beyond *that* is a huge emerald spire in the distance.

THE NULL-CAT

The entrance to the rocky canyons is the domain of a large predator that hunts the area, the null-cat. Clever PCs looking for animal spoor, tracks or fur in the canyons who succeed on a difficulty 4 Intellect task find enough to indicate that something large and carnivorous hunts the area. This beast, which is approximately 1,000 pounds (454 kg), is a deep grey in color and, when not moving, seems to vanish in the rocks. Its face is a star-shaped slit filled with motile teeth, flanked by five eyes laid out in a circle around the front of its head.

The null-cat is drawn to and drains technology. Anyone within immediate range of the null-cat who has an artifact must roll normally for depletion simply for being in its presence. Anyone with a cypher who is attacked by the null-cat and suffers any damage “burns out” a cypher in their possession. It explodes causing no damage, but the explosion renders it useless.

For each artifact destroyed, the null-cat gains 5 health. For each cypher, 1 health.

The null-cat will stalk the group until night and then wait for most of the group to go to sleep. It will then creep in and attempt to snatch a sleeping PC, and before the party can recover, drag the PC off into the rocks to kill and eat it. GMs hoping to increase the difficulty here might have the null-cat hunt with a mate who is waiting in the rocks above.

THE SURVIVORS

The mechanical Raiders have been snatching humans from many different tangential dimensions of the Earth for some time, with the goal of feeding them into the keep simulation. Most humans ended up in the test, but a few fled before the simulation could capture them and transport them to the world of the keep. Fifty-three individuals of various ages and professions have set up camp in the foothills overlooking the simulation on the way to the spire in the distance. There, they've formed an uneasy and unstable settlement.

ON THE ROAD TO THE SPIRE

The path east leads into low, stony hills of black rock. Beyond it, much closer now, is a truly enormous emerald spire rising several kilometers into the sky. At this distance, details can be seen on its surface. Small lights or windows track up its side, and strange patterns seem to be cut into its surface.

Moving into the rocks reveals a well-worn dirt path through the canyons (which often are dead ends). The area is sparse and empty of plant, animal, and apparent water sources. Traveling through the winding canyons and passages of rock will take a group moving at average speed three days. Once inside PCs will find it difficult to move up to the top of the rocks that form the canyons without succeeding at a difficulty 5 Speed roll. Those who fail suffer 3 points of damage in a fall.

SURROUNDED

When the PCs camp, they are quietly surrounded by a group of twenty survivors armed with a mish-mash of weapons (bows and swords mostly). These groups often patrol the area, finding and killing the mechanical Raiders that occasionally wander into their territory. Very rarely, they find a lone human straggler. They have never seen a group of people. They are led by Elei, who represents a portion of the survivors that desire to move on to the emerald spire to the east.

If the PCs are clever and put a lookout on the rise of the canyon, they have a better chance of detecting Elei's band before it arrives. The

lookout must succeed at a difficulty 4 Intellect task to detect Elei's survivors moving into ambush around the camp. Smart PCs will note that before they can act, there are more than a dozen individuals creeping in at the top of the rocks from all directions around the camp. If the lookout takes any provocative action, they are shot with an arrow.

If the PCs remain in the canyons, the first time they notice there are others present is when Elei announces herself from above in the dark and asks for a truce before she comes down from the rocks. At that point, when they are not hiding their presence, it becomes apparent the PCs are surrounded by people. If the PCs attempt anything untoward, depending on the severity, the GM might have the survivors do anything from putting an arrow at the foot of every PC, or in the foot of a PC. Elei, for her part, cautiously comes down from the rocks empty handed to talk.

Elei wants to know why the PCs are in the canyons. Where did they come from? Where are they going? Why?

Elei knows of the light in the desert. She will be incredulous that it is no longer there and that the PCs escaped from it. It is an area that many of her friends have wandered into and have never come back. Minutes after this is brought to her attention, one of her scouts returns confirming the light is not there anymore. If this occurs, Elei will open to the PCs and reveal the following:

Elei is from the Ison Cape in Draolis. She was in a caravan heading near the Wyr River when she woke in the green desert, her caravan being led by mechanical men. She escaped, and traveling towards the spire, fled when she saw the bodies at the light. She's hidden in the canyons ever since. It's been three years now.

Fifty-three survivors live in the canyons at a camp not far away. They are all from the Ninth World (or a version of the Ninth World). All were brought here by mechanical Raiders. Many woke on the way to the light. Others at the light. All the survivors here somehow fled into the canyons away from the light. Many know people who were consumed by the light.

Elei knows that the emerald spire is only ten days' travel past the end of the canyon, but the way is hunted by giant shadow creatures, and there is no water out there. The beasts click and hunt by sound. Individuals attempting to move into the area have never been heard from again. Reego, the leader of the group, claims the road east is a false one, designed to trick and kill unwary travelers.

PCs will recognize the description of the walkers from the keep.

Elei-loyal survivor:

Level 2; Armor 1; inflicts 3 points of damage with bow or 2 points of damage with dagger

Elei: Level 4, perception and balance as level 5; Armor 2; inflicts 4 points of damage with bow or 4 points of damage with broadsword



Elei has the loyalty of most of the group, but an old man name Reego controls a small group of individuals armed with artifacts, cyphers, and powerful weapons. Reego is convinced the group needs to remain until they witness a sign. Then, they can return home. Reego's men have control of the camp and its supplies.

If the PCs confess they hope to move to the emerald spire, Elei will help them, but will also tell them they need to gain access to the water at camp and load up on supplies. It is about ten days to the spire.

REEGO

Reego is a heavy-set old man with a Malevich accent. He is from Yenth—or was—for the last ten years this place has been his home. He and his companions were captured on the Wyr river and woke in the green wasteland. Reego's band were no strangers to combat and very quickly dispatched the mechanical Raiders who had captured them. They recovered their equipment and moved off into the canyons, avoiding the light altogether. A year after arriving, Reego and his group attempted to travel to the emerald spire, but after losing three men to the walkers, they retreated. Since then, survivors have arrived, one by one, and the camp has developed into a small community.

Reego and his three compatriots are skilled and effective warriors armed with artifacts, weapons, and cyphers. They maintain control by guarding the only known source of water in the area, the pool. Survivors are allowed rationed access to the pool, and what they take and store is monitored. No one is permitted to horde more than two days' worth of water (this prevents expeditions from moving off to the east or west). Reego is certain that the group is to wait for a sign—whereupon a portal back to the Ninth World will open. He thinks the light and the spire are distractions and that the mechanical Raiders are demons.

Reego is a quiet, smiling man whose mask of sanity is very thin. If those in his group begin to disobey or question him, it is a short jump for him to move from arguing, to attacking. Elei, the source of most of his frustration, is a likely target for such an outburst.

THE POOL

This small pool of water is a natural bowl on the top of a stone outcropping which naturally refills. The water is cool and clean. The area is always guarded by at least one of Reego's warriors, and often two. Reego loyalists wait nearby and will very quickly raise the alarm in case treachery occurs.

THE CONFLICT

If Elei knows about the PC's escape from the light, she will follow them, advise them, and offer to go with them to the emerald keep. Multiple routes to the pool exist, including:

Approach Reego: Those hoping to make peace with Reego find him a quiet, humble, well-spoken person. He will argue his points (safety for the group, overall security, etc...) but will eventually be lead around to the PCs point of view. Or he will appear to be. He will gather an "expedition" in an area near the exit to the eastern road, and then will trigger an artifact releasing a captured walker to kill the group (see the Walker Ambush, below).

Sneak: Sneaking to the pool to fill up on water is nearly impossible without some violence. There are many Reego-loyal survivors who wait outside the periphery of the area for daily water, and if they are dealt with, that only leaves one or two Reego compatriots guarding the pool. Cyphers and other special abilities may make such a task possible, but the GM should make it fraught with danger.

Attack Reego: Attacking Reego directly leads to the PCs fighting Reego, his three compatriots and a dozen regular survivors in a blow-for-blow full out battle.

Distract Reego: It is possible to distract Reego. Letting the news that the light is gone naturally spread through the camp is one way: Reego will insist on seeing it himself. Luring walkers from the walker causeway back towards the camp is another; Reego and his men will break off from guard duty and engage them. Clever and quick thinking players might be able to gain access to the water without a single drop of blood being spilled.

THE WALKER AMBUSH

In a box canyon, just before the eastern road, Reego will suddenly turn on the PCs and Elei, triggering a small artifact, releasing a huge shadow walker. He and his compatriots will attack any who attempt to exit the small, winding passage out of the canyon, and will wait for the creature to clean house. Those fleeing to the east end up in a causeway filled with shadow walkers...

PCs have seen these creatures before (or facsimiles in the keep simulation). The shadow walker is even more terrifying and powerful in real life. When it moves, the air vibrates with sound, and its high-pitched click which it uses for echolocation is disorienting. It hunts in precisely the same manner as in the keep simulation; by scrabbling around with its giant claws and moving directly towards any discrete

Reego: level 5; attacks, deception, and stealth as level 6; Armor 3; inflicts 6 points of damage with any weapon, 8 points if attacking with surprise; armed with crossbow and broadsword; has three cyphers

Reego-loyal compatriot: level 4; Armor 2; inflicts 2 points of damage with any weapon, 4 points if attacking with surprise; armed with crossbow and broadsword; has one cypher

Survivor: level 2; inflicts 2 points of damage with a dagger or 4 with a bow

Shadow walker: level 9; health 80; smash inflicts 8 points of damage; bite inflicts 12 points of damage

movement or sound. Any PC who speaks or moves draws the attention of the clicking giants and is permitted one difficulty 3 Speed defense roll to avoid their grasp. If they fail, they are snatched up and are permitted one difficulty 5 Might defense roll. If they fail both, they are bitten for 12 points of damage. If they hold still directly after an escape, the giants continue their search.

THE WALKER CAUSEWAY

The road out of the low stony canyons is itself one large canyon heading directly east to the emerald spire (whose base vanishes in the haze of the horizon). This area is filled with dozens of shadow walkers. They move about listlessly, clicking and hunting. Any significant noise or disruption causes several walkers to move towards and hunt the source of the noise.

The shadow walkers are even more terrifying and powerful in real life. When they move, the air vibrates with sound, and the high-pitched click they use for echolocation is disorienting. They hunt in precisely the same manner as in the keep simulation; by scrabbling around with their giant claws and moving directly towards any discrete movement or sound. Any PC who speaks or moves draws the attention of the clicking giants and is permitted one difficulty 3 Speed defense roll to avoid their grasp. If they fail, they are snatched up and are permitted one difficulty 5 Might defense roll. If they fail both, they are bitten for 12 points of damage. If they hold still directly after an escape, the giants continue their search.

Careful PCs that follow the rules and remain silent while slowly moving through the area can avoid direct threat by the shadow walkers. GMs hoping to increase the drama can easily have several close calls with the beasts to raise the tension.

SMASHED SOUND AND SMASHED RAIDERS

Two days east, the PCs come upon what looks like a smashed metal tuning fork that was once as large as a person. Near it are the fragmented remains of two destroyed Raiders. Anyone within 10 feet (3 m) of the tuning fork can feel a strangeness in the air, as if something was slightly impeding sound in the area. The shadow walkers avoid the area of the ruined tuning fork almost as if they can't "see" the area is there. Those within the radius are offered a limited invisibility.

Clever PCs might be able to gather various destroyed portions of Raiders near each other and trigger the reconstruction process (five or

six portions of smashed raiders in an area with ambient sound eventually leads to the portions to reform into one, nearly whole Raider).

RECONSTRUCTING A RAIDER

Reconstructed Raiders act very differently around PCs that have passed through the keep simulation. Any who saw the symbols and shapes (see page 14) are now treated as their leader. They follow, obey and work with those PCs to achieve their goals. They will even sacrifice themselves to protect a PC by drawing the attention of the shadow walkers.

The Raider's language—a burbling of overlapping sounds—is readily understandable to all PCs. If asked, they tell the following story.

The Sonorium was built at the end of an age in an empty world adjacent to Earth, to store all the physicality and power of an entire plane of existence in sound form where it might live on, timelessly, within the tower. It was run by an intelligence called the caretaker. Several eons before, a simulation error gave birth to a cancer, the hunting sound and its offspring, the shadow walkers. This sound began to eat its way through the tower. To prevent the Sonorium's consumption, the caretaker ejected its Raiders (along with as many shadow walkers as it could) outside, and then locked it down. The caretaker remains trapped inside the shut down system with the hunting sound. For seventy-two years now, the Raiders have launched forays into adjacent worlds to bring humans through, to test them, and use their subconscious minds in the simulation to re-write the source code of the caretaker, to reboot the systems of the Sonorium and remove the threat. The PCs contain that source code. They must get to the atrium, shut down the sound damper, and reprogram the caretaker.

THE NO-SOUND ZONE AND THE LOCK

As the PCs approach the end of the eastern road, more and more, they find silver tuning forks with small groups of Raiders gathered around them. There tuning forks render a radius of approximately 30 feet (10 m) completely soundless. Raiders are powered through sound, and so entering these zones is akin to holding their breath. They must step outside, soak up sound and then step back in. Often in doing this, they are discovered by hunting shadow walkers and destroyed.

All Raiders will act as above. They will follow, serve, and sacrifice themselves to save the PCs.

Reconstructed raider:
level 4, all defense tasks
as level 5; Armor23;
short-range hand stab
attack inflicts 4 points of
damage; sound blast at
short-range (5 points of
Intellect damage and on
failed Intellect defense
roll keeps the victims
from acting on their next
turn)



THE SONORIUM SPIRE

Finally, the PCs arrive at the base of the Sonorium spire. It is nearly a mile across, and stretches up into the sky in a breathtaking, curving arc. Hundreds of shadow walkers mill in front of the vast 200-foot (61 m) door. There is no way in without stumbling into a shadow, all of whom seem to be paying homage to whatever lies inside the giant structure. The following methods of entry are possible.

Cyphers, artifacts or special abilities: Cyphers, artifacts or special abilities may allow a PC to transit the shadow walkers and make it to the door undetected. This remains up to the GM to decide.

Use the tuning forks: Clever PCs can carry (or have the Raiders carry) the no-sound tuning forks forward slowly. This causes the shadow walkers to part, as the discomfort of the no-sound zone naturally repels them.

Direct the Raiders as a distraction: Dozens of Raiders (if gathered) can be directed to cause enough of a distraction to cause gaps to be form in the lineup. Moving through such a gap

requires a difficulty 5 Speed defense roll, or the PC is detected and the shadow walker engages normally.

THE DOOR

A zone of silence of 200 feet (61 m) exists around the Sonorium which shadow walkers cannot exist within. Even Raiders entering this zone soon begin to slow and eventually cease to operate. The soundless zone has no ill-effect on humans. As the PCs approach the giant door, they can see their reflection in its surface. As they come closer it becomes clear that colored shapes appear to float in the air around them (but only in the reflection).

Those PCs that have survived the keep recognize the colors and shapes as the message which was flashed when the simulation ended. Any PC can enter the sequence to open the door. This involves moving their arms in normal space while watching the reflection and shifting, connecting and intersecting the colors and shapes in the proper pattern. When the sequence is entered, the door silently opens.



Inside is a huge room ending in another duplicate door; a sound “air lock”. Stepping inside cause the door to the outside to shut. All of this occurs in absolute silence. Another, identical sequence is entered at the second door (after the first has shut). And then the PCs are inside.

SHUTTING OFF THE DAMPER

The entire facility is a huge vertical shaft 1,000 feet (305 m) wide, inset with what appears to be small doors of various sizes—millions of them. It is utterly silent. Hundreds of these doors have been ravaged—seemingly at random—smashed open and blackened by some sort of energy.

In the center of the shaft is a 10 foot (3 m) wide green dome which pulses with energy. This is the caretaker simulation, as well as the force projecting the no-sound zone. PCs will likely have learned by now that the damper must be shut off before the Sonorium can be “restarted.” If they have not pieced this together, shapes in the green dome inform them of the sequence. Shut down the damper, load the information given to each PC into the caretaker, restart it, and the new programming should remove the threat—called the hunting sound—in time.

PCs who wish to shut down the damper can do so with a few touches to the dome. Immediately, sound as well as all the danger that it brings, returns to the facility.

THE HUNTING SOUND

First, an incessant pounding on the exterior doors begin as the shadow walkers attempt to gain entry. Next, a high-pitched whining begins, gathering in intensity. PCs can begin entering the sequence they learned (see page 14) into the caretaker device immediately. Each PC assisting in reprogramming the caretaker device reduces the difficulty of the Intellect task by 1 (it begins with a base difficulty of 9).

In total, ten successful rolls are necessary to restart the caretaker with the proper reprogramming to deal with the hunting sound anomaly (not consecutive). While PCs attempt this, the hunting sound coalesces and in three rounds, attacks a random PC who is working on the caretaker device. It appears as a pulsing, distortion in the air the size of a small elephant. It slashes and stabs with semi-opaque frequencies of sound that end in humming blades of focused noise.

THE REBOOT

Once the caretaker has been reprogrammed, there is a single, sub-audible pulse of sound, followed by silence. Natural silence. The

hunting sound is disintegrated in a split-second, shrieking as it is “removed”. The caretaker comes online, and immediately, the facility begins to fill with dozens, and then hundreds of Raiders who march in and surround the PCs.

When the room is filled, the Raiders bow.

RETURN TO THE NINTH WORLD AND WRAPPING THINGS UP

The caretaker is a beneficent intelligence. It understands the sacrifices and dangers the PCs have endured to restore its function. It will now work to restore the sounds lost to the hunting sound from archives. But, before that, it will offer to return the “recruits” to “the world of their origin.” If they agree, they are immediately overcome by an all-consuming part which rips them to pieces.

A moment later they appear back on Earth, on the Wyr River within a few miles of Qi, fully equipped. At the GMs discretion, each PC has a small, green gem attached to their clothing—this device allows communication with the caretaker—who may or may not call upon them again, in the future.

Congratulate the players on a job well done!

The hunting sound:
level 9; health 80; Armor 5; sound stabs inflict 10 points of damage; sound based attacks against the hunting sound ignores its Armor





UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHARACTER

CHARACTER DESCRIPTOR, TYPE, AND FOCUS

Each character has a simple statement that describes them, like: "I am a [adjective here] [noun here] who [verb here]."

For example, Caris is a Swift Glaive who Wields Two Weapons and Sharad Talaar is an Intelligent Nano who Leads.

In this sentence, the *adjective* is called your descriptor.

The *noun* is your character type.

The *verb* is called your focus.

In some games, character type might be called your character class. It's the noun of the sentence "I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*." You can choose from three character types: Glaive, Jack, and Nano.

Your descriptor places your character in the situation and helps provide motivation. It's the adjective of the sentence "I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*."

Focus is what your character does best. It's the verb of the sentence "I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*."

CHARACTER STATS

Every character has three defining characteristics, called "statistics" or "stats." Might, Speed, and Intellect.

Might: The concepts of strength, endurance, constitution, hardiness, and physical prowess are all folded into Might.

Might governs actions from forcing doors open to resisting disease. It's also the primary means of determining how much damage your character can sustain. Characters interested in fighting focus on Might.

Speed: Speed embodies quickness, movement, dexterity, and reflexes. Speed governs dodging attacks, sneaking around, or throwing a ball accurately. Nimble, fast, or sneaky characters have good Speed stats.

Intellect: Intellect encompasses intelligence, wisdom, charisma, education, reasoning, wit, willpower, and charm. Intellect governs solving puzzles, remembering facts, telling convincing lies, and using mental powers. Characters good at communicating effectively or wielding the numenera stress their Intellect stat.

POOL, EDGE, AND EFFORT

Each of these stats has two components: Pool and Edge. Your Pool is raw ability, and your Edge represents knowing how to use what you have. A third element ties into this concept: Effort. When your character really needs to accomplish a task, apply Effort.

POOL

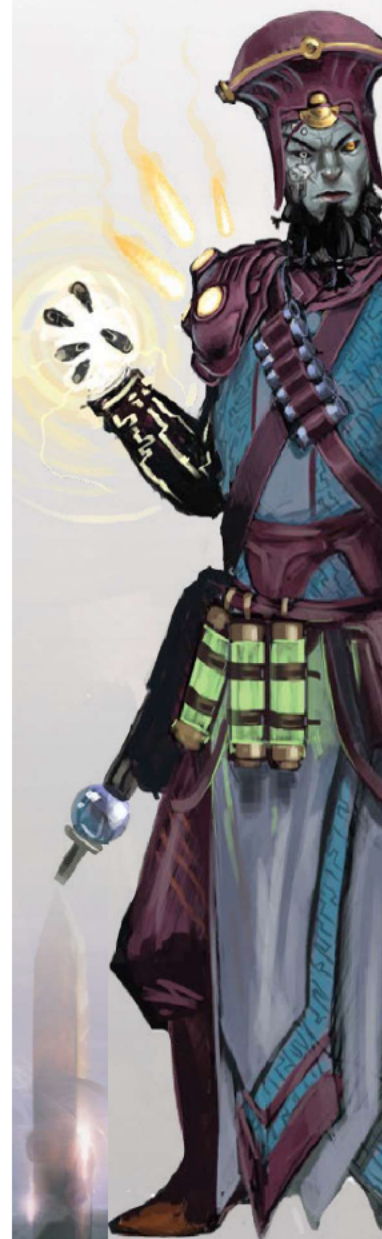
A Pool is the most basic measurement of a stat. Comparing the Pools of two creatures gives a general sense of which is superior. For example, Kalain has a Might Pool of 18, and thus is stronger than Faroon, who has a Might Pool of 12. Most average characters have a Pool of 9 to 12 in most stats.

When your character is injured, sickened, or attacked, you temporarily lose points from one of your stat Pools. The nature of the attack determines which Pool loses points. Physical damage from a sword reduces your Might Pool, a poison that makes you clumsy reduces your Speed Pool, and a psionic blast reduces your Intellect Pool. You can rest to regain lost points from a stat Pool (see Recovering Points in a Pool, page 28).

EDGE

Pool is the basic measurement of a stat, but Edge is also important. When something requires you to spend points from a stat Pool, Edge reduces the cost. It also reduces the cost of applying Effort to a roll.

For example, Sharad Talaar wants to use the Onslaught ability, which costs 1 point from his





Intellect Pool. Subtract his 1 Intellect Edge from the activation cost, and the result is how many points he must spend. Since the result is 0, the ability is free.

EFFORT

When your character really needs to accomplish a task, apply Effort. Applying Effort requires spending 3 points from the stat Pool appropriate to the action. Thus, if your character tries to dodge (a Speed roll) and wants to increase the chance for success, you can apply Effort by spending 3 points from your Speed Pool. The game master determines the difficulty of the task (1 to 10). Effort lowers the difficulty of the task by one step. So, if the difficulty is 5, using Effort makes it 4. This must be done before you attempt a roll.

Every character has an Effort score, which indicates the maximum number of levels of Effort that can be applied.

When you apply Effort, subtract your relevant Edge from the total cost of applying Effort. For example, let's say you need to make a Speed roll. You apply one level of Effort, which will reduce the difficulty of the task by one step. Normally, that would cost 3 points from your Speed Pool. However, you have a Speed Edge of 1, so you subtract that from the cost. So, it only costs 2 points from your Speed Pool.

Skills, equipment and special abilities can also decrease a task's difficulty, and can be used in conjunction with Effort.

EFFORT AND DAMAGE

Instead of applying Effort to reduce the difficulty of your attack, you can apply Effort to increase the amount of damage you inflict for any kind of attack. For each level of Effort, you inflict 3 additional points of damage.

When using Effort to increase the damage of an area attack, such as the explosion created by a detonation cypher, you inflict 2 additional points of damage instead of 3 points. But those points are dealt to all targets in the area. Even if one or more of the targets in the area resists, you still inflict 1 point of damage to them.

SKILLS (AND INABILITIES)

Your character has training in a handful of specific skills. For example, you might be trained in sneaking, climbing and jumping, or social interactions. A character's level of skill is either trained (reasonably skilled) or specialized (very skilled).

If you are trained in a skill relating to a task, decrease the difficulty of that task by one step. If you are specialized, decrease the difficulty by two steps. A skill can never decrease a task's difficulty



by more than two steps, but you can use a skill and Effort together.

You can always attempt any action—you do not need a related skill. In other words, having training in climbing doesn't let you climb, it just makes you good at it. Anyone can still try to climb.

Some characters have inabilities. If a character has an inability in a task, the difficulty of that task is one step more difficult for that character.

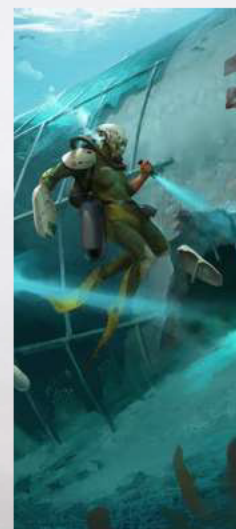
SPECIAL ABILITIES

Character types and foci grant PCs special abilities. Using these abilities usually costs points from your stat Pools (listed in parentheses after the ability name). Your Edge in the appropriate stat can reduce the cost, but you can only apply Edge once per action. For example, let's say a Nano with an Intellect Edge of 2 wants to use their Onslaught ability, which costs 1 Intellect point. They also want to increase the damage by using a level of Effort, which costs 3 Intellect points. The total cost for the action is 2 points from their Intellect Pool (1 point for the Onslaught plus 3 points for using Effort minus 2 points from their Edge).

Sometimes the point cost for an ability has a + sign after the number. That means you can spend more points or more levels of Effort to improve the ability.

Many special abilities grant a character the option of performing an **action** that they couldn't normally do, such as projecting rays of cold or attacking multiple foes at once. Using one of these abilities is an action unto itself, and the end of the ability's description says "Action" to remind you.

Some special abilities allow you to perform a familiar action—one that you can already do—in a different way. For example, an ability might let you wear heavy armor or add 2 points of fire damage to your weapon damage. These are called **enablers**. Using one of these abilities is not considered an action. Enablers either function constantly (such as being able to wear heavy armor) or happen as part of another action (such as adding fire damage to your weapon damage, which happens as part of your attack). If a special ability is an enabler, the end of the ability's description says "Enabler" to remind you.





CYPHERS AND ODDITIES

Cyphers are a type of numenera that have a single use. They might allow you to fly or become temporarily invisible. You can't bear many cyphers at a time because these weird items emit radiation or dangerous chemicals that don't mix well. Thus, each character has a cypher limit indicating how many cyphers they can carry.

You can use your cyphers to activate their abilities as your action, just as you would a special ability. The only difference is, once you've used a cypher, it's gone.

Characters will find new cyphers frequently during the game, so players shouldn't hesitate to use their cypher abilities.

There are two kinds of cyphers: anoetic and occultic.

Anoetic cyphers are simple to use: a pill to swallow or a bomb to throw.

Occultic cyphers are more complex and more dangerous, but they often have better and more interesting effects. An occultic cypher counts as two cyphers for the purpose of determining how many you can bear at the same time.

Oddities are numenera devices that don't have much (apparent) practical purpose. They aren't weapons or tools or wondrous things that grant powers. But they at least have some barter value if you need to do some trading.

EQUIPMENT AND SHINS

Each character has normal equipment they can use, including backpacks, ropes, torches, and so on. In the Ninth World, a few special items are considered equipment as well. These include glowglobes and even stranger things, but if need be, such things are explained on your character sheet.

Shins are currency in the Ninth World—or the closest thing they have to currency. Shins represent a common unit of barter. When coins are needed, shins take the form of various bits and parts of numenera devices, usually scavenged from large machines—buttons, gears, or diodes.

A shin is enough to buy a hefty drink or a light meal. It will get you a bed to sleep in for a night, or allow you to buy a small, simple object like a knife.





HOW TO PLAY NUMENERA

Numenera is played in the joint imagination of all the players, including the GM. The GM sets the scene, the players state what their characters attempt to do, and the GM determines what happens next. One scene logically flows to the next—you might start in a town, travel across the wilderness, and eventually end up at the site of a prior-world ruin—and before you know it, you've got a story as compelling as any you've read or watched. The rules and the dice help make the game run smoothly, but it's the people, not the rules or the dice, that direct the action and determine the story—and the fun. If a rule gets in the way or detracts from the game, the players and the GM should work together to change it.

Numenera uses a twenty-sided die (d20) to determine the results of most actions. Whenever a *roll* of any kind is called for and no die is specified, roll a d20.

This is how you play Numenera:

1. The player tells the GM what they want to do. This is a *character action*.
2. The GM determines if that action is routine (and therefore works without needing a roll) or if there's a chance of failure.
3. If there is a chance of failure, the GM determines which stat the task uses (Might, Speed, or Intellect) and the task's *difficulty*—how hard it will be on a scale from 1 (really easy) to 10 (basically impossible).
4. The player and the GM determine if anything about the character—such as training, equipment, special abilities, or various actions—can modify the difficulty up or down by one or more steps. If these *modifications* reduce the difficulty to less than 1, the action is routine (and therefore works with no roll needed).
5. If the action still isn't routine, the GM uses its difficulty to determine the *target number*—how high the player must roll to succeed at the action (see the Task Difficulty table, page 24). **The target number is always three times the task's difficulty**, so a difficulty 4 task has a target

number of 12. To succeed at the task, you must roll the target number or higher. The GM doesn't have to tell the player what the target number is, but he can give a hint, especially if the character would reasonably know if the action was easy, average, difficult, or impossible.

6. The player rolls a d20. If the roll is equal to or higher than the target number, the character succeeds.

That's it. That's how to do anything, whether it's identifying a strange device, calming a raging drunk, climbing a treacherous cliff, or battling a savage cragworm. Even if you ignored all the other rules, you could still play Numenera with just this information.

The key features here are: character actions, determining task difficulty, and determining modifications.

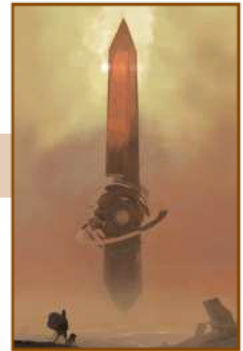
TAKING ACTION

Each character gets one turn each round. On a character's turn, they can do one thing—an action. All actions fall into one of three categories: Might, Speed, or Intellect (just like the three stats). Many actions require die rolls (rolling a d20).

Every action performs a task, and every task has a difficulty that determines what number a character must reach or surpass with a die roll to succeed. Most tasks have a difficulty of 0, which means the character succeeds automatically. For example, walking across a room, opening a door, picking something off the floor, and throwing a stone into a nearby bucket are all actions, but none of them requires a roll. Actions that are usually difficult or that become difficult due to the situation (such as shooting at a target in a blizzard) have a higher difficulty. These actions usually require a roll.

WHEN DO YOU ROLL?

Any time your character attempts a task, the GM assigns a difficulty to that task, and you roll a d20 against the associated target number.





When you jump from a burning vehicle, swing a battleaxe at a mutant beast, swim across a raging river, identify a strange device, convince a merchant to give you a lower price, craft an object, use a power to control a foe's mind, or use a heat-beam emitter to carve a hole in a wall, you make a d20 roll.

However, if you attempt something that has a difficulty of 0, no roll is needed—you automatically succeed. Many actions have a difficulty of 0. Examples include walking across the room and opening a door, using a special ability to negate gravity so you can fly, using an ability to protect your friend from radiation, or activating a device (that you already understand) to erect a force field. These are all routine actions and don't require rolls.

Using skill, assets, and Effort, you can decrease the difficulty of potentially any task to 0 and thus negate the need for a roll. Walking across a narrow wooden beam is tricky for most people, but for an experienced gymnast, it's routine. You can even decrease the difficulty of an attack on a foe to 0 and succeed without rolling. If there's no roll, there's no chance for failure. However, there's also no chance for remarkable success (in Numenera, that usually means rolling a 19 or 20; see Special Rolls, page 28).



DETERMINING TASK STAT

Every task relates to one of a character's three stats: Might, Speed, or Intellect. Physical activities that require strength, power, or endurance relate to Might. Physical activities that require agility, flexibility, or fast reflexes relate to Speed. Mental activities that require force of will, memory, or mental power relate to Intellect. This means you can generalize tasks

into three categories: Might tasks, Speed tasks, and Intellect tasks. You can also generalize rolls into three categories: Might rolls, Speed rolls, and Intellect rolls. The category of the task or roll determines what kind of Effort you can apply to the roll.

DETERMINING TASK DIFFICULTY

The most frequent thing a GM does during the game—and probably the most important thing—is setting a task's difficulty. To make the job easier, use the Task Difficulty table, which associates difficulty rating with a descriptive name, a target number, and general guidance about the difficulty.

Every difficulty from 1 to 10 has a target number associated with it. The target number is easy to remember: it's always three times the difficulty. The target number is the minimum number a player needs to roll on a d20 to succeed at the task. Moving up or down on the table is called increasing or decreasing the difficulty, which is measured in steps. For example, reducing a difficulty 5 task to a difficulty 4 task is "reducing the difficulty by one step."

Modifiers affect the difficulty rather than the player's roll. This has two consequences:

1. Low target numbers such as 3 or 6, which would be boring in most games that use a d20, are not boring in Numenera. For example, if you need to roll a 6 or higher, you still have a 25% chance to fail.
2. The upper levels of difficulty (7, 8, 9, and 10) are all but impossible because the target numbers are 21 or higher, which you can't roll on a d20. However, it's common for PCs to have abilities or equipment that reduce the difficulty of a task and thus lower the target number to something they *can* roll on a d20.

TASK DIFFICULTY

Task Difficulty	Description	Target No.	Guidance
0	Routine	0	Anyone can do this basically every time.
1	Simple	3	Most people can do this most of the time.
2	Standard	6	Typical task requiring focus, but most people can usually do this.
3	Demanding	9	Requires full attention; most people have a 50/50 chance to succeed.
4	Difficult	12	Trained people have a 50/50 chance to succeed.
5	Challenging	15	Even trained people often fail.
6	Intimidating	18	Normal people almost never succeed.
7	Formidable	21	Impossible without skills or great effort.
8	Heroic	24	A task worthy of tales told for years afterward.
9	Immortal	27	A task worthy of legends that last lifetimes.
10	Impossible	30	A task that normal humans couldn't consider (but one that doesn't break the laws of physics).



When setting the difficulty of a task, the GM should rate the task on its own merits, not on the power of the characters. Difficulty is not relative. A level 4 locked door is the same no matter who tries to open it.

MODIFYING DIFFICULTY

Character skills, favorable circumstances, or excellent equipment can decrease the difficulty of a task. For example, if a character is trained in climbing, she turns a difficulty 6 climb into a difficulty 5 climb. This is called “decreasing the difficulty by one step.” If she is specialized in climbing, she turns a difficulty 6 climb into a difficulty 4 climb. This is called “decreasing the difficulty by two steps.”

A *skill* is a category of knowledge, ability, or activity relating to a task, such as climbing, geography, or persuasiveness. A character who has a skill is better at completing related tasks than a character who lacks the skill. A character's level of skill is either *trained* (reasonably skilled) or *specialized* (very skilled).

If you are trained in a skill relating to a task, you decrease the difficulty of that task by one step. If you are specialized, you decrease the difficulty by two steps. A skill can never decrease a task's difficulty by more than two steps.

Anything else that reduces difficulty (help from an ally, a particular piece of equipment, or some

other advantage) is referred to as an *asset*. Assets can never decrease a task's difficulty by more than two steps.

You can also decrease the difficulty of a given task by applying *Effort*. This costs 3 points from the relevant stat Pool, minus any *Edge*. Using *Effort* reduces the difficulty of a task by one step.

To sum up, three things can decrease a task's difficulty: skills, assets, and *Effort*. If you can decrease a task's difficulty to 0, you automatically succeed and don't need to make a roll.

COMBAT

Making an attack in combat works the same way as any other roll: the GM assigns a difficulty to the task, and you roll a d20 against the associated target number.

The difficulty of your attack roll depends on how powerful your opponent is. Just as tasks have a difficulty from 1 to 10, creatures have a *level* from 1 to 10. Most of the time, the difficulty of your attack roll is the same as the creature's level. For example, if you attack a level 2 bandit, it's a level 2 task, so your target number is 6.

Players make all die rolls. If a character attacks a creature, the player makes an attack roll. If a creature attacks a character, the player makes a defense roll.

The damage dealt by an attack is a flat number based on the weapon or attack used. For example, a spear always does 4 points of damage.





Your **Armor** characteristic reduces the damage you take from attacks directed at you. You get Armor from wearing physical armor (such as a sturdy leather jerkin or chainmail) or from special abilities. Like weapon damage, Armor is a flat number, not a roll. If you're attacked, subtract your Armor from the damage you take. For example, a leather jerkin gives you 1 point of Armor, meaning that you take 1 less point of damage from attacks. If a bandit hits you with a knife for 2 points of damage while you're wearing a leather jerkin, you take only 1 point of damage. If your Armor reduces the damage from an attack to 0, you take no damage from that attack.

When you see the word "Armor" capitalized in the game rules (other than as the name of a special ability), it refers to your Armor characteristic—the number you subtract from incoming damage. When you see the word "armor" with a lowercase "a," it refers to any physical armor you might wear.

Typical physical weapons come in three categories: light, medium and heavy.

LIGHT WEAPONS inflict only 2 points of damage, but they reduce the difficulty of the attack roll by one step because they are fast and easy to use. Light weapons are punches, kicks, clubs, knives, handaxes, rapiers, and so on. Weapons that are particularly small are light weapons.

MEDIUM WEAPONS inflict 4 points of damage. Medium weapons include swords, battleaxes, maces, crossbows, spears, and so on. Most weapons are medium. Anything that could be used in one hand (even if it's often used in two hands, such as a quarterstaff or spear) is a medium weapon.

HEAVY WEAPONS inflict 6 points of damage, and you must use two hands to attack with them. Heavy weapons are huge swords, great hammers, massive axes, halberds, heavy crossbows, and so on. Anything that must be used in two hands is a heavy weapon.

ATTACK MODIFIERS AND SPECIAL SITUATIONS

In combat situations, many modifiers might come into play. The GM is at liberty to assess whatever modifiers they think are appropriate to the situation (that's their role in the game). Often the modifier is applied as a step in difficulty. So if a situation hinders attacks, that means if a PC attacks a nonplayer character (NPC), the difficulty for the attack roll is increased by one step, and if an NPC attacks a PC, the difficulty of the defense roll is decreased by one step. This is because players make all rolls, whether they are attacking or defending—NPCs never make attack or defense rolls.





THE DAMAGE TRACK

Hale is the normal state for a character: all three stat Pools are at 1 or higher, and the PC has no penalties from harmful conditions. When a hale PC takes enough damage to reduce one of their stat Pools to 0, they become impaired. Note that a character whose stat Pools are much lower than normal can still be hale.

Impaired is a wounded or injured state. When an impaired character applies Effort, it costs 1 extra point per level applied. For example, applying one level of Effort costs 4 points instead of 3, and applying two levels of Effort costs 7 points instead of 5.

An impaired character ignores minor and major effect results on his rolls, and he doesn't deal as much extra damage in combat with a special roll. In combat, a roll of 17 or higher deals only 1 additional point of damage.

When an impaired PC takes enough damage to reduce one of their stat Pools to 0, they become debilitated.

Debilitated is a critically injured state. A debilitated character may not take any actions other than to move (probably crawl) no more than an immediate distance. If a debilitated character's Speed Pool is 0, they can't move at all.

When a debilitated PC takes enough damage to reduce a stat Pool to 0, he is dead.

Dead is dead.

When in doubt, if it seems like it should be harder to attack in a situation, the difficulty of the attack rolls increase by one step. If it seems like attacks should gain an advantage or be easier in some way, the difficulty of the defense rolls increase by one step.

DEALING AND SUFFERING DAMAGE

When an attack strikes a character, it usually means the character takes damage.

An attack against a PC subtracts points from one of the character's stat Pools—usually the Might Pool. Whenever an attack simply says it deals “damage” without specifying the type, it means Might damage, which is by far the most common type. Intellect damage, which is usually the result of a mental attack, is always labeled as Intellect damage. Speed damage is often a physical attack, but attacks that deal Speed damage are fairly rare.

NPCs don't have stat Pools. Instead, they have a characteristic called *health*. When an NPC takes damage of any kind, the amount is subtracted from its health. Unless described otherwise, an NPC's health is always equal to its target number. Some NPCs might have special reactions to or defenses against attacks that would normally deal Speed damage or Intellect damage, but unless the NPC's description specifically explains this, assume that all damage is subtracted from the NPC's health.

Objects are like NPCs: they have health instead of stat Pools.

As mentioned previously, damage is always a specific amount determined by the attack. For example, a slash with a broadsword deals 4 points of damage. A Nano's Onslaught force blast deals 4 points of damage. Often, there are

ways for the attacker to increase the damage. For example, a PC can apply Effort to deal 3 additional points of damage, and rolling a natural 17 on the attack roll deals 1 additional point of damage.

AMBIENT DAMAGE

Some kinds of damage aren't direct attacks against a creature, but they indirectly affect everything in the area. Most of these are environmental effects such as winter cold, high temperatures, or background radiation. Damage from these kinds of sources is called ambient damage. Physical armor usually doesn't protect against ambient damage, though a well-insulated suit of armor can protect against cold weather.

THE EFFECTS OF TAKING DAMAGE

When an NPC reaches 0 health, it is either dead or (if the attacker wishes it) incapacitated, meaning unconscious or beaten into submission.

When an object reaches 0 health, it is broken or otherwise destroyed.

As previously mentioned, damage from most sources is applied to a character's Might Pool. Otherwise, stat damage always reduces the Pool of the stat it affects.

If damage reduces a character's stat Pool to 0, any further damage to that stat (including excess damage from the attack that reduced the stat to 0) is applied to another stat Pool. Damage is applied to Pools in this order:

1. Might Pool (unless the Pool is 0)
2. Speed Pool (unless the Pool is 0)
3. Intellect Pool

Even if the damage is applied to another stat Pool, it still counts as its original type for the purpose of Armor and special abilities that



affect damage. For example, if a Glaive with 2 Armor is reduced to 0 Might and then is hit by a monster's claw for 3 points of damage, it still counts as Might damage, so his 2 Armor reduces the damage to 1 point, which then is applied to his Speed Pool. In other words, even though the Glaive takes the damage from his Speed Pool, it doesn't ignore Armor like Speed damage normally would.

In addition to taking damage from their Might Pool, Speed Pool, or Intellect Pool, PCs also have a *damage track*. The damage track has four states (from best to worst): hale, impaired, debilitated, and dead. When one of a PC's stat Pools reaches 0, the character moves one step down the damage track. Thus, if they are hale, they become impaired. If they are already impaired, they become debilitated. If they are already debilitated, they become dead.

Some effects can immediately shift a PC one or more steps on the damage track. These include rare poisons, cellular disruption attacks, and massive traumas (such as falls from very great heights, being run over by a speeding vehicle, and so on, as determined by the GM).

Some attacks, like venom from a serpent's bite, a Nano's Stasis esotery, or the mind-controlling influence of a sarrak, have effects other than damage to a stat Pool or shifting the PC on the damage track. These attacks can cause unconsciousness, paralysis, and so on.

RECOVERING POINTS IN A POOL

After losing or spending points in a Pool, you recover those points by resting. You can't increase a Pool past its maximum by resting—just back to its normal level. Any extra points gained go away with no effect. The amount of points you recover from a rest, and how long each rest takes, depends on how many times you have rested so far that day.

When you rest, make a *recovery roll*. To do this, roll 1d6 + 1. You recover that many points, and you can divide them among your stat Pools however you wish. For example, if your recovery roll is 4 and you've lost 4 points of Might and 2 points of Speed, you can recover 4 points of Might, or 2 points of Might and 2 points of Speed, or any other combination adding up to 4 points.

The first time you rest each day, it takes only a few seconds to catch your breath. If you rest this way in the middle of an encounter, it takes one action on your turn.

The second time you rest each day, you must rest ten minutes to make a recovery roll. The third time you rest each day, you must rest one hour to make a recovery roll. The fourth time you

rest each day, you must rest ten hours to make a recovery roll (usually, this occurs when you sleep).

After that much rest, it's assumed to be a new day (Ninth World days are 28 hours long), so the next time you rest, it takes only a few seconds. The next rest takes ten minutes, then one hour, and so on, in a cycle.

If you haven't rested yet that day and you take a lot of damage in a fight, you could rest a few seconds (regaining 1d6 points + 1) and then immediately rest for ten minutes (regaining another 1d6 points + 1). Thus, in one full day of doing nothing but resting, you could recover 4d6 points + 4 points.

Each character chooses when to make recovery rolls. If a party of five explorers rests for ten minutes because two members want to make recovery rolls, the other characters don't have to make rolls at that time. Later in the day, those three can decide to rest for ten minutes and make recovery rolls.

Recovery Roll	Rest Time Needed
First recovery roll	One action
Second recovery roll	Ten minutes
Third recovery roll	One hour
Fourth recovery roll	Ten hours

Using points from a recovery roll to raise a stat Pool from 0 to 1 or higher also automatically moves the character up one step on the damage track.

If all of a PC's stat Pools are above 0 and the character has taken special damage that moved them down the damage track, they can use a recovery roll to move up one step on the damage track instead of recovering points. For example, a Jack who is debilitated from a hit with a cell-disrupting numenera device can rest and move up to impaired rather than recover points in a Pool.

SPECIAL ROLLS

When you roll a natural 19 (the d20 shows "19") and the roll is a success, you also have a minor effect. In combat, a minor effect inflicts 3 additional points of damage with your attack, or, if you'd prefer a special result, you could decide instead that you knock the foe back, distract him, or something similar. When not in combat, a minor effect could mean that you perform the action with particular grace. For example, when jumping down from a ledge, you land smoothly on your feet, or when trying to persuade someone, you convince them that you're smarter than you really are. In other words, you not only succeed but also go a bit further.

When you roll a natural 20 (the d20 shows “20”) and the roll is a success, you also have a major effect. This is similar to a minor effect, but the results are more remarkable. In combat, a major effect inflicts 4 additional points of damage with your attack, but again, you can choose instead to introduce a dramatic event such as knocking down your foe, stunning them, or taking an extra action. Outside of combat, a major effect means that something beneficial happens based on the circumstance. For example, when climbing up a cliff wall, you make the ascent twice as fast. When a roll grants you a major effect, you can choose to use a minor effect instead if you prefer.

In combat (and only in combat), if you roll a natural 17 or 18 on your attack roll, you add 1 or 2 points of damage, respectively. Neither roll has any special effect options—just the extra damage.

Rolling a natural 1 is always bad. It means that the GM introduces a new complication into the encounter. This is called a GM intrusion.

1: Intrusion. The GM makes a free intrusion (see below) and doesn’t award experience points (XP) for it.

17: Damage Bonus. If the roll was an attack, it deals 1 additional point of damage.

18: Damage Bonus. If the roll was an attack, it deals 2 additional points of damage.

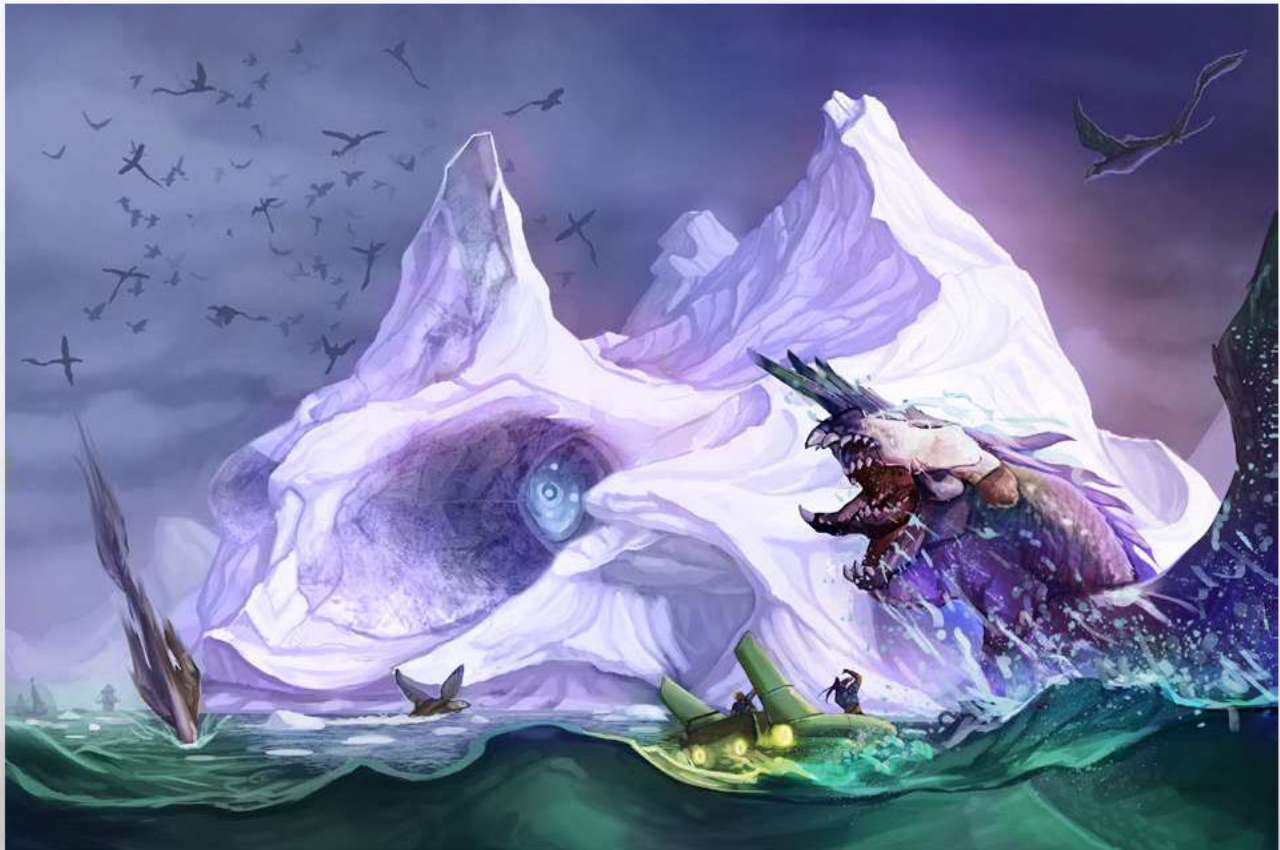
19: Minor Effect. If the roll was an attack, it deals 3 additional points of damage. If the roll was something other than an attack, the PC gets a minor effect in addition to the normal results of the task.

20: Major Effect. If the roll was an attack, it deals 4 additional points of damage. If the roll was something other than an attack, the PC gets a major effect in addition to the normal results of the task. If the PC spent points from a stat Pool on the action, the point cost for the action decreases to 0, meaning the character regains those points as if they had not been spent at all.

GM INTRUSION

GM intrusion reflects when something in the story occurs to complicate the character’s life. The character hasn’t necessarily fumbled or done anything wrong (although perhaps they did). It could just be that the task presents an unexpected difficulty or something unrelated affects the current situation.

At any time, the GM can introduce an unexpected complication for a character. For example, an enemy might appear and attack, the rope the character is climbing might snap, or an unstable floor might give out beneath a character’s feet. A GM intrusion always puts the spotlight on that one character, and when



HELPING

If a character attempts a task and gets help from another character who is trained or specialized in that task, the acting character gets the benefit of the helping character. The helping character uses their action to provide this help. If the helper does not have training or specialization in that task, the acting character instead gets a +1 bonus to the roll. For example, if Veterian the Glaive is trying to climb a steep incline but has no skill at climbing, and Jethua the Jack (who is trained in climbing) spends her turn helping him, Veterian can decrease the difficulty of the task by one step. A character with an inability in a task cannot help another character with that task—the character with the inability provides no benefit in that situation.

the GM finishes explaining what the sudden, surprising turn of events is, they ask that player, “Now what do you do?” They player must deal with this new complication.

When the GM intrudes in this manner, they must give the affected character 2 XP. That player, in turn, must immediately give one of those XP to another player and justify the gift (perhaps the other player had a good idea, told a funny joke, performed an action that saved a life, and so on).

As a general rule, the GM should intrude *at least* once each session, but probably no more than once or twice each session per character.

Anytime the GM intrudes, the player can spend 1 XP to refuse the intrusion, though that also means they don’t get the 2 XP. If the player has no XP to spend, they can’t refuse the intrusion.

Example Intrusion: Through skill and the aid of another character, a PC reduces a wall climbing task from difficulty 2 to difficulty 0. Normally, he would succeed at the task automatically, but the GM intrudes and says, “No, a bit of the crumbling wall gives way, so you still have to make a roll.” As with any difficulty 2 task, the target number is 6. The PC attempts the roll as normal, and because the GM intruded, the character gains 2 XP. He immediately gives one of those XP to another player.

Another Example Intrusion: During a fight, a PC swings her axe and damages a foe with a slice across the shoulder. The GM intrudes by saying that the foe turned just as the axe struck, wrenching the weapon from the character’s grip and sending it clattering across the floor. The axe comes to a stop 10 feet (3 m) away. Because the GM intruded, the PC gains 2 XP, and she immediately gives one of those XP to another player. Now the character must deal with the dropped weapon, perhaps drawing a different weapon or using her next turn to scramble after the axe.

If a character rolls a 1 on a die, the GM can intrude without giving the character any XP. This kind of intrusion happens immediately or very soon thereafter.

RANGE AND SPEED

Distance is simplified into three categories: immediate, short, and long.

IMMEDIATE DISTANCE from a character is within reach or within a few steps. If a character stands in a small room, everything in the room is within immediate distance. At most, immediate distance is 10 feet (3 m).

SHORT DISTANCE is anything greater than immediate distance but less than 50 feet (15 m) or so.

LONG DISTANCE is anything greater than short distance but less than 100 feet (30 m) or so. Beyond that range, distances are always specified—500 feet (150 m), a mile (1.5 km), and so on.

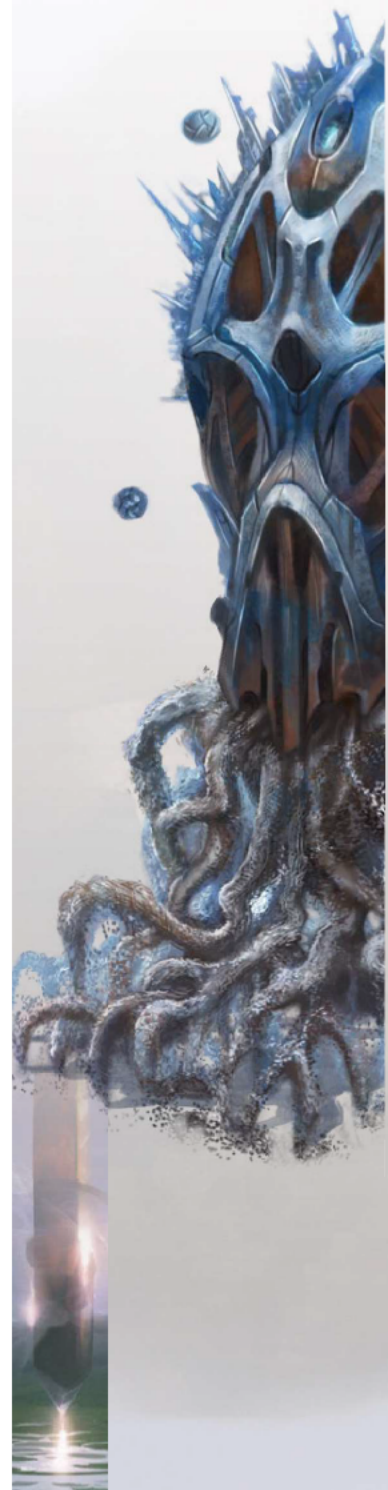
The idea is that it’s not necessary to measure precise distances. Immediate distance is right there, practically next to the character. Short distance is nearby. Long distance is farther off.

All weapons and special abilities use these terms for ranges. For example, all melee weapons have immediate range—they are close-combat weapons, and you can use them to attack anyone within immediate distance of you. A thrown knife (and most other thrown weapons) has short range. A bow has long range. A Nano’s Onslaught ability also has short range.

A character can move an immediate distance as part of another action. In other words, they can take a few steps over to the control panel and activate a switch. They can lunge across a small room to attack a foe. They can open a door and step through.

A character can move a short distance as their entire action for a turn. They can also try to move a long distance as their entire action, but the player might have to roll to see if the character slips, trips, or stumbles as the result of moving so far so quickly.

For example, if the PCs are fighting a group of abhumans, any character can likely attack any abhuman in the general melee—they’re all within immediate range. Exact positions



aren't important. Creatures in a fight are always moving, shifting, and jostling, anyway. However, if one abhuman stayed back to use its crossbow, a character might have to use their entire action to move the short distance required to attack that foe. It doesn't matter if the abhuman is 20 feet (6 m) or 40 feet (12 m)

away—it's simply considered short distance. It does matter if the abhuman is more than 50 feet (15 m) away because that distance would require a long move.

ENCOUNTERS, ROUNDS, AND INITIATIVE

Sometimes in the course of the game, the GM or players will refer to an *encounter*. Encounters are not so much measurements of time as they are events or instances in which something happens, like a scene of a movie or a chapter in a book. An encounter might be a fight with a foe, a dramatic crossing of a raging river, or a stressful negotiation with an important official. It's useful to use the word when referring to a specific scene, as in "My Might Pool is low after that encounter with the jiraskar yesterday."

A *round* is about five to ten seconds. The length of time is variable because sometimes one round might be a bit longer than another. You don't need to measure time more precisely than that. You can estimate that on average there are about ten rounds in a minute. In a round, everyone—each character and NPC—gets to take one action.

To determine who goes first, second, and so on in a round, each player makes a Speed roll called an *initiative roll*. Most of the time, it's only important to know which characters act before the NPCs and which act after the NPCs. On an initiative roll, a character who rolls higher than an NPC's target number takes her action before the NPC does. As with all target numbers, an NPC's initiative roll target number is three times the NPC's level. Many times, the GM will have all NPCs take their actions at the same time, using the highest target number from among all the NPCs. Using this method, any characters who rolled higher than the target number act first, then all the NPCs act, and finally any characters who rolled lower than the target number act.

The order in which the characters act usually isn't important. If the players want to go in a precise order, they can act in initiative order (highest to lowest), by going around the table, by going oldest to youngest, and so on.

For example, Colin, James, and Shanna are in combat with two level 2 abhumans. The GM has the players make Speed rolls to determine

initiative. Colin rolls an 8, Shanna rolls a 15, and James rolls a 4. The target number for a level 2 creature is 6, so each round Colin and Shanna act before the abhumans, then the abhumans act, and finally James acts. It doesn't matter whether Colin acts before or after Shanna, as long as they think it's fair.

After everyone—all PCs and NPCs—in the combat has had a turn, the round ends and a new round begins. In all rounds after the first, everyone acts in the same order as they did in the first round. The characters *cycle* through this order until the logical end of the encounter (the end of the fight or the completion of the event) or until the GM asks them to make new initiative rolls. The GM can call for new initiative rolls at the beginning of any new round when conditions drastically change. For example, if the NPCs gain reinforcements, the environment changes (perhaps the lights go out), the terrain changes (maybe part of the balcony collapses under the PCs), or something similar occurs, the GM can call for new initiative rolls.

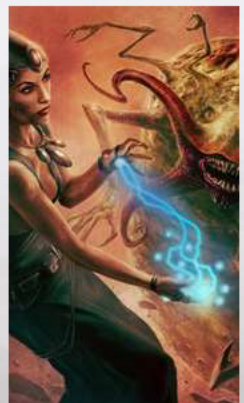
Since the action moves as a cycle, anything that lasts for a round ends where it started in the cycle. If Valleris the Nano uses an esotery on an opponent that hinders its defenses for one round, the effect *lasts* until Valleris acts on his next turn.

INTERACTION

Obviously, players can talk to each other all they want, and at least some of that conversation represents what the characters are saying to each other. Often, a PC will want to talk to an NPC. It might be to haggle with a shopkeeper, convince a guard to let them pass by, or just get information from someone in the know. This conversation is normally handled by the GM taking on the NPC role and talking things through. When a PC tries to convince an NPC of something, or when they try to deceive or intimidate the NPC, a roll is involved. This is handled just like anything else—use the level of the NPC as the difficulty, modified by the circumstances. Trying to convince a loyal soldier to disobey orders is harder than his level might indicate, but convincing the soldier that new orders have come in might be normal. Skills like persuasion or deception might help, and of course Effort can be used (always Intellect).

EXPLORATION AND DISCOVERY

Although fighting dangerous beasts or other foes can be interesting and exciting, much of gameplay in Numenera probably involves other





situations: overcoming obstacles, interacting with NPCs (some of them being weird creatures, machine intelligences, or far stranger things!), figuring out bits of ancient technology, solving mysteries, finding solutions to problems, blazing trails through the wilderness, sneaking, climbing, running, and all other kinds of exciting activities. Sometimes these actions allow PCs to achieve goals, such as “find the lost child in the woods,” or “help escort a merchant to the next town.” But more often than not, they propel characters toward making discoveries.

The core of gameplay in Numenera—the answer to the question “What do characters do in this game?”—is “Discover new things or old things that are new again.” This can be the discovery of something a character can use, like an artifact. It makes the character more powerful because it almost certainly grants a new capability or option, but it’s also a discovery unto itself and results in a gain of experience points.

Discovery can also mean finding a new numenera procedure or device (something too big to be considered a piece of equipment) or even previously unknown information. If the PCs find an ancient hovertrain and get it working again so they can use it to reach a distant location, that’s a discovery. If they locate a signal receiving station and figure out how to turn off the transmission from an overhead satellite that’s causing all the animals in the region to become hostile, that’s a discovery. The common thread is that the PCs discover something that they can understand and put to use. A cure for a plague, the means to draw power from a

hydroelectric plant, an operational flying craft, or an injection that grants the knowledge to create a protective force field dome over a structure—these are all discoveries.

The GM should award between 1 and 4 XP at the end of a session if the characters made any significant discoveries.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Experience points (XP) are rewards given to players when the GM intrudes on the story (this is called GM intrusion) with a new and unexpected challenge. For example, in the middle of combat, the GM might inform the player that they drop their weapon. However, to intrude in this manner, the GM must award the player 2 XP. The rewarded player, in turn, must immediately give one of those XP to another player and justify the gift (perhaps the other player had a good idea, told a funny joke, performed an action that saved a life, and so on).

Alternatively, the player can refuse the GM intrusion. If he does so, he doesn’t get the 2 XP from the GM, and he must also spend 1 XP that he already has. If the player has no XP to spend, he can’t refuse the intrusion.

The GM can also give players XP between sessions as a reward for recovering interesting artifacts or making discoveries during an adventure. You don’t earn XP for killing foes or overcoming standard challenges in the course of play. Discovery is the soul of Numenera.

A player can spend XP they’ve accumulated to reroll any die roll and take the better of the two rolls. Rerolling costs 1 XP.

