NUMENÉRA™

DISCOVERY



By Monte Cook, Bruce R. Cordell, and Sean K. Reynolds


NUMENÉRA™
DISCOVERY

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Dedicated to all the gamers in the world willing to take a chance on something a bit . . . weird.

As we agree with the growing consensus that "they" can and should be used as a gender-neutral, singular English-language pronoun when one is needed, we have adopted that as the style in our products. If you see this grammatical construction, it is intentional.

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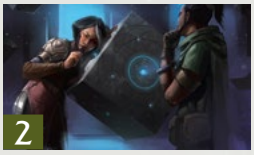
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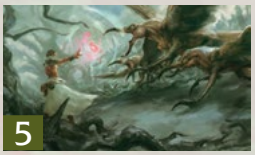
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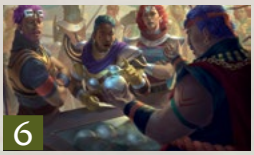
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A BILLION YEARS IN THE MAKING

Numenera is a tale that has grown in the telling. When I started working on it six years ago, the setting and concepts grew out of a strange image I'd imagined with two figures in simple, tattered cloaks (monks? Medieval travelers?) walking across a vast expanse. When our vantage pulls back, we see that they're actually walking across the surface of a massive gearwheel. It's all part of a giant machine. The underlying theme in that vision was Numenera in the broadest sense: a fantasy world with a technological underpinning. I'd had sparks of ideas that ran along similar lines for many years. Most boiled down to a group of magicians or priests performing a complex rite but utilizing some kind of devices, intoning incantations with every manipulation of the controls.

Technology that seems like magic. That's where our good friend Arthur C. Clarke comes in with his words of wisdom: "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." And that's the core idea of where Numenera comes from.

But those two cloaked figures walking slowly and quietly across that gigantic gear hold other concepts as well. They're mysterious. They're distant. The scene is very weird. We cannot imagine, in our own understanding of our world, how such a scene might occur. It's clearly a different context than one we possess in our current lives.

So Numenera had to be those things as well. Not everything is explained. Weirdness—particularly out-of-context weirdness—is prevalent. We don't fully understand the lives or motivations of these people because how on Earth (pun intended) could we? We can only guess. We apply our own templates to them. For example, to us, they seem sort of medieval, so we'll use concepts and terms and imagery that befit our history to describe a future so distant we can't even comprehend it.

But that's what makes it all so interesting. It's like when you're a child and see just a few moments of a television show or movie, or maybe a few images from a book, and you have no idea what it all means. You start filling in your own guesses as to who these characters are and what they're doing. You have no idea if you're right, but you know one thing—you want to know more. But you can't know everything. It's beyond our understanding. So really, it's the striving for understanding that is important. The journey rather than the destination.

Which is the final layer of the complexities of Numenera. Because just as we don't possess the context to understand those two figures (the people living a billion years in the future), they don't have the context to understand their world. These people living amid the detritus of civilizations far older and far greater than their own can't possibly understand it. Not truly. So maybe we understand them—or at least some aspect of them—better than we thought. For them, though, it's more a matter of survival than understanding. They learn bits and pieces—just enough to get by. And thus, so do we.

All of that thinking represents the seeds from which Numenera grew. In 2012, we launched a Kickstarter campaign to fund its creation and ended up funding a whole line of products. (And, in effect, Monte Cook Games as a whole, which is now a company with ten employees, multiple game lines, and lots of big and interesting plans for the future.) We created all those products, further developing and broadening the world and the game. And then we made a bunch more. We explored the reaches of space, the depths of the sea, and the dimensions beyond the familiar. We added more creatures and foes, more treasures, and more adventures to be had. All told, as of this writing, there are 70 products in the Numenera line, counting novels, card decks, character sheets, dice, and more. There are licensed Numenera miniatures, dice bags, t-shirts, two card-based games, an award-winning computer game, and a short film.

Thus, in those intervening years, Numenera has become so much more than just that simple little dreamy image. It's grown, expanded, and developed. Multiple authors have lent multiple voices to this world, creating something that has extended well beyond one person's vision. And yet there's still so much more to do. You hold in your hand, in fact, the first step of a whole new Numenera journey. Don't worry if this is your first foray into this strange place—everything you need to start is within these pages. But if you're an old hand, or even have been with us from the beginning, you're going to find some exciting new stuff.

And we're happy to have all of you with us. Some of my favorite Numenera-related moments of the last five years have been hearing from people saying that they never played an RPG before, but Numenera hooked them. Or, even more often, that Numenera was the game that



got them to start running games as a game master. Or various people telling us how much they appreciated that in Numenera they found representation for themselves. Whether they were women, people of color, people in the LGBTQ community, or others, they didn't find themselves excluded from the Ninth World. And perhaps even more important, they found something there that seemed like a piece of them. And really, how cool is that? How amazing that we can all look to a world a billion years in our future and find a bit of ourselves, no matter who we are.

As befits the expanding nature of Numenera, this game is no longer the work of one designer. As I said, there have been many voices involved and this book is no exception. Designers Sean Reynolds and Bruce Cordell and managing editor Shanna Germain have worked with me on much of the revisions here.

And in addition to my fine compatriots, and of course, Clarke, there's someone else who needs mentioning. As I wrote in the introduction to the original Numenera corebook, so much of what inspired Numenera comes from one of my favorite authors, Gene Wolfe. In *The Book of the New Sun*, Wolfe accomplishes with astonishing literary depth a work that at first seems to be a fantasy set in the past, but eventually we learn that it is, in fact, a science fiction story set in the far, far future. It is brilliant and well written, as full of creative ideas as anything I've ever read. You should read it, too. I was fortunate enough to study fiction under Wolfe, and I learned a great deal about writing. Thus, his work and his style will always be an inspiration to me, but never more than in Numenera, to be sure.

There are, of course, many inspirations for Numenera, so I created a bibliography for the game that you'll find in Appendix B (page 403). But long before you get there, why not give "The Amber Monolith" (page 6) a quick read? The story sets the tone for the setting and establishes a great many details about the Ninth World, the kinds of things characters will do in the game, and the amount of latitude GMs and players have to stretch their imaginations here.

Then read Chapter 1: Welcome to the Ninth World, which presents things a bit more plainly. After that, read Chapter 2: How to Play Numenera, and you'll pretty much have a good handle on the essentials of what you need to know. The rest—character creation, the full rules, the setting, the creatures, and so on—are just details, although hopefully they're fun and interesting details. (Here's a hint that I hope will really help: use How to Play Numenera [page 15] to learn and teach the essentials of the game, and use Chapter 8: Rules of the Game [page 100] as your reference tool when you have questions.)

If you're going to be a GM, read the Running the Game chapters (starting on page 309) carefully after reading the rules. There I've done my best to convey what the game's all about and provide some of my secrets to running a great game.

If you're experienced with Numenera, you'll want to take a look in particular at Chapter 4: Character Type (page 28) to see the many changes there (including player intrusions!). You'll also want to take a look at chapter 8 to see how the rules have been streamlined. And of course, look at the all-new adventures (starting on page 361). You'll note, though, that we didn't make a single change that alters the way most of the previously published Numenera books work. Your bestiaries, adventures, cyphers, artifacts, and more all still work with the rules here.



THE AMBER MONOLITH

The Catechism of Lore:
All glory to the originators of truth and understanding.
Praise to the innovators of steel and synth.
Praise to the shapers of flesh, of bone, and of mind.
Glory to those who re-sculpted the sustaining earth and the life-giving sun.
Praise to the senders of signals, who even now whisper into machine ears and give life to the inanimate.
Praise to those who traveled to the stars, and the realms beyond the stars.
All glory to the originators of truth and understanding.

Let us then resume the recitation of the Sacred Chronicle of High Father Calaval, Amber Pope and Founder of the Citadel of the Conduit and the Order of Truth, as written by his grandniece, Doroa of the Silent Song:

CHAPTER IX: WIND OF IRON
In which we learn the lesson of dedication.

Calaval climbed the hill, his pet thuman at his side. Crumbling bits of ancient brick turned to gravel with each step. At the top, he saw the amber obelisk the old woman had told him about. It stretched impossibly into the sky. The reddish-yellow light of the old, tired sun caught in its angles high above the plain of ruin. Even after all these eons, the machine at the heart of the obelisk still thrummed with power. Rings orbited the device, spinning with unearthly precision.

The thuman sat on its haunches, multi-jointed legs folding beneath it. It looked up at its master with narrow, black eyes. Red dust covered the furry crest atop its head.

Calaval set his heavy pack down next to him, exhausted. He bent down and brushed the dirt and dust away from it, and then from his clothes. Finally, he brushed the red dust from the thuman. "Don't worry, Feddik," he whispered. "You won't have to go inside. I'll have to do that alone."

Feddik's gaze, as always, made it seem as though he understood.

After a short rest, the pair resumed their journey. The people in the last village, Cloudridge, had called this the Plain of Brick. The lack of creativity did not surprise Calaval. A simple folk without a clave, they toiled in fields and herded shereh in the fertile valley to the south. But they'd given him food in exchange for a few baubles and shins he carried with him, and gave him a place to sleep, so it was difficult to feel anything but kindly toward them. Isolated villages with Aeon Priests often became fearful of strangers and dangerously insular. Once, he had come upon a community that had stumbled upon a buried facility from the prior worlds while digging a well. They had inadvertently released a noxious gas, transforming the entire population into maniacal, superhuman cannibals. Calaval had barely escaped alive.

Aeon Priests and their knowledge of numenera could prevent incidents like that. Calaval sought to join their ranks.

History taught that the ancient species that had dwelled upon earth before the Ninth World wielded great power. This power came from knowledge. It might not be possible for Calaval, the Aeon Priests, or anyone else on earth of the present to master all that knowledge, but surely there were secrets there, lost to the past, upon which they could build a future.

Calaval was certain of it. It just had to be discovered. Or rather, rediscovered. He had a plan on how to start.

A red cloud rose on the horizon, beyond the obelisk in the sky. Someone moving across the dry plain? Certainly something big if that was the case. Perhaps a herd. Perhaps a pack of raiders.

Feddik whined. The cloud loomed larger. No herd. No creature at all—a dust storm.

Calaval unpacked his desert filter and put it over his mouth. Then he fitted one over Feddik's nose and mouth. The beast pawed at it a few times, but accepted it quickly. They had been through dust storms together before.

The barren plain offered little shelter. Calaval kept walking, for there were few other options. The thuman stayed very close. The wall of onrushing red engulfed the obelisk and bore down upon the explorers like a monster. Through his filter, a scent caught the young man's attention. It jogged a memory. It triggered fear.

"Iron wind!"

Calaval looked around helplessly for some kind of shelter. But there was nowhere to hide. Not from the wind.

He would stand against the ravages of a sandstorm, even as it tore at his flesh, but the iron wind was something different altogether. It didn't just tear at flesh, it altered it. Within the wind lived particles crafted by the numenera far too tiny for a man to see. Calaval wasn't actually certain that "particles" was the right word. Creatures? Machines? It surpassed understanding.

His pack thudded on the ground. He rummaged through its contents while the thuman whined. Finally, he produced a small iron awl and a device that looked like it was meant to fit snugly in a person's clenched fist, if a person had six

fingers. In two places across its synth surface small wires lay exposed. Calaval crouched low.

A small glass panel on one side showed lighted symbols when he pressed a small stud where his thumb would fit. He didn't know what the symbols meant, but he knew that when a symbol that reminded him a bit of a bird in flight flashed, he needed to press the stud again. He glanced up and saw the roiling red cloud approach. Ignoring the sweat beading at the bridge of his nose, Calaval pushed the awl up into the cavity among the exposed wires near the bottom. The device shook a bit and there was a sizzling sound and the smell of burnt air. Suddenly, a droning noise engulfed Calaval and the nerves all along his flesh tingled unpleasantly. The awl slipped from his hand.

He clenched the device and pulled Feddik close. The thuman squirmed as the air around them shimmered. The hair on Calaval's arms rose and his skin prickled. The shimmering air smelled like a thunderstorm. He knew that it was a sort of halo around him. An aura. A field. He did not know, but he hoped, that the field would repel the dangerous, unseen things in the iron wind.

The approaching numenera storm did not offer him much time to wonder if it would work. The air was suddenly red, churning. The generator in his hand vibrated at a terrible frequency. It numbed his hand and then his arm. He concentrated on holding fast to it even though he could no longer feel it. He told himself that the billions of tiny shrieks in the wind were but his imagination.

The iron wind roiled around him, but it did not harm him.

With a whine that quickly became a howl, Feddik twisted from his grasp, pulling away. Calaval shouted without sound. The beast's leftmost limbs and side emerged from the shimmering distortion and entered the wind.

Calaval could not see what happened, nor could he still hear his companion. The thuman's body thrashed. Calaval grabbed a handful of Feddik's hair and held on as best he could while the device in his other hand numbed more and more of his body, weakening every muscle he had.

He closed his eyes.

The wind passed more quickly than any sandstorm would, but none too quickly for Calaval. The device dropped from his contorted, numb fist onto the stony ground. He collapsed, but was careful to pull Feddik atop him, rather than to fall upon the beast.

Feddik made a plaintive moan unlike anything Calaval had ever heard.

When he could manage it, Calaval lifted his head to look at his pet. Hundreds of tiny, wormlike tendrils flailed where Feddik's left two limbs had once been. The flesh around those legs, and all along the left side, looked and felt like metallic plates. Orifices that Calaval could not begin to understand erupted and closed on the beast's new portions. The left side of its face contorted with opening and closing eyes as if a crowd of smaller creatures had taken up residence in its head.

The wind had rewritten the thuman. Every bit of its flesh that the wind had touched, it changed.

Calaval pushed Feddik from atop him and stood. His stance was not steady, but he hardly noticed. He looked only at his longtime companion slowly writhing on the ground. Pain was evident in every fiber of the creature, new and old.

With a wail, Calaval drew the long knife at his side from its leather sheath.

He held his breath. Tears streamed down his face. He wanted to close his eyes, but he feared his aim would fail. So he stared down at Feddik. He watched his friend's eyes as he sliced into the nonmetallic part of its neck. Blood pooled around the creature. It died in silence.

Calaval did not curse the gods his mother had taught him, nor did he pray to them for mercy. It wasn't that he did not believe in vast, nonhuman intelligences living in the sky above—he had seen them orbiting in Yessai's telescope night after night—he just did not believe that they directed events. He believed in cause and effect. Not gods. Even the things inhabiting the datasphere were created, the result of someone's knowledge and understanding. He believed in the universe and its laws, set in motion billions of years earlier.

Just because the people of this world called it magic did not mean that he could not see beyond. That was what the Aeon Priests did, and—as hard as it was to accept—that is what he would do too. The numenera, as the priests called it, arose because of the intellect of the people of the prior worlds. It only seemed like miracles.

It only seemed like damnation.

CHAPTER X: ALONE

In which we learn the lesson of loss.

Alas, Chapter X is lost to us. It is believed by the council that it contained details of Calaval's mourning of his animal, and thus described his compassion and capacity for love. Likely it also detailed his fantastic intelligence (particularly his near-perfect recall) and his great wisdom, often being well prepared for contingencies that most others would never have foreseen.

Instead of its contents enriching us, let us contemplate on the significance of lost knowledge. No greater loss exists.

All glory to the originators of truth and understanding.

CHAPTER XI: ENTERING THE OBELISK

In which we learn the lesson of perseverance.

The Amber Monolith rose high above Calaval. Almost directly below the obelisk machine, the noise that the vast spinning mechanism produced drowned out the sounds of his own weary breath. The rotating rings moved and thrummed in a rhythm that heartened him. It was exactly what he was looking for. The old woman in Cloudridge had told the truth.

Calaval had only one last trick in his bag. The rest of its contents were mundane supplies, tools, and equipment. But he had saved one minor bit of numenera for just this moment. He pulled a wire mesh belt from the bag and affixed it around his waist. A metal device on the side of

the belt had some simple controls. Sometimes bits of technology like this—cyphers, most people called them—seemed like they were once parts of other, larger devices. Those who had come before him had just figured out a way to make use of them in a temporary, usually one-shot, damn-the-risks sort of way. Calaval knew a lot of the tricks. He didn't fully understand how they worked. No one he knew did. But he knew enough to try that switch, or cross those wires, or look for a readout with this symbol on it. Enough to sometimes get an effect he wanted. Something he could use. Like now.

Except the belt wasn't like that. The belt, Calaval felt sure, was intended for precisely the purpose for which he was about to use it. The only thing was the way it fit him. Obviously, it had been designed for a creature other than a human to wear it.

Calaval manipulated the controls. Soundlessly, his feet left the ground. Buoyant, he floated upward. The belt gently removed him from the grasp of gravity. He soared ever higher. The red brick landscape stretched below him. A warm wind tugged at his tanned leather clothing—his coat, his cap. It brushed against his worn, unshaven face.

Above him, the Amber Monolith drew closer, and he could see that, true to its name, the yellowish-brown structure offered a translucent surface in contrast to the silvery metallic mechanism at its heart. The obelisk offered a pointed top and bottom, but the center was a massive clockwork device with spinning rings orbiting around it at skewed but somehow extraordinarily precise angles.

As he got very close—likely hundreds of feet above the ground—the very lowest point of the hovering obelisk offered a metallic hatch to Calaval. Controlling his horizontal position presented some difficulties. Once again, the position of the belt's console suggested a wearer with a very different body type than his. His arm grew sore from reaching down and around to touch the tiny, glowing panels. The wind made things even harder. Calaval maneuvered toward the hatch, but then the breeze carried him off in the wrong direction again. The situation suggested how hard it might be to be a leaf in the breeze with an objective. Or even a butterfly. Calaval fumbled across the belt controls over and over, grasping at the hatch as he got close each time, and each time failing to reach it.

He began to worry about just how much power the belt had. How long a duration the gravity-nullifying effect offered.

His arms sore, each from stretching in different directions, in different awkward positions, he tried one last time, and finally maneuvered close enough to loop his arm through a handle on the hatch like a hook. The incoherent sound he made was a moan of exasperation and a cry of triumph at once.

Then the power of the belt gave out.

His own sudden weight jerked on his arm, wrenching it with a painful cracking noise. Agony shot down his shoulder and into his side. He grabbed his wrist with his free hand to make it harder for him to slip loose, but he almost blacked out from the pain.

Dangling from the bottom of the obelisk, he gasped for a breath he could not seem to get. His mind swam and he had to fight to keep a focus. Finally, because if he did not, he knew he would soon faint and fall, he let go of his own wrist and thrashed at the hatch to try to find a way to open it.

That task, at least, was surprisingly simple. An easily moved lever produced a sudden hiss, and then the hatch opened slowly. Calaval struggled to hang on to the moving hatch. When it stopped, he twisted his body around to look up into the opening it gave. It was dark, but a metallic ladder offered a way up through an amber shaft. With his free hand, he grabbed the bottom rung, but as he did his other arm wrenched free.

Again, terrific pain lanced down his body from shoulder to hip. He bit down on his tongue, which may have been the only thing that kept him conscious. His one arm dangled, useless. He had no idea how he would climb up the ladder.

He did the only thing he could think of, and pulled himself up as high as he could and kicked his leg up to hook it onto a rung. After a few tries, he succeeded. But when he did, his pack came loose and spilled its contents down the long way to the ground.

Thoughts of gods to curse once again came to his mind. Once again, he refused.

CHAPTER XII: HUNTED IN THE DARK

In which we learn the lesson of ingenuity.

The climb was long and agonizing. Every surface around Calaval vibrated slightly with a constant thrum that kept time with the spinning rings of the central heart of the monolith. Even the air seemed to shake, ever so slightly. Exactly the rhythm he had memorized. The one he had been looking for.

The top of the amber shaft offered light too dim to see, and Calaval had lost his glowglobes when his pack fell. With his good hand, he pulled a box of matches from his pocket and struck one. He confirmed that his immediate surroundings were safe, and then tossed the match away, collapsing on his side for an unknown time. He knew he had to push his arm back into its proper position. When he was a young man, he had seen his farmer father in a similar situation. He had had to help the man reset his shoulder.

Today Calaval would have to do it himself. He struggled to his feet. The pain made his head swim and he almost fell.

He felt the wall in the dim amber-hued light. He positioned his dislocated limb with his useful arm. He took three quick breaths. Not giving himself time to think about it, he rammed his body against the wall.

He shrieked and fell to the floor, writhing in agony.

He shrieked louder the second time. He passed out for a time—he did not know for how long—after realizing that that attempt didn't succeed either.

The third attempt had a similar result.

Finally, the fourth try gave him success. He did not pass out, but lay, resting in his own sweat, for what seemed about an hour. Once he recovered, he climbed once again to his feet. He stood steadier than before. With three deep breaths, he gathered himself mentally and physically. At last, he decided to explore.

He had come here for a reason, after all.

He found himself within a series of tunnels wending their way through vast, incomprehensible machines. Or perhaps, he considered, parts of one large machine. The latter, he determined, seemed most likely.

After burning through half his matches in his explorations, he found a pile of scrap synth in various sizes and colors. Mostly pipes, some of which were hollow, and others filled with cables and wires. Some were broken and jagged. Calaval found a hollow pipe of white synth about two feet long. He used his knife to cut his leather cap into strips. Poking a strip down into the pipe, he created a makeshift torch. It wouldn't last long, and it created a lot of smoke, but it would last longer than a match, and he had many strips of leather and cloth to use.

He climbed another shaft, and after wandering more, yet another. During each ascent his torch failed him and he had to relight it in the dim light once he reached the top. By the time he did this after the third climb, a loud staccato burst of sound startled him. He dropped the torch and the barely lit leather strip fell out.

The strange, irregular noise accompanied a flash of blue-white illumination. And again.

In these brief instances of light, he saw something move. A panel in one wall opened. More light from within. With a yawning hiss, a silhouette emerged. Clatter. Whir. Groan. Ancient limbs stretched to life. Metal, flesh, and wiring shambled in the form of a looming ape. Shaggy hair fluttered about it, as if each strand had its own prehensile life. White eyes glared from above a wide snout, symbols scrolling across them from side to side.

Calaval did not wait to see more. He leapt down the shaft, throwing himself from rung to rung, letting gravity take him at speed. His shoulder was still tender, but he ignored it.

A howl from above shook his bones. A dark shape blotted out the light from above.

He climbed down faster. Recklessly, he dropped down the shaft. Each drop risked pulling his arm from its socket, but terror ruled his behavior, not pain.

At the bottom of the shaft, he retraced his path through the winding maze of machine access conduits. He heard the thing land at the bottom behind him with a powerful grunt. He was sure that he could smell the beast too. Musk and machine oil mixed with something he couldn't place.

In the near darkness, he surged down the corridors, running a hand along the walls. The guardian thing that he had awoken was behind him, tracking him. By sound, perhaps? Calaval tried to be as quiet as he could, but soon gave up and erred on the side of speed. The thing could be following him by scent. It could even be following a heat trail of his own steps. He knew such things were possible.

Finally, he reached the pile of scrap tubing. The pipes, however, once he grasped a few, seemed far too light to be used as weapons. Instead, he grabbed one about his height and got moving again.

The bestial thing lumbered ever closer.

Calaval reached the shaft down and dropped the tube. Then he followed it down, again performing more of a barely controlled drop than a climbing descent.

The creature came down behind him. Closer this time, and gaining. Like Calaval, it was dropping down, using the rungs only occasionally. But its drops were longer, its movements more skilled.

Calaval reached the bottom of the shaft, but knew that the thing would reach him this time.

In fact, he counted on it.

He grasped the jagged length of synth tubing and thrust it up the shaft, one end braced against the floor.

Immediately, the beast dropped down upon the tube, its weight snapping it in two and knocking Calaval to the ground. Calaval's head struck the wall. He saw white in the darkness.

He found himself lying on the tremulous metal floor, unable to see. The sound of his own breaths was drowned out by another sound—rhythmic, wet, gurgling wheezes from not far away.

Calaval struck a match. In the light, he saw the ape-thing, with metal plates and fleshy parts integrated into a cobbled whole. There was nothing beautiful, careful, or elegant about the thing's construction. Even its organic portions did not seem to exist in any sort of natural relationship. Hairlike tendrils writhed across its body, each ending in a tiny sphincter mouth. And each tiny mouth whined in agony.

Through the center of its broad torso projected the broken tube. The momentum of the creature's descent had thrust the shaft more than three feet into its innards. The beast did not move. Each breath was labored and filled with fluid. Blood mixed with some white milky liquids pooled around its prone body.

Calaval's fear turned to remorse. Pity. He thought that the best thing he could do was bring the beast's suffering to an end. He wanted to give it a quick death.

He had no idea how to do that. His small knife, now in his hand, seemed ridiculously tiny and fragile for the task. He approached closer in the light of a new match, but the creature howled and struggled to move, causing it far more pain.

Calaval sighed. His thoughts drifted back to Feddik.

He sat on the floor. He stayed with the creature until it drew its last labored breath.

CHAPTER XIII: MACHINE'S HEART

In which we learn the lesson of comprehension and understanding.

In the mechanical parts of the dead guardian, Calaval had found some easily removed bits that, with some slight modifications and adaptations, he could use. If he hadn't dropped most of his tools with the rest of his gear, he perhaps could have achieved more.

Perhaps most important of them all were the glowing modules in the creature's eyes that, once removed, provided about as much light as his tiny torch. He knew that their illumination would fade, but in terms of his own needs, it would be long after it ceased being important.

With these new cyphers, he ascended back up through the obelisk's inner workings. He crept slowly now. Quietly. No more guardians appeared.

He stopped to rest, and regretted having no food.

He slept.



Steadily, he climbed the length of the massive monolith, until the quivering in every surface reached a powerful intensity. Reaching the top of the twenty-third shaft he had climbed, he determined that he had found the heart of the machine. At that level, he began to explore in earnest, carefully noting everything he found.

The glowing cylinder stretched twenty feet across, thirty feet high. Made of blue metal, it gave off a blue-white glow. It floated two feet from the ground and hovered two feet from the high ceiling. Nothing connected to it from all the machinery around it, but Calaval knew that it was connected by invisible fields of energy and force.

He wiped the sweat from his brow. The interior of the monolith was warm and humid. The air was stale. Stifling. He needed to get inside that cylinder.

He studied its surface for hours, looking for an access panel or a hidden hatch. He found nothing.

He slept again. Fitfully.

He searched the walls of the large chamber around the cylinder. He studied them for mechanisms that might open or provide access into it. Finally, he returned to the cylinder and scoured its vibrating, glowing surface again. At long last, he determined that there was a panel in its surface—a door—almost impossible to perceive. But there was no obvious way to open it.

Driven by this new discovery, he returned to the machine-filled perimeter of the room. He followed lines of conduits that ran across their surfaces, up to the ceiling and down to the floor. He ascertained that the controls of some important function lay behind a large metal panel, but when he tried to pry it off with his knife, its iron blade snapped.

He sat down on the floor, tired and hungry.

"Of course," he said aloud. He pulled out one of the components he had removed from the guardian creature. A weapon had been built into one of its arms, and he could coax its power for a different use of his own. Sliding open a tiny panel at one end of the device, he moved a tiny switch while pointing it at the panel. He saw nothing, but felt the fist-sized thing almost buck out of his hand.

He thrust it toward the panel, which buckled with a loud bang and folded like paper. Guiding it with the device as though it was an invisible fist, he pulled back and the panel tore from its mountings.

Calaval tossed the device to the floor next to it with satisfaction.

The newly exposed glass plate flared to life and light, showing symbols and diagrams. Calaval recognized almost nothing, but after a few tries, touching the screen and moving the symbols as though they were objects rather than bits of light, he quickly figured out how to activate the cylinder's door.

Turning to face it, he watched as the square section of the machine's heart simply faded from sight.

This revealed an empty but brightly lit interior.

Without hesitation, Calaval entered the cylinder.

And then stood elsewhere.

Without realization of transition or translation, Calaval had moved vast distances. As he had hoped. Long ago he had learned of this place.

High above him stretched a transparent dome. Through it, he looked up at the world, displayed before him as the center jewel of a vast night-sky panorama. Or rather, he reasoned, he looked down at the world. For he knew that he was in a citadel created in eons past by inhuman hands and placed high above, permanently in the sky.

Legends spoke of a citadel in the sky so high that it was barely visible from the ground. Calaval had seen it in Yessai's telescope. And the old woman in Cloudridge had given him the secret of how to access it.

Here, Calaval knew, were the true secrets of the numenera. Here he could perhaps—just perhaps—speak with one of the vast intelligences given life in the prior worlds. If he could make his questions understood, he could find the knowledge he sought to join the Aeon Priesthood, and perhaps even become a prominent member of their ranks.

Thus ends the second part of the Sacred Chronicle of the Amber Papacy. Little did Calaval know that the knowledge he would gain would make him not an Aeon Priest, but greatest among them: the high father, greatest of the Aeon Priests, and founder of the Order of Truth.

All glory to the originators of truth and understanding.
Praise to the innovators of steel and synth.
Praise to the shapers of flesh, of bone, and of mind.
Glory to those who re-sculpted the sustaining earth and the life-giving sun.
Praise to the senders of signals, who even now whisper into machine ears and give life to the inanimate.
Praise to those who traveled to the stars, and the realms beyond the stars.
All glory to the originators of truth and understanding.

PART 1:
GETTING STARTED



Chapter 1: Welcome to the Ninth World 12
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CHAPTER 1

WELCOME TO THE NINTH WORLD

The Ninth World is about discovering the wonders of the worlds that came before it, not for their own sake, but as the means to improve the present and build a future.

There have been eight previous worlds. You may refer to them as ages, aeons, epochs, or eras, but it's not wrong to think of each as its own individual world. Each former world stretched across vast millennia of time. Each played host to a species whose civilizations rose to supremacy but eventually died or scattered, disappeared or transcended. During the time that each world flourished, those who ruled it spoke to the stars, reengineered their physical bodies, and mastered form and essence, all in their own unique ways.

Each left behind remnants.

The Ninth World is built on the bones of the previous eight, and in particular the last four. Reach into the dust, and you'll find that each particle has been worked, manufactured, or grown, and then ground back into *drit*—a fine, artificial soil—by the relentless power of time. Look to the horizon—is that a mountain, or part of an impossible monument to the forgotten emperor of a lost people? Feel that subtle vibration beneath your feet and know that ancient engines—vast machines the size of kingdoms—still operate in the bowels of the earth.

The Ninth World is about discovering the wonders of the worlds that came before it, not for their own sake, but as the means to improve the present and build a future.

Each of the prior eight worlds, in its own way, is too distant, too different, too incomprehensible. Life today is too dangerous to dwell on a past that cannot be understood. The people excavate and study the marvels of the prior epochs just enough to help them survive in the world they have been given. They know that energies and knowledge are suspended invisibly in the air, that reshaped continents of iron and glass—below, upon, and above the earth—hold vast treasures, and that secret doorways to stars and other dimensions and realms provide power and secrets and death. They sometimes call it magic, and who are we to say that they're wrong?

More often, however, when they find leftovers of the old worlds—the devices, the vast machine complexes, the altered landscapes, the changes wrought upon living creatures by ancient energies, the invisible nano-spirits hovering in the air in clouds called the iron wind, the information transmitted into the so-called datasphere, and the remnants of visitors from other dimensions and alien planets—they call these things the *numenera*. In the Ninth World, the numenera is both a boon and a bane. It makes life very different from any other time on Earth.

In a southern part of the vast, singular continent of the Ninth World lies a cluster of settled lands collectively called the Steadfast. Although each of the kingdoms and principalities of the Steadfast has its own ruler, a leader known as the Amber Pope guides the Order of Truth, an organization of Aeon Priests that commands a great deal of respect in the region. Thus, the Amber Pope is likely the most powerful ruler in the Steadfast even though he does not govern a single square foot of land. The Order of Truth reveres the people of the past and their knowledge on a quasi-religious level of adoration and faith. It is a religion devoted to science.

Deeper in the wilds lies a region called the Beyond, where villages and communities are isolated and rare. Here, Aeon Priests still study the secrets of the past, but they do so cloistered in remote claves. These priests do

Iron wind, page 135

Numenera, page 13

Steadfast, page 136

Amber Pope, page 215

Order of Truth, page 215

Beyond, page 169

Aeon Priest, page 264

Claves—small cloistered groups of Aeon Priests in the Beyond—can offer protection and resources for the communities that spring up around them. However, claves sometimes become so insular and focused on their work that they end up putting the community at risk with their strange experiments.



little more than pay lip service to the Amber Pope, if that, and are not considered part of the Order of Truth. Like the regions in which they live, and the claves in which they work, they are isolated, islands unto themselves.

THE PEOPLE OF THE NINTH WORLD

In the youth of an age, people use the resources they have on hand, coupled with whatever understanding of their world they can master, to carve out a life for themselves. In the Ninth World, the resources are the numenera—the detritus of the prior eras—and the people's understanding of these resources is crude and incomplete. The Aeon Priests possess just enough discernment and knowledge to suggest possible uses for things, but so much remains to be discovered. Even the creatures and plants of the Ninth World are strange by-products of the prior ages; the past left behind flora, fauna, and machines, some designed by lore or nature, others transplanted from distant stars or dimensions.

The people of the Ninth World clothe themselves in newly spun fabrics but weave the artifacts of the past into each garment. They forge armor, weapons, and tools from materials recovered from ancient structures and devices. Some of these materials are metals, but others are (or appear to be) glass, stone, bone, flesh, or substances that defy categorization and understanding.

Those who risk the mysterious dangers to recover the relics of the past provide a valuable service. Typically these brave souls—warrior Glaives, science-wielding Nanos, and wily Jacks—bring their findings to the Aeon Priests, who use the artifacts to fashion tools, weapons, and other boons for the growing civilization. As time passes, more individuals learn to use the numenera, but it still remains a mystery to most people.

Who, then, are the people of the Ninth World? Most are humans, although not all that call themselves human truly are. There are likewise the abhumans: mutants, crossbreeds, genetically engineered, and their offspring. And then there are the visitants, who are not native to the earth but who now call the Ninth World home, and who have no more understanding of the past (even their own) than anyone else.

THE NUMENERA

People with knowledge of the relics of older worlds divide them into three types: artifacts, cyphers, and oddities.

Abhumans:
Chirog, page 229
Margr, page 240
Murden, page 243
Sathosh, page 251
Yovok, page 261

Visitants:
Lattimors, page 396
Varjellen, page 394

Artifacts, page 289
Cyphers, page 272
Oddities, page 304

For more information on the Ninth World, see Part 4: The Setting (page 129). Game masters will want to refer to Chapter 22: Realizing the Ninth World (page 350).

ARTIFACTS are large devices that typically can be used more than once to produce the same result. An artifact might be a belt that creates a shield of invisible force to protect the wearer or a flying skiff that carries people and cargo from one place to another. The term is almost always used for an item that has an obvious purpose—a weapon, a defense, a mode of transport, a means of communication or learning new information, a means of obtaining food or other necessities, and so forth. Artifacts make their users more powerful, or they make life easier or better.

CYPHERS are usually small, minor devices that most characters can coax a single effect from before they are depleted and become curiosities or decorations. They might include a quick injection designed to repair physical damage in a living creature or a handheld object that, when manipulated properly, becomes a weapon that explodes with tremendous force. However, cyphers are dangerous when gathered together because they create radiation and harmonic frequencies that are inimical to human life.

Numenera items such as artifacts and cyphers add capabilities to the player character's repertoire, but they are the purview of the game master. Very rarely does a player choose these items; they are discovered while exploring ancient ruins or overcoming other challenges of the Ninth World.

ODDITIES are the relics that are neither cyphers nor artifacts. They serve no obvious purpose but have strange functions that are at least curious, if not downright entertaining. Examples include a piece of glass in a metal frame that shows peculiar images or a box with three bells that ring at unpredictable times. Not everything from the prior worlds can be understood. In fact, much of it cannot.



Numenera Discovery is a stand-alone corebook; you don't need *Numenera Destiny* to play. However, the two are designed to work together, so while it isn't necessary to look up the referenced items in *Numenera Destiny*, doing so can provide additional information to enhance and deepen character creation and gameplay.

LOOKING FOR

If another Numenera supplement references a page number in the corebook, this symbol shows where to find that reference in *Numenera Discovery*.

Some content that was in the original corebook has been removed from *Numenera Discovery* and is now offered in a free supplement that you can download at montecookgames.com

LOOKING AT THE NINTH WORLD FROM THE 21ST CENTURY

The Ninth World is a science-fantasy setting approximately a billion years in the future. The people of the world dwell amid the flotsam of impossible ultratech of eight prior civilizations and call it magic. Unimaginably huge machines lie beneath the earth, and satellites orbit high above, transmitting a web of data and free energy. Nanotech, gravitic technology, genetic engineering, spatial warping, and superdense polymers allowed the inhabitants of the previous worlds to reshape the planet. Mass and energy were theirs to command.

In many ways, the Ninth World is a medieval fantasy setting without the historicity. When people who haven't done a lot of homework on the dark ages run a traditional fantasy game, they often insert modern sensibilities or developments such as democracy, hygiene, or matches. But in the Ninth World, these things, and more, make sense. Characters can have rain slickers, ink pens, zippers, and plastic bags, all left over from the prior eras (or fashioned from leavings of the past). They can understand how illnesses are transmitted or how socialism works. They can know that the earth revolves around the sun and be aware of other "anachronistic" bits of knowledge.

On the other hand, characters in Numenera don't refer to weapons as "guns" or to vehicles as "cars." The technology in the Ninth World is too advanced and too alien for such terminology to have endured. Using 21st-century terms for weapons and vehicles is as inappropriate as using medieval terms. The numenera is weird—much of it wasn't created by humans or for humans. It isn't designed or presented in any way that might be familiar to the players or the characters. Only through experimentation, player insight, and character skill can the player characters (PCs) identify, and possibly use, what they find.

Perhaps even more important, the artifacts, cyphers, and oddities that characters use probably aren't serving their original purpose. The explosive cypher that a character tosses at an enemy might have been the power source for a vehicle. The force field the enemy uses to protect herself from the blast might have been designed to contain the radiation of the fuel rods in a miniature nuclear reactor.

Welcome to the Ninth World, where every discovery might save you—or kill you. But you won't know until you try.

CHAPTER 2

HOW TO PLAY NUMENERA

The rules of Numenera are quite straightforward at their heart, as all of gameplay is based around a few core concepts.

This chapter provides a brief explanation of how to play the game, and it's useful for learning the game. Once you understand the basic concepts, you'll likely want to reference Chapter 8: Rules of the Game for a more in-depth treatment.

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.

The game master (GM) sets a difficulty for any given task. There are 10 degrees of difficulty. Thus, the difficulty of a task can be rated on a scale of 1 to 10.

Each difficulty has a target number associated with it. 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.

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 *easing the difficulty by one step* (or just *easing the difficulty*, which assumes it's eased by one step). If she is specialized in climbing, she turns a difficulty 6 climb into a difficulty 4 climb. This is called *easing the difficulty by two steps*. Decreasing the difficulty of a task can also be called simply *easing a task*. Some situations increase, or *hinder*, the difficulty of a task. If a task is hindered, it increases the difficulty by one step.

Skills, page 27

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).

Chapter 8: Rules of the Game, page 100

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

Trained, page 101

Difficulty, page 102

Specialized, page 101

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 ease a task's difficulty by more than two steps.

Asset, page 103

You can also ease the difficulty of a given task by applying Effort. (Effort is described in more detail in Chapter 8: Rules of the Game.)

Effort, page 23

To sum up, three things can ease a task's difficulty: skills, assets, and Effort.

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).

You don't earn XP for killing foes or overcoming standard challenges in the course of play. Discovery is the soul of Numenera.

If you can ease a task so that its difficulty is reduced to 0, you automatically succeed and don't need to make 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.

Special Rolls, page 18

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.

"I love the feeling of defeating someone just by using my words. With a threat and a cold look, I can scare a guard into letting me pass. And it saves me having to clean their blood off my knives."
~Dalk the Ravenous

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.

LOOKING FOR
Defense roll, see page 17

Using skills, assets, and Effort, you can ease 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 ease 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 in Chapter 8: Rules of the Game).

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.

It's worth noting that players make all die rolls. If a character attacks a creature, the player

GLOSSARY

Game Master (GM): The player who doesn't run a character, but instead guides the flow of the story (and runs all the NPCs).

Nonplayer Character (NPC): Characters run by the GM. Think of them as the minor characters in the story, or the villains or opponents. This includes any kind of creature as well as people.

Party: A group of player characters (and perhaps some NPC allies).

Player Character (PC): A character run by a player rather than the GM. Think of them as the main characters in the story.

Player: The players who run characters in the game.

Session: A single play experience. Usually lasts a few hours. Sometimes one adventure can be accomplished in a session. More often, one adventure is multiple sessions.

Adventure: A single portion of the campaign with a beginning and an end. Usually defined at the beginning by a goal put forth by the PCs and at the end by whether or not they achieve that goal.

Campaign: A series of sessions strung together with an overarching story (or linked stories) with the same characters. Often, but not always, a campaign involves a number of adventures.

Character: Anything that can act in the game. While this includes PCs and human NPCs, it also includes creatures, aliens, mutants, automatons, animate plants, and so on. The word "creature" is usually synonymous.



makes an attack roll. If a creature attacks a character, the player makes a defense roll.

The damage dealt by an attack is not determined by a roll—it's 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 ease attack rolls 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.

BONUSES

Rarely, an ability or piece of equipment does not ease a task's difficulty but instead adds a bonus to the die roll. Bonuses always add together, so if you get a +1 bonus from two different sources, you have a +2 bonus. If you get enough bonuses to add up to a +3 bonus for a task, treat it as an asset: instead of adding the bonus to your roll, you ease the task. Therefore, you never add more than +1 or +2 to a die roll.

Armor, page 109

Combat will be an important part of Numenera for some people. However, this is your choice; Numenera doesn't have to be a game about combat.

Although the Ninth World has many quasi-historical weapons and armor like swords, spears, and chainmail, it also has unique items like razor rings, which are bladed metal throwing weapons.

For more on the types of weapons that your characters can use, see Chapter 7: Equipment (page 93).



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 them, 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.

For more information on special rolls and how they affect combat and other interactions, see page 104.

In combat (and only in combat), if you roll a natural 17 or 18 on your attack roll, you add 1 or 2 additional 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.

RANGE AND SPEED

Distance, page 106

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

VERY LONG DISTANCE is anything greater than long distance but less than 500 feet (150 m) or so. (Beyond that range, distances are always specified—1,000 feet [300 m], a mile [1.5 km], and so on.)

People of the Ninth World have units of measurement very different from our own. When converting these to U.S. standard and metric units, we've used approximations rather than precise conversions for ease of use.

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. Very long distance is really far 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. 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 it's more than 50 feet (15 m) away because that distance would require a long move.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Experience points (XP) are rewards given to players when the GM intrudes on the story with a new and unexpected challenge (an event called a GM intrusion). 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 they do so, they don't get the 2 XP from the GM, and they must also spend 1 XP that they already have. If the player has no XP to spend, they 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.

Experience points are used primarily for character advancement (for details, see Chapter 3: Creating Your Character), but a player can also spend 1 XP to reroll any die roll and take the better of the two rolls.

GM intrusion, page 123

Nano, page 36

Onslaught, page 40

Abhuman, page 13

Chapter 3: Creating Your Character, page 22



In Numenera, 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.

CYPHERS

Cypher, page 272

As explained in Chapter 1: Welcome to the Ninth World, cyphers are a type of numenera that have a single minor use. A character can carry cyphers and use them during the game. You can't bear many cyphers at a time because a large number of these weird items emit radiation or dangerous chemicals that don't mix well. Gathering cyphers together in one place is extraordinarily unhealthy.

Characters will find new cyphers frequently in the course of play, so players shouldn't hesitate to use their cypher abilities. Because cyphers are always different, the characters will always have new special powers to try.

Most cyphers are as simple to use as swallowing a pill, flipping a switch on a handheld device, or throwing a bomb. Some are more complex, with multiple buttons, switches, knobs, keypads, touchscreen controls, wires, and so on, and may take longer to understand, but otherwise they are still one-use items.

OTHER DICE

A d6 is used most often for recovery rolls (page 111) and to determine the effects of numenera devices (Part 6, page 269).

In addition to a d20, you'll need a d6 (a six-sided die). Rarely, you'll need to roll a number between 1 and 100 (often called a d100 or d% roll), which you can do by rolling a d20 twice, using the last digit of the first roll as the "tens" place and the last digit of the second roll as the "ones" place. For example, rolling a 17 and a 9 gives you 79, rolling a 3 and an 18 gives you 38, and rolling a 20 and a 10 gives you 00 (also known as 100). If you have a d10 (a ten-sided die), you can use it instead of the d20 to roll numbers between 1 and 100.



LOOKING FOR

Might, see page 22
Speed, see page 22
Intellect, see page 22
Stat pools, see page 22
Edge, see page 23

THERE'S MORE TO EXPLORE

Numenera is a game in which player characters explore the ruins of aeons past to gather amazing treasures and help build a new future for a world struggling in darkness. The original *Numenera* corebook delivered well on the first part, and *Numenera Discovery* is an updated version of that book. Here you have the rules for three character types (Glaive, Jack, and Nano), exploration, using ancient technology, and combat, as well as advice about how to run a campaign set in the Ninth World.

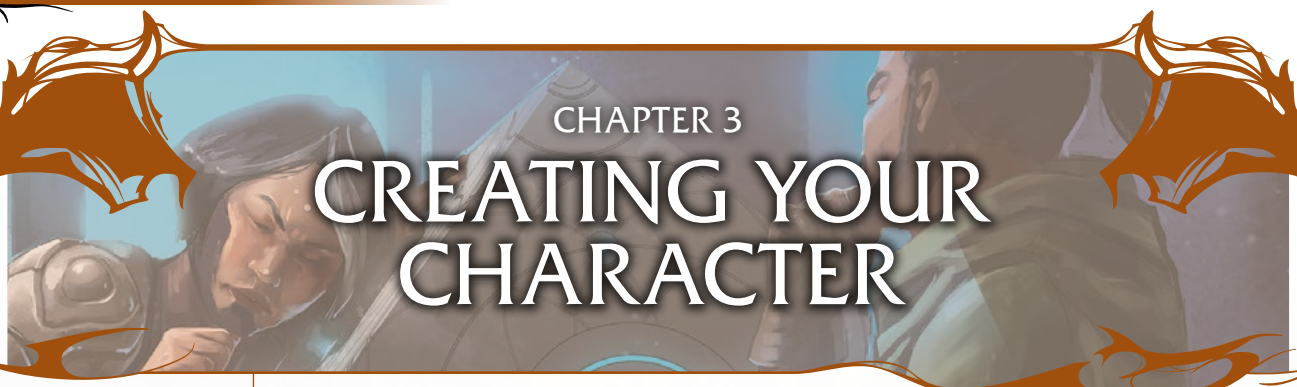
Numenera Destiny allows you to take the game in a direction that we only touched on before. The people of the Ninth World are locked in a medieval-like state, a world of struggle and danger, and they are often suffering in the shadow of the prior worlds' wonders. *Numenera Destiny* allows you to build adventures and campaigns in which players don't just explore the wonders of the past but use them to help lift the Ninth World out of darkness. You can make the world a better place. Help a community defend itself from abhumans or the iron wind. Create centers of learning or trade. Innovate, build, and protect. Manage an entire community and help it prosper and grow—or simply create a cool base or vehicle for your PC group. *Numenera Destiny* will allow you to take what you discover and make your mark on history as someone who elevated the Ninth World into the future.

If you're ready for more, we've published a lot of books sure to appeal to your interests. If you want more creatures, there's the *Ninth World Bestiary* and *Ninth World Bestiary 2*. For more weird technology, read the *Technology Compendium: Sir Arthour's Guide to the Numenera*. For more descriptions of places and people, there's the *Ninth World Guidebook* and *Torment: Tides of Numenera—The Explorer's Guide*. For advice on campaigns underwater, in space, and other dimensions, we have *Into the Deep, Into the Night*, and *Into the Outside*. If you want a campaign's worth of adventures, try *The Devil's Spine* or *Jade Colossus: Ruins of the Prior Worlds*. For fiction about the Ninth World, we've published many short stories and two full-length novels, *The Poison Eater* and *The Night Clave*. Altogether, we've published more than 60 supplements and accessories, and the Ninth World has spawned a critically acclaimed hit computer game, board games, an excellent short film, and a line of novels. And all of that just scratches the surface of Numenera.

PART 2:
CHARACTERS



Chapter 3: Creating Your Character 22
Chapter 4: Character Type 28
Chapter 5: Character Descriptor 53
Chapter 6: Character Focus 58
Chapter 7: Equipment 93



CHAPTER 3

CREATING YOUR CHARACTER

This section explains how to create characters to play in a Numenera game. This involves a series of decisions that will shape your character, so the more you understand what kind of character you want to play, the easier character creation will be. The process involves understanding the values of three game statistics and choosing three aspects that determine your character's capabilities.

CHARACTER STATS

Every player character has three defining characteristics, which are typically called "statistics" or "stats." These stats are Might, Speed, and Intellect. They are broad categories that cover many different but related aspects of a character.

Might could be thought of as Might/Health because it governs how strong you are and how much physical punishment you can take.

MIGHT: Might defines how strong and durable your character is. The concepts of strength, endurance, constitution, hardiness, and physical prowess are all folded into this one stat. Might isn't relative to size; instead, it's an absolute measurement. An elephant has more Might than the mightiest tiger, which has more Might than the mightiest rat, which has more Might than the mightiest spider.

Might governs actions from forcing doors open to walking for days without food to resisting disease. It's also the primary means of determining how much damage your character can sustain in a dangerous situation. Physical characters, tough characters, and characters interested in fighting should focus on Might.

Speed could be thought of as Speed/Agility because it governs your overall swiftness and reflexes.

SPEED: Speed describes how fast and physically coordinated your character is. The stat embodies quickness, movement, dexterity, and reflexes. Speed governs such divergent actions as dodging attacks, sneaking around quietly, and throwing a ball accurately. It helps determine whether you can move farther on your turn. Nimble, fast, or sneaky characters will want good Speed stats, as will those interested in ranged combat.

Intellect could be thought of as Intellect/Personality because it governs both intelligence and charisma.

INTELLECT: This stat determines how smart, knowledgeable, and likable your character is. It includes intelligence, wisdom, charisma, education, reasoning, wit, willpower, and charm. Intellect governs solving puzzles, remembering facts, telling convincing lies, and using mental powers. Characters interested in communicating effectively, being learned scholars, and wielding the numenera should stress their Intellect stat.

POOL, EDGE, AND EFFORT

Each of your stats has two components: your Pool and your Edge. Your Pool represents your raw, innate 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, you apply Effort.

POOL

Your Pool is the most basic measurement of a stat. Comparing the Pools of two creatures will give you a general sense of which creature is superior in that stat. For example, a character who has a Might Pool of 16 is stronger (in a basic sense) than a character who has a Might Pool of 12. Most characters start with a Pool of 9 to 12 in most stats—that's the average range.

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. For example, physical damage from a sword reduces your Might Pool, a poison that makes you clumsy reduces your Speed Pool, and a mental blast reduces your Intellect Pool. You can also spend points from one of your stat Pools to decrease a task's difficulty (see Effort, next page). You can rest to regain lost points from a stat Pool (see Recovering Points in a Pool), and some special abilities or numenera might allow you to recover lost points quickly.

Recovering Points in a Pool, page 111

Every character starts the game at the first tier. Tier is a measurement of power, toughness, and ability. Characters can advance up to the sixth tier.

EDGE

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

For example, let's say you have a mental blast ability, and activating it costs 1 point from your Intellect Pool. Subtract your Intellect Edge from the activation cost, and the result is how many points you must spend to use the mental blast. If using your Edge reduces the cost to 0, you can use the ability for free.

Your Edge can be different for each stat. For example, you could have a Might Edge of 1, a Speed Edge of 1, and an Intellect Edge of 0. You'll always have an Edge of at least 1 in one stat. Your Edge for a stat reduces the cost of spending points from that stat Pool, but not from other Pools. Your Might Edge reduces the cost of spending points from your Might Pool, but it doesn't affect your Speed Pool or Intellect Pool. Once a stat's Edge reaches 3, you can apply one level of Effort (see below) for free.

A character who has a low Might Pool but a high Might Edge has the potential to perform Might actions consistently better than a character who has a Might Edge of 0. The high Edge will reduce the cost of spending points from the Pool, which means they'll have more points available to spend on applying Effort.

It may help to think of Edge as a negative number—it's something you subtract from the cost of spending points from your Pool.

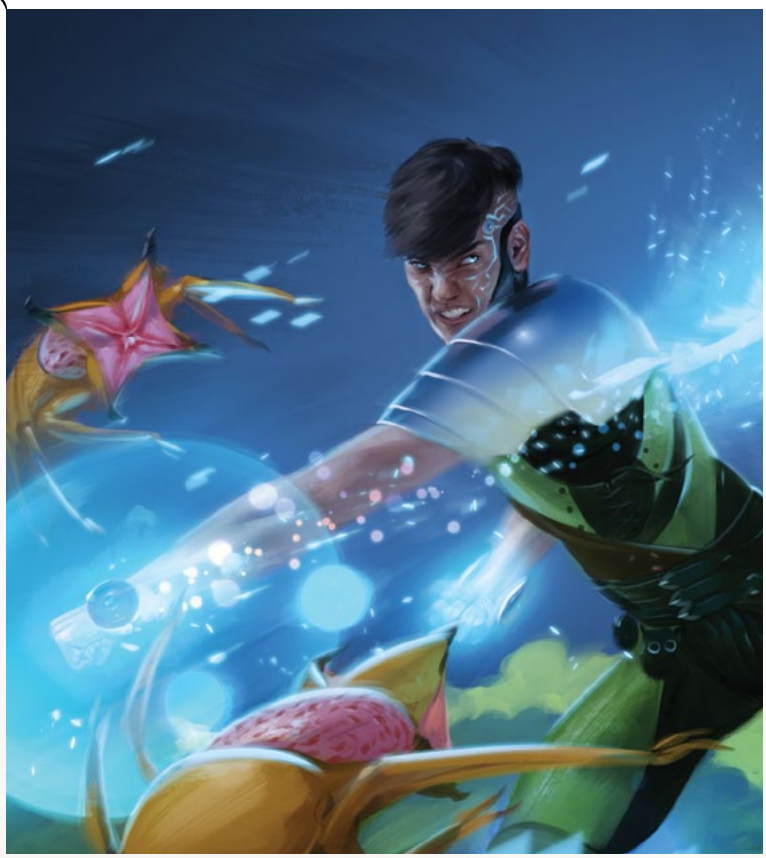
EFFORT

When your character really needs to accomplish a task, you can apply Effort to reduce the difficulty of a task (also called easing a task). For a beginning character, applying Effort requires spending 3 points from the stat Pool appropriate to the action. Thus, if your character tries to dodge an attack (a Speed roll) and wants to increase the chance for success, you can apply Effort by spending 3 points from your Speed Pool. Using Effort eases the task by one step. This is called applying one level of Effort.

Ease, page 15

Your stat Pools, as well as your Effort and Edge, are determined by the character type, descriptor, and focus that you choose. Within those guidelines, however, you have a lot of flexibility in how you develop your character.





For information on additional types of damage, see Damage Track, page 110, and Special Damage, page 112.

Flash, page 40

MAKING ATTACKS

When applying Effort to melee attacks, you have the option of spending points from either your Might Pool or your Speed Pool. When making ranged attacks, you may spend points only from your Speed Pool. This reflects that with melee you sometimes use brute force and sometimes use finesse, but with ranged attacks, it's always about careful targeting.

You don't have to apply Effort if you don't want to. If you choose to apply Effort to a task, you must do it before you attempt the roll—you can't roll first and then decide to apply Effort if you rolled poorly.

Applying more Effort can lower a task's difficulty further: each additional level of Effort eases the task by another step. Applying one level of Effort eases the task by one step, applying two levels eases the task by two steps, and so on. Each level of Effort after the first costs only 2 points from the stat Pool instead of 3. So applying two levels of Effort costs 5 points (3 for the first level plus 2 for the second level), applying three levels costs 7 points (3 plus 2 plus 2), and so on.

Every character has an Effort score, which indicates the maximum number of levels of Effort that can be applied to a roll. A beginning (first-tier) character has an Effort of 1, meaning you can apply only one level of Effort to a roll. A more experienced character has a higher Effort score and can apply more levels of Effort to a roll. For example, a character who has an Effort of 3 can apply up to three levels of Effort to ease a task.

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. To increase your chance for success, you decide to apply one level of Effort, which will ease the task by one step. Normally, that would cost 3 points from your Speed Pool. However, if you have a Speed Edge of 2, you subtract that from the cost. Thus, applying Effort to the roll costs only 1 point from your Speed Pool.

What if you applied two levels of Effort to the Speed roll instead of just one? That would ease the task by two steps. Normally, it would cost 5 points from your Speed Pool, but after subtracting your Speed Edge of 2, it costs only 3 points.

Once a stat's Edge reaches 3, you can apply one level of Effort for free. For example, if you have a Speed Edge of 3 and you apply one level of Effort to a Speed roll, it costs you 0 points from your Speed Pool. (Normally, applying one level of Effort would cost 3 points, but you subtract your Speed Edge from that cost, reducing it to 0.)

Skills and other advantages also ease a task, and you can use them in conjunction with Effort. In addition, your character might have special abilities or equipment that allow you to apply Effort to accomplish a special effect, such as knocking down a foe with an attack or affecting multiple targets with a power that normally affects only one.

EFFORT AND DAMAGE

Instead of applying Effort to ease your attack, you can apply Effort to increase the amount of damage you inflict with an attack. For each level of Effort you apply in this way, you inflict 3 additional points of damage. This works for any kind of attack that inflicts damage, whether a sword, a crossbow, a mind blast, or something else.

When using Effort to increase the damage of an area attack, such as the explosion created by a Nano's Flash ability, you inflict 2 additional points of damage instead of 3 points. However, the additional points are dealt to all targets in the area. Further, even if one or more of the targets in the area resist the attack, you still inflict 1 point of damage to them.

MULTIPLE USES OF EFFORT AND EDGE

If your Effort is 2 or higher, you can apply Effort to multiple aspects of a single action. For example, if you make an attack, you can apply Effort to your attack roll and apply Effort to increase the damage.

The total amount of Effort you apply can't be higher than your Effort score. For example, if your Effort is 2, you can apply up to two levels of Effort. You could apply one level to an attack roll and one level to its damage, two levels to the attack and no levels to the damage, or no levels to the attack and two levels to the damage.

"I am a [fill in an adjective here] [fill in a noun here] who [fill in a verb here]."

You can use Edge for a particular stat only once per action. For example, if you apply Effort to a Might attack roll and to your damage, you can use your Might Edge to reduce the cost of one of those uses of Effort, not both. If you spend 1 Intellect point to activate your mind blast and one level of Effort to ease the attack roll, you can use your Intellect Edge to reduce the cost of one of those things, not both.

STAT EXAMPLES

A beginning character is fighting a creature called a broken hound. She stabs her spear at the broken hound, which is a level 2 creature and thus has a target number of 6. The character stands atop a boulder and strikes downward at the beast, and the GM rules that this helpful tactic is an asset that eases the attack by one step (to difficulty 1). That lowers the target number to 3. Attacking with a spear is a Might action; the character has a Might Pool of 11 and a Might Edge of 0. Before making the roll, she decides to apply a level of Effort to ease the attack. That costs 3 points from her Might Pool, reducing the Pool to 8. But they appear to be points well spent. Applying the Effort lowers the difficulty from 1 to 0, so no roll is needed—the attack automatically succeeds.

Another character is attempting to convince a guard to let him into a private office to speak to an influential noble. The GM rules that this is an Intellect action. The character is third tier and has an Effort of 3, an Intellect Pool of 13, and an Intellect Edge of 1. Before making the roll, he must decide whether to apply Effort. He can choose to apply one, two, or three levels of Effort, or apply none at all. This action is important to him, so he decides to apply two levels of Effort, easing the task by two steps. Thanks to his Intellect Edge, applying the Effort costs only 4 points from his Intellect Pool (3 points for the first level of Effort plus 2 points for the second level minus 1 point for his Edge). Spending those points reduces his Intellect Pool to 9. The GM decides that convincing the guard is a difficulty 3 (demanding) task with a target number of 9; applying two levels of Effort reduces the difficulty to 1 (simple) and the target number to 3. The player rolls a d20 and gets an 8. Because this result is at least equal to the target number of the task, he succeeds. However, if he had not applied some Effort, he would have failed because his roll (8) would have been less than the task's original target number (9).

CHARACTER TIERS AND BENEFITS

Every character starts the game at the first tier. Tier is a measurement of power, toughness, and ability. Characters can advance up to the sixth tier. As your character advances to higher tiers, you gain more abilities, increase your Effort, and can improve a stat's Edge or increase a stat. Generally speaking, even first-tier characters are quite capable. It's safe to assume that they've already got some experience under their belt. This is not a "zero to hero" progression, but rather an instance of competent people refining and honing their capabilities and knowledge. Advancing to higher tiers is not really the goal of Numenera characters, but rather a representation of how characters progress in a story.

To progress to the next tier, characters earn experience points (XP) by exploring new places and discovering new things—the Ninth World is about discovery of the past and what it means for the future. Experience points have many uses, and one use is to purchase character benefits. After your character purchases four character benefits, they go up to the next tier.

Broken hound, page 226

Skills are a broad category of things your character can learn and accomplish. For a list of sample skills, see the Skills sidebar on page 27.

Character advancement, page 128





CHARACTER DESCRIPTOR, TYPE, AND FOCUS

Character descriptor, page 53

To create your character, you build a simple statement that describes them. The statement takes this form: "I am a [fill in an adjective here] [fill in a noun here] who [fill in a verb here]."

Thus: "I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*." For example, you might say, "I am a Rugged Glaive who Controls Beasts" or "I am a Charming Nano who Focuses Mind Over Matter."

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

Character focus, page 58

The noun is your character *type*.

The verb is called your *focus.*

Even though character type is in the middle of the sentence, that's where we'll start this discussion. (Just as in a sentence, the noun provides the foundation.)

Character type is the core of your character. In some roleplaying games, it might be called your character class. Your type helps determine your character's place in the world and relationship with other people in the setting. It's the noun of the sentence "I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*."

Onslaught, page 40

Glaive, page 28
Jack, page 44
Nano, page 36

You can choose from three character types: Glaive, Jack, and Nano.

LOOKING FOR
Skills, page 27

Descriptor defines your character—it flavors everything you do. Your descriptor places your character in the situation (the first adventure, which starts the campaign) and helps provide motivation. It's the adjective of the sentence "I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*."

You can choose from many character descriptors.

Focus is what your character does best. Focus gives your character specificity and provides interesting new abilities that might come in handy. Your focus also helps you understand how you relate with the other player characters in your group. It's the verb of the sentence "I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*."

There are many character foci to choose from.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

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

SKILLS

Sometimes your character gains training in a specific skill or task. For example, your focus might mean that you're trained in sneaking, in climbing and jumping, or in social interactions. Other times, your character can choose a skill to become trained in, and you can pick a skill that relates to any task you think you might face.

The game has no definitive list of skills. However, the following list offers ideas:

Astronomy	History	Philosophy
Balancing	Identifying	Pickpocketing
Carrying	Initiative	Repairing
Climbing	Intimidation	Riding
Crafting numenera*	Jumping	Salvaging numenera*
Deceiving	Leatherworking	Smashing
Economics	Literature	Sneaking
Escaping	Lockpicking	Swimming
Geography	Metalworking	Understanding numenera*
Geology	Perception	Woodworking
Healing	Persuasion	

* This skill requires detailed knowledge. If you aren't trained or specialized in this skill, you have an inability in the skill. See Inability, page 101.

You could choose a skill that incorporates more than one of these areas (interacting might include deceiving, intimidation, and persuasion) or is a more specific version of one (hiding might be sneaking when you're not moving). You could also make up more general, professional skills, such as baker, sailor, or lumberjack. If you want to choose a skill that's not on this list, it's probably best to run it past the GM first, but in general, the most important aspect is to choose skills that are appropriate to your character.

Remember that if you gain a skill that you're already trained in, you become specialized in that skill, which eases related tasks by two steps instead of one. Because skill descriptions can be nebulous, determining whether you're trained or specialized might take some thinking. For example, if you're trained in lying and later gain an ability that grants you skill with all social interactions, you become specialized in lying and trained in all other types of interactions. Being trained three times in a skill is no better than being trained twice (in other words, specialized is as good as it gets).

Only skills gained through character type abilities (such as the Glaive's fighting moves), focus abilities, or other rare instances allow you to become skilled with attack or defense tasks.

If you gain a special ability through your type, your focus, or some other aspect of your character, you can choose it in place of a skill and become trained or specialized in that ability. For example, if you have a mind blast, when it's time to choose a skill to be trained in, you can select your mind blast as your skill. That would ease the task every time you used it. Each ability you have counts as a separate skill for this purpose. You can't select "all mind powers" or "all esoteries" as one skill and become trained or specialized in such a broad category.

action is 2 points from their Intellect Pool (1 point for the bolt of force 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. For example, the cost might be stated as "2+ Intellect points." That means you can spend more points or more levels of Effort to improve the ability further.

Many special abilities grant a character the option to perform 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. It also might provide more information about when or how you perform the action.

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, ease Speed defense rolls, or add 2 points of fire damage to your weapon damage. These abilities 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, which isn't an action) or happen as part of another action (such as adding fire damage to your weapon damage, which happens as part of your attack action). If a special ability is an enabler, the end of the ability's description says "Enabler" to remind you.



CHAPTER 4

CHARACTER TYPE

In some roleplaying games, character type might be called your character class.

Character type is the core of your character. Your type helps determine your character's place in the world and relationship with other people in the setting. It's the noun of the sentence "I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*."

You can choose from three character types: Glaive, Nano, and Jack.

GLAIVE

Glaives are the elite warriors of the Ninth World, using weapons and armor to fight their enemies. Hunters, guardians, and soldiers could be Glaives. Sometimes scouts, warlords, bandits, and even athletes are Glaives. "Glaive" is a common slang term used almost everywhere in the Steadfast and the Beyond for any person skilled with weapons or a martial art, but in truth, it applies only to the best of the best. Glaives are warriors who command abilities far beyond those of a typical person with a sword.

Steadfast, page 136

Beyond, page 169

Most Glaives are either strong (using the heaviest armor and weapons available and having a high Might) or fast (sticking with light weapons and armor and having a high Speed). A few attempt to use both Might and Speed and stay somewhere in the middle. Glaives also use ranged weapons such as bows or darts. Some don't rely on weapons at all, preferring to use their bodies in hand-to-hand combat—punching, kicking, grabbing, throwing, and so on.

Might, page 22

Speed, page 22

Glaives in Society: In most cities and villages, people hold Glaives in great esteem. Although a Glaive could just as likely be a thug as a noble warrior, those who help protect their fellow humans from the dangers of the Ninth World are always treated with respect. There is no shame in getting paid for the use of one's skills, so being a blade for hire is a perfectly acceptable profession. Restrictions on carrying weapons openly are rare, and most Glaives wear the tools of their trade with pride.

Not surprisingly, Glaives often get along best with other Glaives, or at least soldiers, guards, or similar comrades in arms. Nanos, scholars, and people who aren't terribly physical are less likely to mix well with Glaives, but obviously not every Glaive is the same. They focus on their bodies, but that doesn't mean they don't value more cerebral pursuits as well. A Glaive need not follow the stereotype of the dumb bruiser with a sword or an axe.

Glaives in the Group: In a group of explorers, Glaives typically take the lead. They're usually the most physically capable, the most durable, and the most ready to meet danger head-on. Sometimes they act protectively toward their companions; other times, they're more self-interested. Either way, a Glaive's place is often in the middle of the fray.



Glaives and the Numenera: When it comes to the numenera, most Glaives are interested in weapons, armor, or devices that aid them in combat. The ancients produced all sorts of incredibly durable substances, many of which can be made into armor that is lighter and more protective than steel. Sometimes, Glaives can scavenge a suit of armor composed of these advanced materials, but more often they find the materials and then ask a crafter or smith to make the armor. Of course, the problem is that a substance that is difficult to damage is also hard to work.

As varied as armoring materials might be, numenera weaponry is infinitely more so. These items include melee weapons that shock, stun, or burn whatever they touch; and ranged weapons that blast projectiles with incredible power or bursts of strange energies. There are also bombs, damaging energy fields, poisonous gases, and far stranger weaponry, but some Glaives find that such complex objects are better off in the hands of a Nano. Maneuverability is just as important as attack or defense, however, so an item that allows a Glaive to move quickly or negate gravity is a great prize.

As for cyphers, Glaives prefer physically enhancing or restorative objects, such as injections of chemicals that improve reaction time or pills with microscopic repair devices that heal wounds and restore fatigued muscle tissue. They use the nickname "boost" for any cypher that enhances their strength, stamina, reflexes, or other physical aspects, while one that repairs damage or alleviates fatigue is called a "treat."

Advanced Glaives: As they progress, Glaives become better combatants, often felling multiple foes in a single stroke. They gain special types of attacks and learn to use armor more efficiently to get the most out of the protection it offers.

GLAIVE BACKGROUND

Glaives are no mere bandits or town guards. They stand head and shoulders above ordinary soldiers and brawlers. Something in your background—whether intensive training, inborn traits, or biomechanical modification—has made you more than the others around you. Choose one of those three options (described below) as the source of your skills, strength, reflexes, and stamina. It will provide the foundation of your background and give you an idea of how you can improve. The GM can use this information to develop adventures and quests that are specific to your character and play a role in your advancement.

INTENSIVE TRAINING

You are strong, fast, or both, but what really separates you from the crowd is your training. Perhaps you ascended the highest peak of the Black Riage or sought the deepest sewers beneath Qi to find teachers who could show you how to move, fight, and endure beyond normal human limits. You know a thousand ways to kill a foe, most of them secret to all but a chosen few. You're privy to techniques and fighting styles that most people in the Ninth World have never seen. You have learned that the impossible is possible—as long as you know the secret. Your body is a weapon, and your weapon is part of your body. You have studied with the masters, and now you carry that regimen as you venture into the world.

Advancement: You need to train and practice constantly to hone your skills and develop new techniques, building on what you've been taught. Perhaps at some point you will return to your secret masters for further initiation or find new teachers or lessons that can take you to the next step.

When you gain additional points for your stat Pools, an increase to a stat's Edge, or an increase in the level of Effort you can apply, the benefit comes as the result of rigorous exercise and personal development. When you gain a new skill or Glaive ability, it's the result of the martial arts you have studied.

INBORN TRAITS

You've trained under excellent instructors and have experience in many dangerous situations, but what makes you different is deep inside, entwined in your genetic heritage. Maybe it was the luck of being born fit. Maybe you're a hulking brute—a mountainous figure who commands attention when you enter a room. Or maybe your strength is more subtle; you might be the descendant of a bioengineered species bred (or designed) for perfection. Perhaps you're a mutant with psychic abilities that augment your physical nature; you guide and enhance your attacks with telekinesis, or you use a natural mutation in your brain to control matter on a molecular level to resist blows and inflict harm. Perhaps you're something wholly new: an aberration or a human so perfect that you're beyond human. You might be a posthuman—the next step toward the true destiny of the people of the Ninth World.

Advancement: You have talents of which you are only dimly aware. You must practice and experiment to find your limitations, if any. At some point in the future, you might have to seek out someone who can help you master your inherent abilities. You were born with great

Numenera, page 13

Black Riage, page 172

Qi, page 144

Cypher, page 272

Many of the people you meet in the Ninth World are mutants, whether you are aware of it or not. For more information on the types of mutations, see page 397.

LOOKING FOR
Fighting moves, page 31

power. Now you need to learn how to use that power, even if the education takes a lifetime.

When your stats improve, it's because you're tapping deeper into the unknown reserves within you. When you gain a new Glaive ability, it's the result of your superhuman traits as much as it is about your study, practice, or knowledge. You can do things that other people simply cannot, no matter how hard they train.

BIOMECHANICAL MODIFICATION

You might be a fighter, but you're no archaic stereotype—this is the Ninth World, after all. Although you trained and gained your share of practical experience, you have the numenera on your side as well. Some of your knowledge of fighting techniques is implanted in your brain and spine, wired into your nerves and muscles. Your joints have surgically implanted servo motors. Subdermal plating makes you tougher than should be possible. Your muscle tissue is augmented with artificial fibers.

Aeon Priest, page 264

Perhaps your genetic code has been rewritten by engineered viruses, or the tissues in your body have been reworked by nanotech, turning you into an efficient battle machine. Or maybe you've been altered by strange science—radioactive treatments of bizarre energies, chemical compounds and drugs, or extradimensional enhancements—that makes you stronger, faster, tougher, and more proficient in attack and defense than anyone around you.

Whatever the case, you're the result of ancient knowledge made manifest in the present, and now you're shaping the future. Perhaps your modifications are obvious and visible; perhaps they're not. Regardless, you know that you're more than merely human.

Advancement: Your body is an ongoing project. In a way, it's a work of art, although its beauty comes not from its appearance but from what it can do. As you go forward, you should keep an eye out at all times for new parts and systems that can be incorporated into your body, or new doses of drugs and supplements to maintain your abilities. You might need to seek out surgeons, mechanics, or bioenhancement specialists to take you to the next level. Perhaps the Aeon Priests can help. Perhaps the parts you need can be found only in the ruins of the past or the dangerous black market of a faraway city.

When your stats improve, it's because you literally have added something new to your body. When you gain a new ability, it's the direct result of a tangible change in your own physical being.

PLAYER INTRUSION

A player intrusion is the player choosing to alter something in the campaign, making things easier for a player character. Conceptually, it is the reverse of a GM intrusion: instead of the GM giving the player XP and introducing an unexpected complication for a character, the player spends 1 XP and presents a solution to a problem or complication. What a player intrusion can do depends on the PC's type, and it usually introduces a change to the world or current circumstances rather than directly changing the character. If a player has no XP to spend, they can't use a player intrusion.

GM intrusion, page 123

Not every player intrusion listed here is appropriate for all situations. The GM may allow players to come up with other player intrusion suggestions, but the GM is the final arbiter of whether the suggested intrusion is appropriate for the character's type and suitable for the situation. If the GM refuses the intrusion, the player doesn't spend the 1 XP, and the intrusion doesn't occur.

Player intrusions should be limited to no more than one per player per session.

Using an intrusion does not require a character to use an action to trigger it. A player intrusion just happens.

Object damage track, page 116

GLAIVE PLAYER INTRUSIONS

As a Glaive, you can spend 1XP to use one of the following player intrusions, provided the situation is appropriate and the GM agrees.

Perfect Setup: You're fighting at least three foes and each one is standing in exactly the right spot for you to use a move you trained in long ago, allowing you to attack all three as a single action. Make a separate attack roll for each foe. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action.

Old Friend: A comrade in arms from your past shows up unexpectedly and provides aid in whatever you're doing. They are on a mission of their own and can't stay longer than it takes to help out, chat a while after, and perhaps share a quick meal.

Weapon Break: Your foe's weapon has a weak spot and in the course of the combat quickly becomes damaged and moves two steps down the object damage track.

GLAIVE STAT POOLS

Stat	Pool Starting Value
Might	11
Speed	10
Intellect	7

You get 6 additional points to divide among your stat Pools however you wish.

LOOKING FOR
Spray, page 33

GLAIVE TIERS

FIRST-TIER GLAIVE

First-tier Glaives have the following abilities:

Effort: Your Effort is 1.

Fighter: You have a Might Edge of 1, a Speed Edge of 1, and an Intellect Edge of 0.

Combat Prowess: You add +1 damage to one type of attack of your choice: melee attacks or ranged attacks. Enabler.

Cypher Use: You can bear two cyphers at a time.

Trained in Armor: You can wear armor for long periods of time without tiring and can compensate for slowed reactions from wearing armor. You reduce the Speed Effort cost for wearing armor by 1. Enabler.

Weapons: You can use any weapon without penalty.

Physical Skills: Choose one of the following skills in which you aren't already trained: balancing, climbing, jumping, or swimming. You are trained in this skill. You have an inability in crafting numenera, salvaging numenera, and understanding numenera.

Starting Equipment: You start with clothing, two weapons (or one weapon and a shield), light or medium armor, an explorer's pack, two cyphers (chosen for you by the GM), one oddity (chosen for you by the GM), and 5 shins (coins). If you start with a ranged weapon that requires ammunition (arrows, for example), you start with 12 of that type of ammunition. Before selecting your weapons, armor, and other gear, you might want to wait until after you've chosen your fighting moves, descriptor, and focus.

Default Starting Cyphers and Oddity: Your GM may provide you with starting cyphers and an oddity. Otherwise, you begin with the following.

- **Cyphers:** density nodule, rejuvenator
- **Oddity:** Blob of clay that takes on various mysterious shapes when left alone

Fighting Moves: You have a special talent for combat and can perform feats that others can barely imagine. These feats are called *fighting moves*. Some fighting moves are constant, ongoing effects, and others are specific actions that usually cost points from one of your stat Pools.

Choose two of the fighting moves described below. You can't choose the same fighting move more than once unless its description says otherwise.

- **Aggression (2 Might points):** You focus on making attacks to such an extent that you leave yourself vulnerable to your opponents. While this ability is active, you gain an asset on your melee attacks, and your Speed defense rolls against melee and ranged attacks are hindered. This effect lasts for as long as you wish, but it ends if no combat is taking place within range of your senses. Enabler.
- **Fleet of Foot (1+ Speed points):** You can move a short distance as part of another action. You can move a long distance as your entire action for a turn. If you apply a level of Effort to this ability, you can move a long distance and make an attack as your entire action for a turn, but the attack is hindered. Enabler.
- **Impressive Display (2 Might points):** You perform a feat of strength, speed, or combat, impressing those nearby. For the next minute you gain an asset in all interaction tasks with people who saw you use this ability. Action.
- **Misdirect (3 Speed points):** When an opponent misses you, you can redirect their attack to another target (a creature or object) of your choosing that's within immediate range of you. Make an unmodified attack roll against the new target (do not use any of your or the opponent's modifiers to the attack roll, but you can apply Effort for accuracy). If the attack hits, the target takes damage from your opponent's attack. Enabler.
- **No Need for Weapons:** When you make an unarmed attack (such as a punch or kick), it counts as a medium weapon instead of a light weapon. Enabler.
- **Trained Without Armor:** You are trained in Speed defense actions when not wearing armor. Enabler.

Armor, page 109

Inability, page 101

Your character's starting equipment is as important as their beginning skills. Learn more about what you carry and what it's used for in Chapter 7: Equipment (page 93).

Descriptor, page 53

Focus, page 58

Density nodule, page 277

Rejuvenator, page 286

Oddities, page 304

The GM should keep careful track of combat order, as a player using Misdirect to make an attack roll out of turn may cause confusion about who is supposed to act next.



LOOKING FOR
Arc Spray, page 34

GLAIVE CONNECTION

Roll a d20 or choose from the following list to determine a specific fact about your background that provides a connection to the rest of the world. You can also create your own fact.

Roll	Background
1	You were in the military and have friends who still serve. Your former commander remembers you well.
2	You were the personal guard of a wealthy merchant who accused you of theft. You left her service in disgrace.
3	You were the bouncer in a local bar for a while, and the patrons there remember you.
4	You trained with a highly respected mentor. He regards you well, but he has many enemies.
5	You trained in an isolated monastery far away. The monks think of you as a brother, but you're a stranger to all others.
6	You have no formal training. Your abilities come to you naturally (or unnaturally).
7	You spent time on the streets and even were in prison for a while.
8	You were conscripted into military service, but you deserted before long.
9	You served as a bodyguard to a powerful criminal who now owes you his life.
10	You worked as a constable. Everyone knows you, but their opinions of you vary.
11	Your older sibling is an infamous glaive who has been disgraced.
12	You served as a caravan guard. You know a smattering of people in many cities and towns.
13	Your best friend is a sage and a scholar. She is a great source of knowledge.
14	You and a friend both smoke the same kind of rare, expensive tobacco. The two of you get together weekly to chat and smoke.
15	Your uncle runs a theater in town. You know all the actors and watch all the shows for free.
16	Your blacksmith friend sometimes calls on you for help at the forge. However, he pays you well.
17	Your mentor wrote a book on the martial arts. Sometimes other warriors seek you out to ask about its stranger passages.
18	A man you fought alongside in the military is now the mayor of a nearby town.
19	You saved the lives of a family when their house burned down. They're indebted to you, and their neighbors regard you as a hero.
20	Your old trainer still expects you to come back and sharpen her blades and clean up after her classes, but when you do, she occasionally shares interesting rumors.

If you become trained with a weapon that you have an inability in, the inability and training cancel each other out.

SECOND-TIER GLAIVE

Second-tier Glaives have the following abilities:

Skill With Attacks: Choose one type of attack in which you are not already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. Enabler.

Fighting Moves: Choose one of the following fighting moves (or a move from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your first-tier fighting moves with a different first-tier fighting move.

- **Crushing Blow (2 Might points):** When you use a bashing or bladed weapon in both hands and apply Effort on the attack, you get a free level of Effort on the damage. (If fighting unarmed, this attack is made with both fists or both feet together.) Action.
- **Hemorrhage (2+ Might points):** You make a powerful and precise strike that inflicts additional damage later. On your next turn, the target of this attack takes an additional 3 points of damage (this ignores Armor). The target can prevent this additional damage by making a recovery roll, using any ability that heals it, or using its action to attend to the injury. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase this duration by one round. Action.
- **Reload (1 Speed point):** When using a weapon that normally requires an action to reload, such as a heavy crossbow, you can reload and fire (or fire and reload) in the same action. Enabler.
- **Skill With Defense:** Choose one type of defense task in which you are not already trained: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You are trained in defense tasks of that type. Unlike most fighting moves, you can select this move up to three times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different type of defense task. Enabler.
- **Successive Attack (2 Speed points):** If you take down a foe, you can immediately make another attack on that same turn against a new foe within your reach. The second attack is part of the same action. You can use this fighting move with melee attacks and ranged attacks. Enabler.

Free level of Effort, page 103.

LOOKING FOR
Nano, page 36

THIRD-TIER GLAIVE

Third-tier Glaives have the following abilities:

Expert Cypher Use: You can bear three cyphers at a time.

Skill With Attacks: Choose one type of attack in which you are not already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. Enabler.

Fighting Moves: Choose one of the following fighting moves (or a move from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can also replace one of your lower-tier fighting moves with a different fighting move from the same lower tier.

- **Energy Resistance:** Choose a discrete type of energy that you have experience with (such as heat, sonic, electricity, and so on). You gain +5 to Armor against damage from that type of energy. You must be familiar with the type of energy; for example, if you have no experience with a certain kind of extradimensional energy, you can't protect against it. Unlike most fighting moves, you can select this more than once. Each time you select it, you must choose a different kind of energy. Enabler.
- **Lunge (2 Might points):** This move requires you to extend yourself for a powerful stab or smash. The awkward lunge hinders the attack roll. If your attack is successful, it inflicts 4 additional points of damage. Action.
- **Obstacle Running (3 Speed points):** For the next minute, you can ignore obstacles that slow your movement, allowing you to travel at normal speed through areas with rubble, fences, tables, and similar objects that you would have to climb over or move around. This movement might include sliding on a railing, briefly running along a wall, or even stepping on a creature to boost yourself over something. If an obstacle would normally require a Might or Speed task to overcome, such as swinging on a rope, balancing on a rope, or jumping over a hole, you are trained at that task. Enabler.
- **Slice (2 Speed points):** This is a quick attack with a bladed or pointed weapon that is hard to defend against. You are trained in this task. If the attack is successful, it deals 1 less point of damage than normal. Action.
- **Specialized in Armor:** The cost reduction from your Trained in Armor ability improves. You now reduce the Speed Effort cost for wearing armor by an additional 1. Enabler.
- **Spray (2 Speed points):** If a weapon has the ability to fire rapid shots without reloading (usually called a rapid-fire weapon, such as a crank crossbow), you can spray multiple shots around your target to increase the chance of hitting. This move uses 1d6 + 1 rounds of ammo (or all the ammo in the weapon, if it has less than the number rolled). You are trained in making this attack. If the attack is successful, it deals 1 less point of damage than normal. Action.
- **Trick Shot (2 Speed points):** As part of the same action, you make a ranged attack against two targets that are within immediate range of each other. Make a separate attack roll against each target. The attack rolls are hindered. Action.
- **Vigilance (2 Intellect points):** You take a cautious approach to combat, focusing more on protecting yourself than on hurting your opponents. While this ability is active, you gain an asset on Speed defense rolls against melee and ranged attacks, and your melee and ranged attacks are hindered. This effect lasts for as long as you wish, but it ends if no combat is taking place within range of your senses. Action to initiate.

FOURTH-TIER GLAIVE

Fourth-tier Glaives have the following abilities:

Skill With Attacks: Choose one type of attack in which you are not already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. Enabler.

Fighting Moves: Choose one of the following fighting moves (or a move from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can also replace one of your lower-tier fighting moves with a different fighting move from the same lower tier.

- **Amazing Effort:** When you apply at least one level of Effort to a non-combat task, you get a free level of Effort on that task. When you choose this fighting move, decide if this ability applies to Might Effort or Speed Effort. Enabler.
- **Capable Warrior:** Your attacks deal 1 additional point of damage. Enabler.
- **Experienced Defender:** When wearing armor, you gain +1 to Armor. Enabler.
- **Feint (2 Speed points):** If you spend one action creating a misdirection or diversion, in the next round you can take advantage of your opponent's lowered defenses. Make a melee attack roll against that opponent. You gain an asset on this attack. If your attack is successful, it inflicts 4 additional points of damage. Action.
- **Minor to Major:** You treat rolls of natural 19 as rolls of natural 20 for Might attack rolls or Speed attack rolls (your choice when you gain this ability). This allows you to gain a major effect on a natural 19 or 20. Enabler.

Defense tasks are when a player makes a roll to keep something undesirable from happening to their PC. The type of defense task matters when using Effort.

Might defense: Used for resisting poison, disease, and anything else that can be overcome with strength and health.

Speed defense: Used for dodging attacks and escaping danger. This is by far the most commonly used defense task.

Intellect defense: Used for fending off mental attacks or anything that might affect or influence one's mind.

Trained in Armor, page 31

Crank crossbow, page 95

- **Snipe (2 Speed points):** If you spend one action aiming, in the next round you can make a precise ranged attack. You are trained in this task. If your attack is successful, it inflicts 4 additional points of damage. Action.

FIFTH-TIER GLAIVE

Fifth-tier Glaives have the following abilities:

Jumping, page 121

You can use Jump Attack to reach an opponent that is above you.

Adept Cypher Use: You can bear four cyphers at a time.

Mastery With Attacks: Choose one type of attack in which you are trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are specialized in attacks using that type of weapon. Enabler. (In place of this ability, you may instead select Skill With Attacks to become trained in one type of attack.)

Fighting Moves: Choose one of the following fighting moves (or a move from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can also replace one of your lower-tier fighting moves with a different fighting move from the same lower tier.

Trained in Armor, page 31

- **Mastery in Armor:** The cost reduction from your Trained in Armor ability improves. You now reduce the Speed Effort cost for wearing armor by an additional 1. Enabler.

Crank crossbow, page 95

- **Arc Spray (3 Speed points):** If a weapon has the ability to fire rapid shots without reloading (usually called a rapid-fire weapon, such as a crank crossbow), you can fire your weapon at up to three targets (all next to one another) at once. Make a separate attack roll against each target. Each attack is hindered. Action.

GM intrusions and other significant changes to the location may negate the advantages and disadvantages discovered by Battlefield Tactician.

- **Battlefield Tactician (2+ Intellect points):** You scrutinize your surroundings, learning whatever facts the GM feels are pertinent about attacking, defending, maneuvering, and dealing with environmental hazards within a short distance. For example, you might notice a pile of rubble you can stand on for an advantage in melee, a sheltered corner to help protect against enemy attacks, a less-slippery part of a frozen lake, or a place where the poison gas is thinner than elsewhere. If you (or someone you tell) move to that location, you (or the person told) gain an asset on tasks related to that optimal position (such as attack rolls from the high ground, Speed defense rolls from the sheltered corner, balance rolls on the frozen lake, or Might defense rolls against the poisonous cloud). Instead of gaining an advantageous location, you might learn a disadvantageous location that you could use against your enemies, such as maneuvering them into an awkward corner that hinders their melee attacks or a weak spot on the frozen lake that will break if they stand on it. You can apply Effort to learn one additional good or bad location within range (one location per level of Effort), increase the range of this ability (another short distance per level of Effort), or both. Enabler.
- **Jump Attack (5 Might points):** You attempt a difficulty 4 Might roll to jump high into the air as part of your melee attack action. If you succeed at the jump and your attack hits, you inflict 3 additional points of damage and knock the foe prone. If you fail at the jump, you still make your normal attack roll, but you don't inflict the extra damage or knock down the opponent if you hit. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to enhance your jump; each level of Effort used in this way adds +2 feet to the height and +1 damage to the attack. Action.
- **Mastery With Defense:** Choose one type of defense task in which you are trained: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You are specialized in defense tasks of that type. Unlike most fighting moves, you can select this move up to three times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different type of defense task. Enabler.
- **Parry (5 Speed points):** You can deflect incoming attacks quickly. When you activate this move, for the next ten rounds you ease all Speed defense rolls. Enabler.

One Glaive of renown in the Steadfast is Yerra Mestanir, who held off the Squirming Horde on her own in Batrak's Pass until the armies of Navarene could arrive. Single-handedly, she likely saved the eastern portion of the kingdom from destruction at the hands of the abhumans.

SIXTH-TIER GLAIVE

Sixth-tier Glaives have the following abilities:

Mastery With Attacks: Choose one type of attack in which you are trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are specialized in attacks using that type of weapon. Enabler. (In place of this ability, you may instead select Skill With Attacks to become trained in one type of attack.)

Fighting Moves: Choose one of the following fighting moves (or a move from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can also replace one of your lower-tier fighting moves with a different fighting move from the same lower tier.

- **Again and Again (8 Speed points):** You can take an additional action in a round in which you have already acted. Enabler.
- **Finishing Blow (5 Might points):** If your foe is prone, stunned, or somehow helpless or incapacitated when you strike, you inflict 7 additional points of damage on a successful hit. Enabler.

- **Slayer (3 Might points):** When you successfully strike an NPC or creature of level 5 or lower, make another roll (using whichever stat you used to attack). If you succeed on the second roll, you kill the target outright. If you use this fighting move against a PC of any tier and you succeed on the second roll, the character moves down one step on the damage track. Enabler.
- **Spin Attack (5 Speed points):** You stand still and make attacks against up to five foes, all as part of the same action in one round. All of the attacks have to be the same sort of attack (melee or ranged). Make a separate attack roll for each foe. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to all of these attacks. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the number of foes you can attack with this ability (one additional foe per level of Effort used in this way). Action.

GLAIVE EXAMPLE

Colin wants to create a Glaive character who is fast and strong. He puts 3 of his additional points into his Might Pool and 3 into his Speed Pool; his stat Pools are now Might 14, Speed 13, Intellect 7. As a first-tier character, his Effort is 1, his Might Edge and Speed Edge are 1, and his Intellect Edge is 0. His Glaive is not particularly smart or charismatic.

He wants to use a broadsword (a medium weapon that inflicts 4 points of damage) and a heavy crossbow (a heavy weapon that inflicts 6 points of damage but requires the use of both hands). Colin decides not to wear armor, so for his first fighting move, he chooses Trained Without Armor so he eases Speed defense actions. For his second fighting move, he chooses Impressive Display so he can use his physical fitness to compensate for his lack of social skills.

The GM generously gives Colin an extra 10 shins because he chose to forgo armor, and he uses this money to buy more crossbow bolts. The Glaive's starting equipment includes two cyphers, and the GM decides that Colin's cyphers are a pill that restores 6 points of Might when swallowed and a small device that explodes like a firebomb when thrown, inflicting 3 points of damage to all within immediate range. Colin chooses swimming for his trained physical skill.

He still needs to choose a descriptor and a focus. Looking ahead to the descriptor rules, Colin chooses Strong, which increases his Might Pool to 18. He also becomes trained in jumping and breaking inanimate objects. (If he had chosen jumping as his physical skill, the Strong descriptor would have made him specialized in jumping instead of trained.) Being Strong also gives Colin an extra medium or heavy weapon. He chooses another broadsword as a backup blade. He decides that one sword is slightly smaller than the other, and he'll sheathe them together on his left side.

For his focus, Colin chooses Masters Weaponry. This gives him yet another weapon of high quality. He chooses a broadsword and asks the GM if his first sword can be a shield instead, which will ease his Speed defense rolls (the shield counts as an asset). The GM agrees to the change. During the game, Colin's Glaive will be hard to hit—he is trained in Speed defense rolls and his shield also eases those rolls.

Thanks to his focus, he also inflicts 1 additional point of damage with his chosen weapon. Now he inflicts 5 points of damage with his blade. Colin's character is a deadly combatant, likely starting the game with some amount of renown as a swordsman.

Damage track, page 110

Masters Weaponry, page 80

Heavy crossbow, page 96

Trained Without Armor, page 31

Strong, page 57

LOOKING FOR

Esoteries, page 40
Onslaught, page 40



NANO

Nanos are sometimes called mages, wizards, sorcerers, or witches by the people of the Ninth World. Nano-sorcerer is also a common term, with their abilities referred to as nano-sorcery. Some claim to be the representatives of gods or other supernatural agencies. Whatever they're called, Nanos master the mysteries of the past to the degree that they seem to perform miracles. They tap into the numenera to alter reality or learn things that they couldn't otherwise know.

The term "Nano" is derived from the nanotechnology that is omnipresent throughout the Ninth World (whether anyone realizes it or not). Sometimes people call these invisible, numinous particles that infuse the landscape nano-spirits. Sometimes these spirits take on a devastating manifestation called the iron wind and move through the air in clouds, which can be far more dangerous than any conventional storm. In truth, nanites are literally everywhere.

Numenera, page 13

Iron wind, page 135

"The Aeon Priests have discovered the means to directly control people's thoughts simply through the use of words and images. Everything they say, do, and even wear is carefully calculated."
~Narada Trome, anti-papist



LOOKING FOR

Scan, page 40
Ward, page 40

Nanos wield their power in the form of what they call *esoteries*, although some prefer to call them spells, enchantments, or charms. Nanos are proficient with other devices as well, and sometimes their powers are actually the subtle use of such items hidden upon their person. All Nanos call forth their power in slightly different ways.

Typically, Nanos are intelligent, learned, and insightful. Most of the time, they devote themselves to the numenera and other esoterica rather than to purely physical pursuits. As a result, they're often well versed in the artifacts and leftovers of the previous worlds.

Nanos in Society: Frequently, common folks fear Nanos or look upon them with suspicion. It's easy to be afraid of a brute with an axe, but when it comes to someone who wields invisible powers—magic, for lack of a better term—too much is unknown. A Nano's strange abilities are unsettling even to the bravest souls unless they have a modicum of knowledge about the numenera. That said, not everyone is frightened of or intimidated by Nanos. There are other people and creatures that have capabilities far beyond the understanding of normal folks—things that even Nanos might not understand. Things that even Nanos might fear.

Like the wizards of fables, some Nanos dwell in solitude to study and conduct odd experiments, while others gather in schools and teach those with potential to use their abilities. They enjoy time in the company of people with similar predilections and interests. Not every Nano is a frail bookworm, however—that's just the stereotype placed upon them by society. Sometimes, people view Nanos as representatives of the powers that be: gods, demons, or spirits. That's not too surprising considering that they affect the world around them in ways that most people can't fathom. What's more surprising is that some Nanos believe this to be true as well. They call themselves priests or shamans and treat their esoteries more like rituals, prayers, or invocations. When these Nanos gather, they do so in temples, but just as often one of them lives alone amid a flock of the faithful. Some of these loner Nanos don't call themselves priests; they call themselves gods.

Nanos in the Group: Typically, a Nano is the party member who keeps to the back of the group, as far from the danger as possible. Compared to their comrades, Nanos are often a bit fragile and less well protected against threats. In addition, most of their abilities work best at range.

As useful and impressive as Nanos' offensive powers can be, their knowledge is often most valuable to a group. When the party comes upon mysterious devices, weird creatures, or other aspects of the numenera, the Nano is usually the one who knows how to identify or deal with the finds. They can scavenge for new cyphers or figure out how to use artifacts from the past. Many Nanos possess other valuable knowledge in areas such as geography, botany, medicine, and more.

Nanos and the Numenera: All Nanos know a fair bit about the numenera. In many ways, it's their lifeblood. When a group finds a broken vehicle, an inactive automaton, or an ancient machine, the Nano steps up and searches it for useful devices.

Almost any numenera item would be welcome, but generally, Nanos are most interested in ranged weapons, protective devices other than armor, and devices that have interesting utility effects—using magnetism, creating force fields, healing wounds, reshaping flesh, creating or destroying matter, and so on. This is true of cyphers as well as artifacts.

Advanced Nanos: As Nanos gain more experience, they typically learn new and more powerful esoteries. They begin their careers by making personal shields and blasting foes with energy, but eventually, they can fly through the air, disintegrate matter, teleport vast distances, and control the weather.

NANO BACKGROUND

Nanos can do things that seem like magic to other people, but their powers aren't based on charms or spellcasting—the explanation is likely far stranger. Choose one of the three options described below as the source of your abilities. It will provide the foundation of your background and give you an idea of how you can improve. The GM can use this information to develop adventures and quests that are specific to your character and play a role in your advancement.

FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE

You understand the numenera far better than most people do. You know that it isn't just strange machines buried in old ruins. The numenera is everywhere, beyond the perception of humans. You know that microscopic machines called nanites are threaded through every inch of the world, waiting to be activated. You know that satellites in orbit are broadcasting information, waiting for someone to access it. Having studied long and hard, learning the proper ways to tap into the forces all around you, you know how to activate these machines and make them do what you wish, at least in limited, specific ways. These uses of power are called esoteries.

Through various tiny devices that you possess, which probably seem like magic charms to the uninitiated, you "conjure" energy. By accessing the datasphere transmitted across the world, you connect with machines—including the nanites—to change your environment.

Datasphere, page 355

Advancement: You must continue to study. There's far more to the numenera than one person can ever know, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't try to learn it all. More secrets and more knowledge mean more power. At some point in your career, you might need to find a teacher or another source of knowledge. So many questions need answers.

When your stats improve or you learn new skills, it's because you have mastered another new technique that taps into the secret world. When you gain a new esotery, it's the result of long hours of study and practice in using your mysterious lore.

One infamous Nano is Nordarvar, who was the first to develop the now-ubiquitous Push esotery. He used it to knock Duke Guchian off the top of his own tower, thus ending the War of Three Lillies.

PSIONICS

You know that the world is filled with ancient machines and their creations. Some of them are visible, but many are not. It's not just skill or knowledge that allows you to gain access to them. You have a psychic talent to interface with the machines to produce various effects. Some of these machines are secreted about your person, and others are infused into the environment of the Ninth World.

You can't conjure energy or warp matter on your own, but you have the rare and spectacular ability to control the invisible nano-machines that do it for you. Is this gift the natural result of extreme exposure to technology? Is it the fusion of the biological and the mechanical? Is it the design of a genius architect, generations earlier, who manipulated the genetics of your family? Or is it just a random mutation? In any case, you're the natural synthesis of human and machine, working as one.

Advancement: Understanding this natural talent took time and training, and more of both is needed to expand and refine your powers. In addition to seeking help with your instruction, you might need to find drugs, devices, or other external stimulation.

When aspects of your character improve or you learn new skills or esoteries, it's because you have mastered a new facet of your psychic abilities or discovered an entirely new use for a machine in your environment.

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Flash, page 40
Hover, page 41
Mind Reading, page 41
Sensor, page 42

NANO CONNECTION

Roll a d20 or choose from the following list to determine a specific fact about your background that provides a connection to the rest of the world. You can also create your own fact.

Roll	Background
1	You served as an apprentice for a nano-sorcerer respected and feared by many people. Now you bear his mark.
2	You studied in a school infamous for its dark, brooding instructors and graduates.
3	You learned nano-sorcery (or gained your modifications) in the temple of an obscure god. Its priests and worshippers, although small in number, respect and admire your talents and potential.
4	While traveling alone, you saved the life of a powerful abhuman brute. Although unwilling to accompany you on your journey, he remains indebted to you.
5	Your mother was a powerful nano while she lived, helpful to many locals. They look upon you kindly, but they also expect much from you.
6	You owe money to a number of people around town and don't have the funds to pay your debts.
7	You failed disgracefully at your initial studies with your teacher and now proceed on your own.
8	You learned your skills faster than your teachers had ever seen before. The powers that be took notice and are paying close attention.
9	You killed a well-known criminal in self-defense, earning the respect of many and the enmity of a dangerous few.
10	You trained as a glaive, but your skills with the numenera and other types of lore eventually led you down a different path. Your former comrades don't understand you, but they respect you.
11	While studying to be a nano, you worked as an assistant for a seamstress, making friends with the owner and the clientele.
12	Your family owns a large vineyard nearby known to all for its fine wine and fair business dealings.
13	You trained for a time with a group of Aeon Priests, and they still look upon you with fondness.
14	You worked the gardens in the palace of an influential noble. She wouldn't remember you, but you made friends with her young daughter.
15	An experiment you conducted in the past went horribly awry. The locals remember you as a dangerous and foolhardy individual.
16	You hail from a distant land where you were well known and regarded, but people here treat you with suspicion.
17	People you meet seem put off by the strange birthmark on your face.
18	Your best friend is also a nano. You and she share discoveries and secrets readily.
19	You know a local merchant very well. Since you give him so much business, he offers you discounts and special treatment.
20	You belong to a secretive social club that gathers monthly to drink and talk.

"When adding a fluctuating generator to an unstable warp capacitor, make sure you polarize the endings correctly or you'll end up draining the energy . . . directly into your brain."
~Sir Arthour

Player intrusion, page 30

LOOKING FOR
Glimmer, page 43
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PORTS AND PLUGS

You have a connection with machines for one clear reason: you're practically a machine yourself. Your nervous system is laced with circuitry, and your body has implanted jacks and ports where you plug in modules and other technological bits that provide your capabilities. When you produce effects or manipulate nanites, you do so through your body's direct mechanical interface. Your force blasts might come from a device implanted in your palm or fingertip. Your ability to tap into the datasphere might come from the receiver plugged into a port you built in the back of your neck.

Obviously, to become a Nano, you have undergone numerous surgeries and procedures (either willingly or unwillingly). You are forever changed. Some people treat you with disdain or derision, but perhaps most of your modifications can be hidden by a hooded cloak or similar garment.

Advancement: Do you want to gain more abilities? Just find new hardware and plug it in. Although talent and practice are still involved, physical upgrades are your primary means of picking up new tricks. Adding points to your stat Pools might mean undergoing new procedures. Adding a new esotery might require putting an implant in your head, although changing one esotery to another could be as simple as unplugging one module and jacking in a replacement.

NANO PLAYER INTRUSIONS

When playing a Nano, you can spend 1 XP to use one of the following player intrusions, provided the situation is appropriate and the GM agrees.



Advantageous Malfunction: A numenera device that is being used against you malfunctions. It might harm the user or one of their allies for a round, or activate a dramatic and distracting side effect for a few rounds.

Convenient Glimmer: A glimmer provides you with a clear answer or suggests a course of action with regard to an urgent question, problem, or obstacle you're facing.

Inexplicably Unbroken: An inactive, ruined, or presumed-destroyed device temporarily activates and performs a useful function relevant to the situation. This is enough to buy you some time for a better solution, alleviate a complication that was interfering with your abilities, or just get you one more use out of a depleted cypher or artifact.

NANO STAT POOLS

Stat	Pool Starting Value
Might	7
Speed	9
Intellect	12

You get 6 additional points to divide among your stat Pools however you wish.

NANO TIERS

FIRST-TIER NANO

First-tier Nanos have the following abilities:

Effort: Your Effort is 1.

Genius: You have an Intellect Edge of 1, a Might Edge of 0, and a Speed Edge of 0.

Expert Cypher Use: You can bear three cyphers at a time.

Weapons: You can use light weapons without penalty. You have an inability with medium weapons and heavy weapons; your attacks with medium and heavy weapons are hindered.

Skills: You are trained in understanding numenera.

Starting Equipment: You start with clothing, one weapon, a book about the numenera, three cyphers (chosen for you by the GM), one oddity (chosen for you by the GM), and 4 shins (coins). Before selecting your weapons, armor, and other gear, you might want to wait until after you've chosen your esoteries, descriptor, and focus.

Default Starting Cyphers and Oddity: Your GM may provide you with starting cyphers and an oddity. Otherwise, you begin with the following.

- **Cyphers:** gravity-nullifying spray, telepathy implant, teleporter
- **Oddity:** Metallic jar that maintains the temperature of liquid inside indefinitely

Your character's starting equipment is as important as your character's beginning skills. Learn more about what you carry and what it's used for in Chapter 7: Equipment, page 93.

Inability, page 101

Understanding numenera, page 27

Gravity-nullifying spray, page 280

Telepathy implant, page 287

Teleporter, page 287

Oddities, page 304

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Traverse the Worlds, page 43



Esoteries: You can tap into the numenera to reshape the world around you. Similar in appearance to the way a fabled wizard might seem to cast spells, these expressions of your knowledge are called esoteries. People who are not Nanos sometimes call them spells or charms.

Most esoteries must be activated, which requires that you have a free hand and spend 1 or more Intellect points. If no Intellect point cost is given for an esotery, it functions continuously without needing to be activated. Some esoteries specify a duration, but you can always end one of your own esoteries anytime you wish.

Choose two of the esoteries described below. You can't choose the same esotery more than once unless its description says otherwise.

- **Hedge Magic (1 Intellect point):** You can perform small tricks: temporarily change the color or basic appearance of a small object, cause small objects to float through the air, clean a small area, mend a broken object, prepare (but not create) food, and so on. You can't use Hedge Magic to harm another creature or object. Action.
- **Onslaught (1 Intellect point):** You attack a foe using energies that assail either their physical form or their mind. In either case, you must be able to see your target. If the attack is physical, you emit a short-range ray of force that inflicts 4 points of damage. If the attack is mental, you focus your mental energy to blast the thought processes of another creature within short range. This mindslice inflicts 2 points of Intellect damage (and thus ignores Armor). Some creatures without minds (such as automatons) might be immune to your mindslice. Action.
- **Push (2 Intellect points):** You push a creature or object an immediate distance in any direction you wish. You must be able to see the target, which must be your size or smaller, must not be affixed to anything, and must be within short range. The push is quick, and the force is too crude to be manipulated. For example, you can't use this esotery to pull a lever or even close a door. Action.
- **Scan (2 Intellect points):** You scan an area equal in size to a 10-foot (3 m) cube, including all objects or creatures within that area. The area must be within short range. Scanning a creature or object always reveals its level (a measure of how powerful, dangerous, or difficult it is). You also learn whatever facts the GM feels are pertinent about the matter and energy in that area. For example, you might learn that the wooden box contains a device of metal and synth. You might learn that the glass cylinder is full of poisonous gas, and that its metal stand has an electrical field running through it that connects to a metal mesh in the floor. You might learn that the creature standing before you is a mammal with a small brain. However, this esotery doesn't tell you what the information means. Thus, in the first example, you don't know what the metal and synth device does. In the second, you don't know if stepping on the floor causes the cylinder to release the gas. In the third, you might suspect that the creature is not very intelligent, but scans, like looks, can be deceiving. Many materials and energy fields prevent or resist scanning. Action.
- **Ward:** You have a shield of energy around you at all times that helps deflect attacks. You gain +1 to Armor. Enabler.

Armor, page 109

Level, page 102

SECOND-TIER NANO

Second-tier Nanos have the following abilities:

Esoteries: Choose one of the following esoteries (or an esotery from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your first-tier esoteries with a different first-tier esotery.

- **Adaptation (2+ Intellect points):** You adapt to a hostile environment for 28 hours. As a result, you can breathe safely, the temperature doesn't kill you (though it might be extremely uncomfortable or debilitating), crushing gravity doesn't incapacitate or harm you (though, again, you might be seriously hindered), and so on. In extreme environments, the GM might increase the cost of activating this esotery to a maximum cost of 10 Intellect points. Roughly speaking, the cost should equal the amount of damage you would sustain in a given round. For example, if you enter a hostile environment that would normally deal 6 points of damage per round, using Adaptation to avoid that damage costs 6 points. You can protect other creatures in addition to yourself, but each additional creature costs you the same number of Intellect points as it costs to protect you. Thus, if it costs 6 points to protect yourself, it costs 12 more to protect two other people. This esotery never protects against quick, instantaneous threats, like an attack with a weapon or a sudden explosion of fire. Action to initiate.
- **Flash (4 Intellect points):** You create an explosion of energy at a point within close range, affecting an area up to immediate range from that point. You must be able to see the location where you intend to center the explosion. The blast inflicts 2 points of damage to all creatures or objects within

the area. Because this is an area attack, adding Effort to increase your damage works differently than it does for single-target attacks. If you apply a level of Effort to increase the damage, add 2 points of damage for each target, and even if you fail your attack roll, all targets in the area still take 1 point of damage. Action.

- **Hover (2 Intellect points):** You float slowly into the air. If you concentrate, you can control your movement to remain motionless in the air or float up to a short distance as your action; otherwise, you drift with the wind or with any momentum you have gained. This effect lasts for up to ten minutes. Action to initiate.
- **Mind Reading (4 Intellect points):** You can read the surface thoughts of a creature within short range of you, even if the target doesn't want you to. You must be able to see the target. Once you have established contact, you can read the target's thoughts for up to one minute. If you or the target move out of range, the connection is broken. Action to initiate.
- **Stasis (3 Intellect points):** You surround a foe of your size or smaller with scintillating energy, keeping it from moving or acting for one minute, as if frozen solid. You must be able to see the target, and it must be within short range. While in stasis, the target is impervious to harm, cannot be moved, and is immune to all effects. Action.

THIRD-TIER NANO

Third-tier Nanos have the following abilities:

Adept Cypher Use: You can bear four cyphers at a time.

Esoteries: Choose one of the following esoteries (or an esotery from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier esoteries with a different esotery from the same lower tier.

- **Barrier (3+ Intellect points):** You create an opaque, stationary barrier of solid energy within immediate range. The barrier is 10 feet by 10 feet (3 m by 3 m) and of negligible thickness. It is a level 2 barrier and lasts for ten minutes. It can be placed anywhere it fits, whether against a solid object (including the ground) or floating in the air. Each level of Effort you apply strengthens the barrier by one level. For example, applying two levels of Effort creates a level 4 barrier. Action.
- **Countermeasures (4 Intellect points):** You immediately end one ongoing numenera effect (such as an effect created by an esotery) within immediate range. Alternatively, you can use this as a defense action to cancel any incoming esotery targeted at you, or you can cancel any numenera device or the effect of any numenera device for 1d6 rounds. You must touch the effect or device to cancel it. Action.
- **Energy Protection (3+ Intellect points):** Choose a discrete type of energy that you have experience with (such as heat, sonic, electricity, and so on). You gain +10 to Armor against damage from that type of energy for ten minutes. Alternatively, you gain +1 to Armor against damage from that energy for 28 hours. You must be familiar with the type of energy; for example, if you have no experience with a certain kind of extradimensional energy, you can't protect against it. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to protect more targets; each level of Effort used in this way affects up to two additional targets. You must touch additional targets to protect them. Action to initiate.

"Humans lived on Earth many millions of years ago, in at least one if not many great civilizations that rose and fell. For some of the planet's history, there were no humans. But now humans are back. How can that be? Where were they in the intervening time?"
~Visixtru, varjellen philosopher



- **Sensor (4 Intellect points):** You create an immobile, invisible sensor within immediate range that lasts for 28 hours. At any time during that duration, you can concentrate to see, hear, and smell through the sensor, no matter how far you move from it. The sensor doesn't grant you sensory capabilities beyond the norm. Action to create; action to check.
- **Targeting Eye:** You are trained in any physical ranged attack that is an esotery or comes from a numenera device. For example, you are trained when using an Onslaught force blast because it's a physical attack, but not when using an Onslaught mindslice because it's a mental attack. Enabler.

Onslaught, page 40

FOURTH-TIER NANO

Fourth-tier Nanos have the following abilities:

Esoteries: Choose one of the following esoteries (or an esotery from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier esoteries with a different esotery from the same lower tier.

Scan, page 40

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Tricks of the Trade, page 47



- **Invisibility (4 Intellect points):** You become invisible for ten minutes. While invisible, you are specialized in stealth and Speed defense tasks. This effect ends if you do something to reveal your presence or position—attacking, performing an esotery, using an ability, moving a large object, and so on. If this occurs, you can regain the remaining invisibility effect by taking an action to focus on hiding your position. Action to initiate or reinitiate.
- **Mind Control (6+ Intellect points):** You control the actions of another creature you touch. This effect lasts for one minute. The target must be level 2 or lower. Once you have established control, you maintain mental contact with the target and sense what it senses. You can allow it to act freely or override its control on a case-by-case basis. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the maximum level of the target or increase the duration by one minute. Thus, to control the mind of a level 5 target (three levels above the normal limit) or control a target for four minutes (three levels above the normal duration), you must apply three levels of Effort. Smart Nanos use the Scan esotery on a creature to learn its level before trying to control its mind. When the Mind Control esotery ends, the creature doesn't remember being controlled or anything it did while under your command. Action to initiate.
- **Regeneration (6 Intellect points):** You restore points to a target's Might or Speed Pool in one of two ways: either the chosen Pool regains up to 6 points, or it is restored to a total value of 12. You make this decision when you initiate this esotery. Points are regenerated at a rate of 1 point each round. You must maintain contact with the target the whole time. In no case can this raise a Pool higher than its maximum. Action.
- **Reshape (5 Intellect points):** You reshape matter within short range in an area no larger than a 5-foot (1.5 m) cube. If you use only one action on this esotery, the changes you make are crude at best. If you spend at least ten minutes and succeed at an appropriate crafting task (which is hindered, due to the circumstances), you can make complex changes to the material. You can't change the nature of the material, only its shape. Thus, you can make a hole in a wall or floor, or you can seal one up. You can fashion a rudimentary sword from a large piece of iron. You can break or repair a chain. With multiple uses of this esotery, you could bring about large

changes, making a bridge, a wall, or a similar structure. Action.

- **Slay (6 Intellect points):** You gather disrupting energy in your fingertip and touch a creature. If the target is an NPC or a creature of level 3 or lower, it dies. If the target is a PC of any tier, they move down one step on the damage track. Action.

FIFTH-TIER NANO

Fifth-tier Nanos have the following abilities:

Master Cypher Use: You can bear five cyphers at a time.

Esoteries: Choose one of the following esoteries (or an esotery from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier esoteries with a different esotery from the same lower tier.

- **Absorb Energy (7 Intellect points):** You touch an object and absorb its energy. If you touch a cypher, you render it useless. If you touch an artifact, roll for the artifact's depletion. If you touch another kind of powered machine or device, the GM determines whether its power is fully drained. In any case, you absorb energy from the object touched and regain 1d10 Intellect points. If this would give you more Intellect than your Pool's maximum, the extra points are lost, and you must make a Might defense roll. The difficulty of the roll is equal to the number of points over your maximum you absorbed. If you fail the roll, you take 5 points of damage and are unable to act for one round. You can use this esotery as a defense action when you're the target of an incoming esotery. Doing so cancels the incoming esotery, and you absorb the energy as if it were a device. Action.
- **Dust to Dust (7 Intellect points):** You disintegrate one object that is smaller than you and whose level is less than or equal to your tier. You must touch the object to affect it. If the GM feels it appropriate to the circumstances, you can disintegrate a portion of an object (the total volume of which is smaller than you) rather than the entire thing. Action.
- **Knowing the Unknown (6 Intellect points):** Tapping into the datasphere, you can ask the GM one question and get a general answer. The GM assigns a level to the question, so the more obscure the answer, the more difficult the task. Generally, knowledge that you could find by looking somewhere other than your current location is level 1, and obscure knowledge of the past is level 7. Gaining knowledge of the future is impossible. Action.
- **Teleportation (6+ Intellect points):** You instantaneously transmit yourself to any location that you have seen or been to, no matter the distance, as long as it is on Earth (or whatever world you're currently on). In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to bring other people with you; each level of Effort used in this way affects up to three additional targets. You must touch any additional targets. Action.
- **True Senses:** You can see in complete darkness up to 50 feet (15 m) as if it were dim light. You recognize holograms, disguises, optical illusions, sound mimicry, and other such tricks (for all senses) for what they are. Enabler.

SIXTH-TIER NANO

Sixth-tier Nanos have the following abilities:

Esoteries: Choose one of the following esoteries (or an esotery from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier esoteries with a different esotery from the same lower tier.

- **Control Weather (10 Intellect points):** You change the weather in your general region. If performed indoors, this esotery creates only minor weather effects, such as mist, mild temperature changes, and so on. If performed outside, you can create rain, fog, snow, wind, or any other kind of normal (not overly severe) weather. The change lasts for a natural length of time, so a storm might last for an hour, fog for two or three hours, and snow for a few hours (or for ten minutes if it's out of season). For the first ten minutes after activating this esotery, you can create more dramatic and specific effects, such as lightning strikes, giant hailstones, twisters, hurricane force winds, and so on. These effects must occur within 1,000 feet (300 m) of your location. You must spend your turn concentrating to create an effect or to maintain it in a new round. These effects inflict 6 points of damage each round. Action.
- **Move Mountains (9 Intellect points):** You exert a tremendous amount of physical force within 250 feet (75 m) of you. You can push up to 10 tons (9 t) of material up to 50 feet (15 m). This force can collapse buildings, redirect small rivers, or perform other dramatic effects. Action.
- **Traverse the Worlds (8+ Intellect points):** You instantaneously transmit yourself to another planet, dimension, plane, or level of reality. You must know that the destination exists; the GM will decide if you have enough information to confirm its existence and the level of difficulty to reach the destination. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to bring other people with you; each level of Effort used in this way affects

Throughout the Ninth World, people of all walks of life report random glimmers of images or information that seem to come from nowhere. These unexpected bursts of data are often nonsensical, rarely useful or pertinent, and sometimes disturbing. While some call them visions, Nanos and other experts in the numenera believe that the "glimmers" are malfunctions of the datasphere that still permeates the world.

Damage track, page 110

"I used to hoard cyphers, not wanting to use them if I didn't absolutely need to. Now I know that the treasures of the numenera are all around us, and I'll always be able to find more when I need them. Old ruins are littered with the bones of explorers who didn't use cyphers they were saving for later."
~Yaim Three-Shins

Datasphere, page 355

up to three additional targets. You must touch any additional targets. Action.

- **Usurp Cypher:** Choose one cypher that you carry. The cypher must have an effect that is not instantaneous. You destroy the cypher and gain its power, which functions for you continuously. You can choose a cypher when you gain this ability, or you can wait and make the choice later. However, once you usurp a cypher's power, you cannot later switch to a different cypher—the esotery works only once. Action to initiate.

Cypher, page 272



NANO EXAMPLE

Shanna wants to create a Nano. She decides to be somewhat well rounded, so she puts 2 of her additional points into each stat Pool, giving her a Might Pool of 9, a Speed Pool of 11, and an Intellect Pool of 14. Her Nano is smart and quick. She has an Intellect Edge of 1, a Might Edge of 0, and a Speed Edge of 0. As a first-tier character, her Effort is 1. She is trained in understanding numenera. As her initial esoteries, she chooses Onslaught and Ward, giving her a strong offense and defense.

She can bear three cyphers. The GM gives her a handheld, short-range teleporter, a device that explodes like a fiery bomb, and goggles that let her mentally record everything she sees for one minute. For her weapon, Shanna chooses a knife, which is a light weapon.

Graceful, page 54

For her descriptor, Shanna chooses Graceful, which adds 2 points to her Speed Pool, bringing it to 13. That descriptor means she is trained in balancing and anything requiring careful movements, physical performing arts, and Speed defense tasks. Perhaps she is a dancer. In fact, she begins to develop a backstory that involves graceful, lithe movements that she incorporates into her esotery performance.

Rides the Lightning, page 83

For her focus, she chooses Rides the Lightning. This gives her Shock, another offensive power, which she plans on using with the knife if she ever gets into hand-to-hand combat (though she'll try to avoid that). She also gains Charge, which will come in handy when she finds more numenera artifacts in her explorations.

Her esoteries and focus abilities cost Intellect points to activate, so she's glad to have a lot of points in her Intellect Pool. In addition, her Intellect Edge will help reduce those costs. If she uses her Onslaught force blast without applying Effort, it costs her 0 Intellect points and deals 4 points of damage. Likewise, using her Shock ability without applying Effort costs 0 Intellect points. Her Intellect Edge will allow her to save points to devote toward applying Effort for other purposes, perhaps to boost the accuracy of her Onslaught or Shock abilities.

JACK

Jacks are intrepid explorers. They are jacks of all trades—hence the name—although the word also hearkens back to fables involving a wily, resourceful hero who always seems to be named Jack. Used as a verb, "to jack" means to steal, to deceive, or to get out of a tight scrape through ingenuity or luck.

Jacks don't use one skill or tactic exclusively; they use whatever weapons, armor, esoteries, or anything else might help them. They are hunters (particularly treasure hunters), con artists, skalds, rogues, scouts, and experts in a variety of fields.

Jacks in Society: Jacks are crafters, entertainers, leaders, and thieves. They're architects, engineers, con artists, salespeople, and teachers. This diversity doesn't mean that the Jack is the archetypal everyman—that kind of simple categorization would diminish the character type. Jacks are remarkable in that they can do so many different things, and some do multiple things. If one Jack is an artist and another is an explorer, there's likely a third who is both at once.

Skilled and learned Jacks who share their gifts with others are prized members of society, well respected for what they know and can do. A village might be protected by warriors, but it's the Jack who makes everything run smoothly by repairing or building whatever is needed, handling disputes, investigating mysteries, and so on. On the other hand, Jacks who use their varied abilities to benefit only themselves are distrusted at best and reviled at worst. The murderers and thieves of a community are likely Jacks.

Jacks in the Group: Jacks fill in the space between the extremes of Nanos and Glaives. They frequently do a little of everything and know a little of everything. They can fight alongside a Glaive or have a scholarly talk with a Nano. There are no right or wrong places, actions, or roles for Jacks. They can hold their own in combat or other dangerous situations, but they excel at many assorted tasks like searching for clues, using diplomacy with the locals, or repairing a piece of broken gear. The drawback, of course, is that Jacks are rarely the best fighters in combat or the best numenera handlers. They might, however, be the best at more specialized skills. They're the most likely characters to know how to climb, how to stand watch effectively, how to jimmy a lock, and how to jury-rig a makeshift shelter or snare trap.

Jacks and the Numenera: Jacks gravitate toward cyphers or artifacts that expand their array of options even further. An enhanced piece of armor might be fine for a Glaive, but many Jacks would rather have an object that allows them to communicate at a distance, walk through walls, or put foes to sleep.

JACK CONNECTION

Roll a d20 or choose from the following list to determine a specific fact about your background that provides a connection to the rest of the world. You can also create your own fact.

Roll	Background
1	You come from a large family and had to fend for yourself from an early age.
2	Your older sister is a skilled nano. You weren't able to follow her path, but the numenera is not unknown to you.
3	You're a member of a guild of explorers who specialize in uncovering ancient mysteries.
4	You worked alongside your father, who was skilled in many things, until he disappeared one day with no explanation.
5	You grew up on the streets and studied at the school of hard knocks.
6	You remember little of your past, which has always seemed strange to you.
7	You came of age in the wild and are used to living rough.
8	Your family is wealthy but earns little respect from the locals.
9	You're friends with many people in the community and are generally well regarded.
10	You have an annoying rival who always seems to get in your way or foil your plans.
11	You're in love with a local shopkeeper, but that person shows little interest in you.
12	Several expeditions preparing to explore old ruins and odd mysteries would like you to join them because you seem like a promising addition to the team.
13	Your best friend from childhood is now an Aeon Priest.
14	You come from a nearby community, but the locals consider the folk of your hometown to be untrustworthy rivals.
15	You're close friends with a local married couple, both of whom are experienced nanos.
16	You're drinking buddies with a number of the local guards and glaives.
17	You once saved the child of a local noble from a fire, and she is very grateful.
18	You used to work with a troupe of traveling minstrels and performers, and they remember you fondly (as do people in the places you visited).
19	You're wanted for a crime you didn't commit.
20	You have a friend with an extensive library, plenty of food and drink, and a comfortable home—and the door is always open to you.

Advanced Jacks: Jacks are the most flexible of the character types, and advanced Jacks are no different. Some learn esoteries, as Nanos do. Others hone their combat abilities. Some Jacks do both, gaining more skills and improving at, well, a little bit of everything.

JACK BACKGROUND

You might hear people say that a Jack is just the typical everyman (or everyperson), but don't believe it. You aren't like anyone else. You can do things that no one else can do because you do so *many* things. You're a warrior, you're a thief, you're a diplomat, you're a sage, and you're a spy.

When you choose Jack as your character type, come up with an explanation for how you learned your wide variety of talents. Choose one of the three options described below. It will provide the foundation of your background and give you an idea of how you can improve. The GM can use this information to develop adventures and quests that are specific to your character and play a role in your advancement.

BORN LUCKY

You seem to be better than most people because you are. Your ancestors were part of a genetic experiment, and your genes are superior to those of the average human. You're smarter, stronger, more dexterous, and able to learn mental and physical skills more quickly. Folks might call you charismatic, blessed, divinely gifted, or just plain lucky. They probably said the same thing about your parents, their parents, and so on. Some of your genetic advantage might even grant you low-level psychic abilities that greatly resemble the "miracles" performed by Nanos.

Advancement: You might be a superhuman, but you're still limited by what you learn and experience. Therefore, you must continue to train and study. Practice is the key—it just comes easier for you than it does for others.

When you improve, it's because you have honed your natural abilities or unlocked heretofore unknown genetic traits.

Esoteries, page 40

Confusingly, in some cultures, the term "jack" is an insult, while in others it's a compliment.

SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS

You learned things the hard way—on your own. Adaptive and canny, you express the true strengths of humanity in your ability to adjust quickly to circumstances, pick up new tricks to succeed, and ultimately survive when you probably should be dead.

Most likely, you grew up on your own, perhaps on the streets, in the wilderness, or amid ruins. The details don't really matter. What's important is that you taught yourself how to overcome whatever challenges came along.

Advancement: Just keep on keeping on. You got to where you are by observing, learning, adapting, and adopting. To advance, you need to do more of the same. Constant wariness coupled (somewhat paradoxically) with constant curiosity allows you to hone your skills and new capabilities.

Player intrusion, page 30



A COBBLED JUMBLE

You're the product of generations of eugenics, bolstered by minor cybernetic enhancements, a few small psychic abilities, and the lessons of secret masters. In other words, you don't have one source of power or one explanation for your abilities—you have many, and as far as you're concerned, that's the best formula for success. You don't put all your eggs in a single proverbial basket. To really get ahead, you must rely on multiple strengths.

You've always got an unexpected trick up your sleeve or a fallback contingency. For example, you might have subdermal implants that make you more resilient, your training might let you sense a foe's attack before he strikes, and your psychic abilities could allow you to push your enemy's blade slightly to the left so you can just barely dodge it. In the end, you're simply hard to hurt.

Advancement: You have chosen every path, so you must travel each of them. Training and drugs fuel your body and mind, brain implants grant you additional skills, and devices hidden in your palms give you fresh abilities. Advancement means new teachers and technicians, strange substances and radiations, and an ever-increasing need to discover the secrets of the past that will prove essential for your future.

JACK PLAYER INTRUSIONS

When playing a Jack, you can spend 1 XP to use one of the following player intrusions, provided the situation is appropriate and the GM agrees.

Familiar Insight: You know this person (or heard about them somewhere) well enough to give insight about their motives or intentions and how best to convince them to see things your way. You know the right words, posturing, inflection, amount of emotional manipulation, or even what sort of joke or agreeable complaint might sway them. This can convince a neutral person to take your side, or a hostile one to hear you out for a little while longer.

Inspirational Recall: You recall an important detail from a previous encounter (perhaps something you don't even remember noticing at the time) that suggests a successful course of action for your current situation. This might be recognizing a password hidden in an innocuous code or riddle, realizing you saw a suspicious individual near a crime scene, overhearing an important conversation between two NPCs, or understanding that an NPC's subtle glance or gesture had additional connotations indicating what you should do.

Lucky Break: Something unexpected happens that is to your advantage. A rope your opponent is hanging from might snap,

the person you're debating in front of an influential Aeon Priest might trip or forget what they were going to say, or something that was supposed to last only a round or two lasts a little while longer.

JACK STAT POOLS

Stat	Pool Starting Value
Might	10
Speed	10
Intellect	10

You get 6 additional points to divide among your stat Pools however you wish.

JACK TIERS

FIRST-TIER JACK

First-tier Jacks have the following abilities:

Effort: Your Effort is 1.

Jack of All Trades: You have an Edge of 1 for one stat of your choice: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You have an Edge of 0 for the other two stats.

Cypher Use: You can bear two cyphers at a time.

Weapons: You can use light and medium weapons without penalty. You have an inability with heavy weapons; your attacks with heavy weapons are hindered.

Skills: Choose one skill (other than attacks or defense) in which you aren't already trained. You are trained in this skill.

Flex Skill: At the beginning of each day, choose one task (other than attacks or defense) on which you will concentrate. For the rest of that day, you're trained in that task. You can't use this ability with a skill you're already trained in to become specialized.

Starting Equipment: You start with clothing, two weapons, light armor, an explorer's pack, a pack of light tools, two cyphers (chosen for you by the GM), one oddity (chosen by the GM), and 8 shins. Before selecting your weapons, armor, and other gear, you might want to wait until after you've chosen your tricks of the trade, descriptor, and focus.

Default Starting Cyphers and Oddity: Your GM may provide you with starting cyphers and an oddity. Otherwise, you begin with the following.

- **Cyphers:** machine control implant, visage changer
- **Oddity:** Small square cage that puts whatever single creature is inside it into stasis

Tricks of the Trade: You have a wide range of abilities that keep people guessing. Some of these tricks of the trade are technically esoteries, using the numenera, while others are more mundane. Some tricks are constant, ongoing effects; others are specific actions that usually cost points from one of your stat Pools.

Choose two of the tricks described below. You can't choose the same trick more than once unless its description says otherwise.

- **Trained in Armor:** You can wear armor for long periods of time without tiring and can compensate for slowed reactions from wearing armor. You can wear any kind of armor. You reduce the Speed Effort cost for wearing armor by 1. Enabler.
- **Create Deadly Poison (3+ Intellect points):** You create one dose of a level 2 poison that inflicts 5 points of damage. You can apply this poison to a weapon, food, or drink as part of the action of creating it. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the level of the poison; each level of Effort used in this way increases the poison level by 1. If unused, the poison loses its potency after one hour. Action.
- **Critter Companion:** A level 1 creature accompanies you and follows your instructions. This creature is no larger than a large cat (about 20 pounds, or 9 kg) and is normally some sort of domesticated species. You and the GM must work out the details of your creature, and you'll probably make rolls for it in combat or when it takes actions. The critter companion acts on your turn. As a level 1 creature, it has a target number of 3 and a 3 health, and it inflicts 1 point of damage. Its movement is based on its creature type (avian, swimmer, and so on). If your critter companion dies, you can search an urban or wild environment for 1d6 days to find a new companion. Enabler.
- **Face Morph (2+ Intellect points):** You alter your features and coloration for one hour, hiding your identity or impersonating someone. This affects only your face, not the rest of your body. You can't perfectly duplicate someone else's face, but you can be accurate enough to fool someone who knows that person casually. You have an asset in all tasks involving disguise. You must apply a level of Effort to be able to impersonate a different species. Action.
- **Fleet of Foot (1+ Speed points):** You can move a short distance as part of another action. You can move a long distance as your entire action for a turn. If you apply a level of Effort to this ability, you can move a long distance and make an attack as your entire action for a turn, but the attack is hindered. Enabler.
- **Late Inspiration (3 Intellect points):** You retry a task you failed within the past one minute, using the same difficulty and modifiers, except this time you have an asset on the

Jacks are able to take the best of all abilities and fuse them into a style all their own.

Poison applied to a weapon lasts for one successful attack. If you want to poison someone else with the weapon after that, you need to apply a new dose of poison.

Although technically esoteries are Nano abilities, Jacks often refer to their more clearly supernatural tricks of the trade as esoteries as well.

Inability, page 101

Your character's starting equipment is as important as your character's beginning skills. Learn more about what you carry and what it's used for in Chapter 7: Equipment, page 93.

Machine control implant, page 282

Visage changer, page 288

Oddities, page 304

LOOKING FOR

Descriptors, page 53

You can only have one phased pocket at a time. It's like a concealed pocket in your clothing, except it goes to a tiny private dimension. Its opening is big enough for your fist. The pocket and everything inside of it moves with you.

Feiren Quevas is a well-known Jack who sought the legendary three keys of the Silver Door, the only entrance to the massive numenera object known as the Mushroom due to its shape. Although he never possessed all three keys at once, he did manage to uncover an artifact known as the Red Glove, which could transmute any material touched to vapor.

task. If this retry fails, you can't use this ability to retry it again. Enabler.

- **Link Senses (2 Intellect points):** You touch a willing creature and link its senses to yours for one minute. At any time during that duration, you can concentrate to see, hear, and smell what that creature is experiencing, instead of using your own senses. If you or the creature move out of long range, the connection is broken. Action to initiate.
- **Phased Pocket (2+ Intellect points):** You connect yourself for one hour to a small space that is out of phase and moves with you. You can access this space as if it were a convenient pocket or bag, but nobody else can perceive or access the space unless they have the ability to interact with transdimensional areas. The space can hold up to 1 cubic foot. The space is a part of you, so you can't use it to carry more cyphers than your limit, a detonation cypher activated inside the space harms you, and so on. When the connection ends, anything in the space falls out. For each 2 additional Intellect points you spend, the pocket lasts an additional hour. Enabler.
- **Vanish (2 Intellect points):** You become invisible for a short amount of time. While invisible, you have an asset on stealth and Speed defense tasks. The invisibility ends at the end of your next turn, or if you do something to reveal your presence or position—attacking, using an ability, moving a large object, and so on. Action.

SECOND-TIER JACK

Second-tier Jacks have the following abilities:

Skills: You are trained in one task of your choosing (other than attacks or defense). If you choose a task you're already trained in, you become specialized in that task. You can't choose a task you're already specialized in.

Tricks of the Trade: Choose one of the following tricks (or a trick from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. Instead of selecting a trick, you can select a lower-tier Glaive fighting move or Nano esotery. In addition, you can replace one of your first-tier tricks with a different first-tier trick.

- **Augment Cypher (2+ Intellect points):** When you activate a cypher, add +1 to its level. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the level of the cypher by an additional +1 (per level of Effort applied). You can't increase the cypher's level above 10. Enabler.
- **Create Debilitating Poison (3+ Intellect points):** You create one dose of a level 2 poison that hinders the poisoned creature's actions for ten minutes. You can apply this poison to a weapon, food, or drink as part of the action of creating it. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the level of the poison; each level of Effort used in this way increases the poison level by 1. If unused, the poison loses its potency after one hour. Action.
- **Encouraging Presence (2 Intellect points):** For one minute, allies within short range gain an asset on defense rolls. Action.
- **Illusory Duplicate (2 Intellect points):** You create a single image of yourself within immediate range. The image looks like you as you are now (including how you are dressed). The image can move (for example, you could make it walk or attack), but it can't move more than an immediate distance from where you created it. The illusion includes sound and smell. It lasts for ten minutes and changes as you direct (no concentration is needed). If you move beyond short range of the illusion, it vanishes. Action to create.
- **Intense Interaction (3 Intellect points):** You gain an asset on intimidating, persuading, and influencing people for ten minutes. Action.
- **Restful Presence:** Creatures who make a recovery roll within short range of you add +1 to their roll. Enabler.
- **Skill With Defense:** Choose one type of defense task in which you are not already trained: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You are trained in defense tasks of that type. Unlike most tricks of the trade, you can select this trick up to three times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different type of defense task. Enabler.

THIRD-TIER JACK

Third-tier Jacks have the following abilities:

Expert Cypher Use: You can bear three cyphers at a time.

Skills: You are trained in one task of your choosing (other than attacks or defense). If you choose a task you're already trained in, you become specialized in that task. You can't choose a task you're already specialized in.

Tricks of the Trade: Choose one of the following tricks (or a trick from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. Instead of selecting a trick, you can select a lower-tier Glaive fighting move or Nano esotery. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier tricks with a different trick from the same lower tier.

- **Far Hands (2 Intellect points):** You can use your tricks of the trade from one range category farther away than normal: immediate becomes short, short becomes long, long becomes very long. Using the

trick at this increased distance hinders the task. Enabler.

- **Meticulous Planner:** If you spend a long time planning an action, you gain an asset on performing it. The time to study and plan for the action is ten times as long as it takes to perform the action. For example, if you want to jump across a hole in the floor (one action), you can study the area for ten rounds (about a minute), and when you attempt to jump over the hole, you have an asset on the jump. This benefit applies to only one roll—if you want to perform the task again with the benefit of an asset, you need to study and plan again. Enabler.
- **Obstacle Running (3 Speed points):** For the next minute, you can ignore obstacles that slow your movement, allowing you to travel at normal speed through areas with rubble, fences, tables, and similar objects that you would have to climb over or move around. This movement might include sliding on a railing, briefly running along a wall, or even stepping on a creature to boost yourself over something. If an obstacle would normally require a Might or Speed task to overcome, such as swinging on a rope, balancing on a rope, or jumping over a hole, you are trained at that task. Enabler.
- **Recharge Cypher (2+ Intellect points):** You recharge a cypher that was used in the past ten minutes, allowing it to be used again. You must touch the cypher, spend 1 XP, and succeed at an understanding numenera roll (difficulty equal to the level of the cypher) to recharge it. Otherwise, the cypher remains spent and useless. Some cyphers (particularly pills and injections) cannot be recharged in this way. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to recharge a cypher that was used more than ten minutes ago; each level of Effort used in this way extends the time period by ten minutes. Action.
- **Skill With Attacks:** Choose one type of attack in which you are not already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. Enabler.

FOURTH-TIER JACK

Fourth-tier Jacks have the following abilities:

Skills: You are trained in one task of your choosing (other than attacks or defense). If you choose a task you're already trained in, you become specialized in that task. You can't choose a task you're already specialized in.

Tricks of the Trade: Choose one of the following tricks (or a trick from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. Instead of selecting a trick, you can select a lower-tier Glaive fighting move or Nano esotery. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier tricks with a different trick from the same lower tier.

- **Bypass Barrier (6+ Intellect points):** You get past a door, force field, or other barrier up to 3 feet (1 m) thick that is blocking your way. Depending on the barrier, this might involve finding a weak spot you can push through, luckily pressing the right button, or even weirder explanations like touching a thin place between dimensions or an unexpected interaction with numenera you carry. The difficulty of the task is the level of the barrier. This trick allows you alone to pass through, not anyone else, and the



Another famous Jack is Crimson Tellach, an expert in both the numenera and the finer points of combat. She lost her hand in a battle with a jiraskar, but she replaced it herself with a solid light emitter that allows her to create a temporary hand, weapon, tool, or anything else she needs.



way through closes at the end of your turn (which might mean you're trapped on the far side). You have an asset in any attempts to get through it again. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the maximum thickness of the barrier, each level adding 3 feet (1 m). Action.

- **Crowd Control (6+ Intellect points):** You control the actions of up to five creatures in short range. This effect lasts for one minute. All targets must be level 2 or lower. Your control is limited to simple verbal commands like "stop," "run away," "follow that Glaive," "look over there," or "get out of my way." All affected creatures respond to the command unless you specifically command them otherwise. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the maximum level of the targets or affect an additional five people. Thus, to control a group that has a level 4 target (two levels above the normal limit) or a group of fifteen people, you must apply two levels of Effort. When the Crowd Control trick ends, the creatures remember your commands but don't remember being controlled—your commands seemed reasonable at the time. Action to initiate.
- **Illusory Evasion (5 Intellect points):** When you are hit by an attack, you teleport an immediate distance away, leaving behind an illusory copy of yourself to be struck by that attack instead of you. This destroys the illusion but leaves you unharmed by the attack. If the attack affects an area and the teleportation can't get you out of that area, the attack still affects you normally. Enabler.
- **Memory Becomes Action (4+ Intellect points):** You can duplicate a one-action esotery, fighting move, or trick of the trade, performing it as if it were natural for you. You must have seen the ability used within the past week, it must be third tier or lower, and it must be an ability with a point cost. In addition to the point cost of Memory Becomes Action, you must pay the Might, Speed, or Intellect cost of the ability you are copying. For example, if you want to copy a Glaive friend's Lunge attack (which normally costs 2 Might points), you'd pay 4 Intellect points to activate Memory Becomes Action and 2 Might points to use Lunge. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to copy an ability you saw longer than one week ago; each level of Effort used in this way extends the time period by one week. Enabler.

Stun, page 112

Lunge, page 33

If you choose Memory Becomes Action, familiarize yourself with the abilities of other characters in the group so you don't slow down gameplay when you copy them.

FIFTH-TIER JACK

Fifth-tier Jacks have the following abilities:

Adept Cypher Use: You can bear four cyphers at a time.

Skills: You are trained in one task of your choosing (other than attacks or defense). If you choose a task you're already trained in, you become specialized in that task. You can't choose a task you're already specialized in.

Tricks of the Trade: Choose one of the following tricks (or a trick from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. Instead of selecting a trick, you can select a lower-tier Glaive fighting move or Nano esotery. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier tricks with a different trick from the same lower tier.

- **Effective Skill:** Choose one non-combat skill when you gain this ability. You get a minor effect with that skill when you roll a natural 14 or higher (the d20 shows "14" or more). You get a major effect with that skill when you roll a natural 19 or higher (the d20 shows "19" or higher). Unlike most tricks of the trade, you can select this trick more than once. Each time you select it, you must choose a different non-combat skill. Enabler.
- **Jaunt (5+ Intellect points):** You instantaneously teleport yourself to any location within a long distance that you can see. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the distance you can travel; each level of Effort used in this way increases the range by another 100 feet (30 m). Action.
- **Mastery With Defense:** Choose one type of defense task in which you are trained: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You are specialized in defense tasks of that type. Unlike most tricks of the trade, you can select this trick up to three times. Each time you select it, you must choose a different type of defense task. Enabler.
- **Stun Attack (6 Speed points):** You attempt a difficulty 5 Speed action to stun a creature as part of your melee or ranged attack. If you succeed, your attack inflicts its normal damage and stuns the creature for one round, causing it to lose its next turn. If you fail, you still make your normal attack roll, but you don't stun the opponent if you hit. Action.
- **Subtle Tricks:** You can use your skills and tricks of the trade in ways that don't look like you're doing anything. If the skill or trick would normally require an obvious movement, phrase, or other action by you, it instead seems to happen on its own. Instead of using your tools to pick a lock, the lock clicks open as you stand near it. Instead of manipulating a numenera

screen, the information you want appears on the screen when you look at it. Instead of bluffing your way past some guards, they step aside as you approach and let you through. This ability usually only works up to an immediate distance. You still must spend points and make rolls to use your skills and tricks with this ability. Performing a trick in a subtle way hinders the task. This ability can't be used to conceal your attack or defense rolls. Enabler.

- **Teach Trick (5+ Intellect points):** You spend an hour instructing someone on how to perform a trick of the trade that you know. The trick must be no higher than fourth tier. For one hour after you teach them, the student can perform that trick of the trade as if it were natural for them. They must pay the Might, Speed, or Intellect cost (if any) to use that trick. The student must be able to understand your instructions. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase how long the student can use the trick or to teach additional students at the same time; each level of Effort used in this way increases the duration by one hour or the number of students by one. One hour to initiate.

SIXTH-TIER JACK

Sixth-tier Jacks have the following abilities:

Skills: You are trained in one task of your choosing (other than attacks or defense). If you choose a task you're already trained in, you become specialized in that task. You can't choose a task you're already specialized in.

Tricks of the Trade: Choose one of the following tricks (or a trick from a lower tier) to add to your repertoire. Instead of selecting a trick, you can select a lower-tier Glaive fighting move or Nano esotery. In addition, you can replace one of your lower-tier tricks with a different trick from the same lower tier.

- **Blurring Speed (7 Speed points):** You move so quickly that until your next turn, you look like a blur. While you are blurred, if you apply Effort to a melee attack task or Speed defense task, you get a free level of Effort on that task; you can move a short distance as part of another action or a long distance as your entire action. Enabler.
- **Doppeljack (7+ Might points):** A perfect copy of you appears within an immediate distance. This doppeljack might be a version of you from another timeline, a parallel dimension, or the past; an instantly spawned clone; or something even stranger. The doppeljack is a level 6 NPC with 18 health. It has your mind and memories, and you control it as if it were you in another body. In effect, while this ability is active, you have two bodies. If the doppeljack uses any of your abilities that cost points, those points come from your Pools (including spending Effort). Controlling two bodies at once is difficult and distracting; while this ability is active, all tasks performed by you or the doppeljack are hindered. The doppeljack has no equipment other than simple clothing. It remains for up to one minute, but disappears if killed or if you use an action to dismiss it. If the doppeljack is killed, you take 6 points of damage that ignore Armor, and you lose your next action. If you are killed while the doppeljack is present, you live on as the doppeljack (it becomes your character instead of being an NPC that disappears). In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the duration of this ability; each level of Effort used in this way adds one minute to the doppeljack's existence. Action.

The GM might decide that some creatures can't be taught with Teach Trick even if they can understand you. Seskii, simple automatons, and bodiless energy beings are poor students.

Free level of Effort, page 103



- **Impossible Walk (5+ Speed points):** You can walk (or crawl or run) on steep inclines and horizontal surfaces (such as walls and cliffs) for the next minute as if they were flat ground. When using this ability, "down" for you is either the surface you are walking on or the normal orientation of gravity (your choice). If you apply one level of Effort, you can also walk on the ceiling or on a liquid or semi-liquid surface such as water, mud, quicksand, or even lava (although touching a dangerous surface like lava still harms you). If you apply two levels of Effort, you can also walk on air as if it were solid ground.
- **Mastery With Attacks:** Choose one type of attack in which you are trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are specialized in attacks using that type of weapon. Enabler. (In place of this ability, you may instead select Skill With Attacks to become trained in one type of attack.)
- **Outside Reality (6+ Intellect points):** You exist outside of everything until the start of your next turn. To you, a few seconds pass while you are alone in a cool void. To everyone else, you seem to vanish for a few seconds and reappear in the same place. While in this unreal state, you can use abilities or objects on yourself, but you can't perceive, interact with, or affect the rest of the world, and vice versa. Time-based effects already on you (like a poison that inflicts damage every round) are paused while you exist outside reality, but when this ability ends they resume as if no time had passed. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the duration; each level of Effort used in this way adds one round to how long you spend outside reality. Enabler.
- **Rapid Recovery:** You can make most recovery rolls faster than normal. You can make your one-action recovery roll as part of another action or when it isn't your turn, your ten-minute recovery roll takes you only one action, and your one-hour recovery roll takes you only ten minutes (your ten-hour rest is unchanged). If you make a recovery roll when it isn't your turn, until the end of your next turn all of your tasks are hindered. Enabler.

JACK EXAMPLE

James wants to play a Jack. He likes the idea of being crafty, sneaky, and maybe a little devious. He puts 4 of his additional points in his Intellect Pool (raising it to 14) and 2 points in his Speed Pool (raising it to 12). This leaves his Might Pool at 10. He decides to have a Speed Edge of 1, but it was a hard choice—he was tempted to put his Edge point in Intellect. As a first-tier character, his Effort is 1.

James chooses a quarterstaff and a dart thrower for his weapons. The staff is a medium weapon that inflicts 4 points of damage. The dart thrower is a light weapon, so he eases attack rolls with it, but each shot inflicts only 2 points of damage. The dart thrower comes with 12 darts.

He wears a leather jerkin that gives him 1 point of Armor, so James subtracts 1 from all damage he takes. This type of armor normally increases the cost of using Speed Effort by 1. To compensate, James chooses Trained in Armor as one of his tricks of the trade, which reduces that cost by 1 (meaning it becomes 0).

For his other trick, he chooses Face Morph. James likes the opportunities this gives him to trick and confuse people.

He also chooses a skill to be trained in. James decides to go with stealth so that whenever he tries to hide, move quietly, or slip something into his pocket unnoticed, he eases the task. In addition, his flex skill lets him choose another skill each day, so he has many options.

His character can bear two cyphers. The GM decides that one item is an injector that gives James a temporary +1 bonus to his Speed Edge for one hour, and the other is a belt-mounted device that projects a force shield around him for ten minutes and grants +3 to his Armor.

James still needs to choose his descriptor and focus. For his descriptor, he picks Clever to complement his "devious" theme, so he adds 2 to his Intellect Pool, raising it to 16. The Clever descriptor also means he is trained in lies and trickery (which is fitting for his character), defense rolls against mental effects, and identifying or assessing things. Basically, his Jack is good at figuring out whatever situation he lands in. Conversely, he doesn't excel at reading books, studying, or remembering details. Finally, the descriptor gives James some extra starting money—probably from being so clever.

For his focus, he makes a choice that's devious but overt: Crafts Illusions. At first tier, he can spend 1 point from his Intellect Pool to create minor images. The focus also grants him a strange oddity that involves images in a piece of glass. James will use these abilities to create a con artist character who is careful and clever and backs up his lies with illusions.

Quarterstaff, page 96

Dart thrower, page 96

Eases, page 15

Leather jerkin, page 95

Trained in Armor, page 47

Face Morph, page 47

Skill With Attacks, page 49

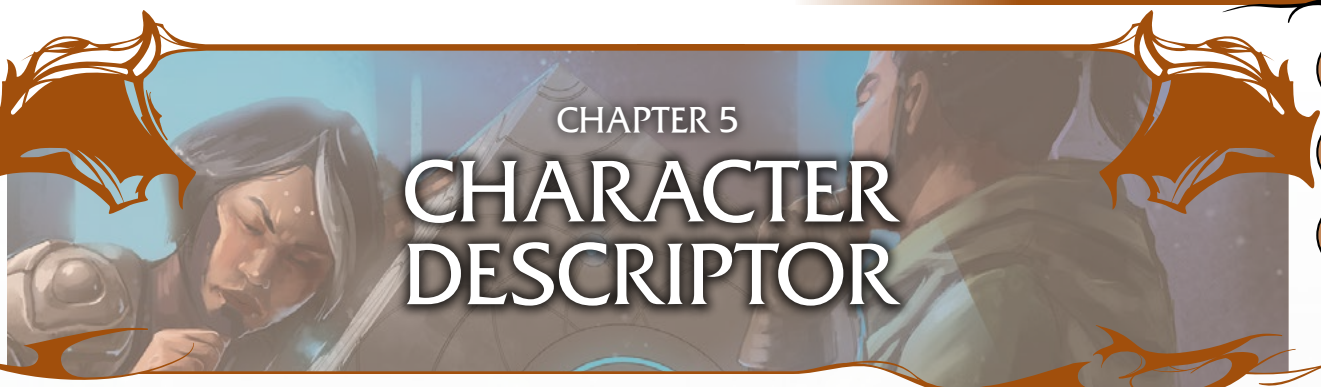
Clever, page 54

Recovery roll, page 111

Crafts Illusions, page 65

LOOKING FOR

Bears a Halo of Fire, page 58



CHAPTER 5

CHARACTER DESCRIPTOR

Your descriptor defines your character—it flavors everything you do. The differences between a Charming Glaive and a Graceful Glaive are considerable. The descriptor changes the way those characters go about every action. Your descriptor places your character in the situation (the first adventure, which starts the campaign) and helps provide motivation. It is the adjective of the sentence "I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*."

Descriptors offer a one-time package of extra abilities, skills, or modifications to your stat Pools. Not all of a descriptor's offerings are positive character modifications. For example, some descriptors have inabilities—tasks that a character isn't good at. You can think of inabilities as "negative skills"—instead of being one step better at that kind of task, you're one step worse. If you become skilled at a task that you have an inability with, they cancel out. Remember that characters are defined as much by what they're not good at as by what they are good at.

Descriptors also offer a few brief suggestions of how your character got involved with the rest of the group on their first adventure. You can use these, or not, as you wish.

This section details the following descriptors: Charming, Clever, Graceful, Intelligent, Learned, Mystical/Mechanical, Rugged, Stealthy, Strong, Strong-Willed, Swift, and Tough. Choose one of them for your character. You can pick any descriptor you wish regardless of whether you're a Glaive, Nano, or Jack.

DESCRIPTORS

Charming
Clever
Graceful
Intelligent
Learned
Mystical/Mechanical
Rugged
Stealthy
Strong
Strong-Willed
Swift
Tough

CHARMING

You're a smooth talker and a charmer. Whether through seemingly supernatural means or just a way with words, you can convince others to do as you wish. Most likely, you're physically attractive or at least highly charismatic, and others enjoy listening to your voice. You probably pay attention to your appearance, keeping yourself well groomed. You make friends easily.

You play up the personality facet of your Intellect stat; intelligence is not your strong suit. You're personable, not necessarily studious or strong-willed.

You gain the following benefits:

Personable: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Intellect Pool, page 22

Skill: You're trained in all tasks involving positive or pleasant social interaction.

Skill: You're trained when using esoteries or special abilities that influence the minds of others.

Esoteries, page 40

Contact: You have an important contact who is in an influential position, such as a minor noble, the captain of the town guard, an Aeon Priest, or the head of a large gang of thieves. You and the GM should work out the details together.

Aeon Priest, page 264

Inability: You were never good at studying or retaining facts. Any task involving lore, knowledge, or understanding is hindered.

Inability: Your willpower is not one of your strong points. Whenever you try to resist a mental attack, you're hindered.

Additional Equipment: You've managed to talk your way into some decent discounts and bonuses in recent weeks. As a result, you have 10 extra shins jangling in your pocket.

Shins, page 93

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

1. You convinced one of the other PCs to tell you what they were doing.

2. You instigated the whole thing and convinced the others to join you.

3. One of the other PCs did a favor for you, and now you're repaying that obligation by helping them with the task at hand.

4. There is reward involved, and you need the money.

Your descriptor defines your character—it flavors everything you do.

CLEVER

You're quick-witted, thinking well on your feet. You understand people, so you can fool them but are rarely fooled. Because you easily see things for what they are, you get the lay of the land swiftly, size up threats and allies, and assess situations with accuracy. Perhaps you're physically attractive, or maybe you use your wit to overcome any physical or mental imperfections.

You gain the following benefits:

Intellect Pool, page 22

Smart: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You're trained in all interactions involving lies or trickery.

Skill: You're trained in defense rolls to resist mental effects.

Skill: You're trained in all tasks involving, identifying, or assessing danger, lies, quality, importance, function, or power.

Inability: You were never good at studying or retaining trivial knowledge. Any task involving lore, knowledge, or understanding is hindered.

Additional Equipment: You see through the schemes of others and occasionally convince them to believe you—even when, perhaps, they should not. Thanks to your clever behavior, you have 10 extra shins.

Shins, page 93

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

1. You convinced one of the other PCs to tell you what they were doing.
2. From afar, you observed that something interesting was going on.
3. You talked your way into the situation because you thought it might earn some money.
4. You suspect that the other PCs won't succeed without you.

GRACEFUL

You have a perfect sense of balance, moving and speaking with grace and beauty. You're quick, lithe, flexible, and dexterous. Your body is perfectly suited to dance, and you use that advantage in combat to dodge blows. You might wear garments that enhance your agile movement and sense of style.

Speed Pool, page 22

You gain the following benefits:

Agile: +2 to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You're trained in all tasks involving balance and careful movement.

Skill: You're trained in all tasks involving physical performing arts.

Skill: You're trained in all Speed defense tasks.

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

1. Against your better judgment, you joined the other PCs because you saw that they were in danger.
2. One of the other PCs convinced you that joining the group would be in your best interest.
3. You're afraid of what might happen if the other PCs fail.
4. There is reward involved, and you need the money.

INTELLIGENT

You're quite smart. Your memory is sharp, and you easily grasp concepts that others might struggle with. This aptitude doesn't necessarily mean that you've had years of formal education, but you have learned a great deal in your life, primarily because you pick things up quickly and retain so much.

You gain the following benefits:

Smart: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You're trained in an area of knowledge of your choice.

Skill: You're trained in all actions that involve remembering or memorizing things you experience directly. For example, instead of being good at recalling details of geography that you read about in a book, you can remember a path through a set of tunnels that you've explored before.

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

1. One of the other PCs asked your opinion of the mission, knowing that if you thought it was a good idea, it probably was.
2. You saw value in what the other PCs were doing.
3. You believed that the task might lead to important and interesting discoveries.
4. A colleague requested that you take part in the mission as a favor.

LOOKING FOR
Commands Mental Powers, page 60

LEARNED

You have studied, either on your own or with an instructor. You know many things and are an expert on a few topics, such as history, biology, geography, the numenera, nature, or any other area of study. Learned characters typically carry a few books around with them and spend their spare time reading.

You gain the following benefits:

Smart: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You're trained in three areas of knowledge of your choice.

Inability: You have few social graces. Any task involving charm, persuasion, or etiquette is hindered.

Additional Equipment: You have two additional books on topics of your choice.

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

1. One of the other PCs asked you to come along because of your knowledge.
2. You need money to fund your studies.
3. You believed that the task might lead to important and interesting discoveries.
4. A colleague requested that you take part in the mission as a favor.

MYSTICAL/MECHANICAL

You have a special talent that can be viewed in one of two ways. You might think of yourself as "mystical," and thus attuned with the mysterious and the paranormal, or you might think of yourself as "mechanical," and thus adept with devices and machines. In either case, your true talents lie with the numenera. You likely have experience with ancient lore, and you can sense and wield the numenera—though whether that means "magic" or "technology" is up to you (and probably up to those around you as well).

Numenera, page 13

Mystical characters often wear jewelry, such as a ring or an amulet, or have tattoos or other marks that show their interests. Mechanical characters tend to carry a lot of tools and treat them almost like talismans.

You gain the following benefits:

Smart: +2 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You're trained in all actions involving understanding numenera.

Sense "Magic": You can sense whether the numenera is active in situations where its presence is not obvious. You must study an object or location closely for a minute to get a feel for whether the touch of the ancients is at work.

Esotery: You can perform the esotery known as Hedge Magic when you have a free hand and can pay the Intellect point cost.

Hedge Magic: You can perform small tricks: temporarily change the color or basic appearance of a small object, cause small objects to float through the air, clean a small area, mend a broken object, prepare (but not create) food, and so on. You can't use Hedge Magic to harm another creature or object. Action.

LOOKING FOR
Controls Beasts, page 62



Inability: You have a manner or an aura that others find a bit unnerving. Any task involving charm, persuasion, or deception is hindered.

Additional Equipment: You have an extra oddity, determined by the GM.

Oddity, page 304

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

1. A dream guided you to this point.
2. You need money to fund your studies.
3. You believed the mission would be a great way to learn more about the numenera.
4. Various signs and portents led you here.

Explorer's pack, page 98

Ranged weapon, page 95

RUGGED

You're a nature lover accustomed to living rough, pitting your wits against the elements. Most likely, you're a skilled hunter, gatherer, or naturalist. Years of living in the wild have left their mark with a worn countenance, wild hair, or scars. Your clothing is probably much less refined than the garments worn by city dwellers.

Of the three character aspects, descriptors make the most sense, both mechanically and narratively, to change over the life of a character. If it fits the story, for example, a GM might allow a character to change from being "charming" to being "tough" after terrible circumstances befall her. When changing descriptors, the PC loses all former benefits and gains those from the new descriptor.



Speed Pool, page 22

Esoteries, page 40

You gain the following benefits:

Skill: You're trained in all tasks involving climbing, jumping, running, and swimming.

Skill: You're trained in all tasks involving training, riding, or placating natural animals.

Skill: You're trained in all tasks involving identifying or using natural plants.

Inability: You have no social graces and prefer animals to people. Any task involving charm, persuasion, etiquette, or deception is hindered.

Additional Equipment: You carry an explorer's pack. If you already have one, you can instead take 50 extra feet (15 m) of rope, two more days' worth of rations, and an extra ranged weapon.

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

1. Against your better judgment, you joined the other PCs because you saw that they were in danger.
2. One of the other PCs convinced you that joining the group would be in your best interest.
3. You're afraid of what might happen if the other PCs fail.
4. There is reward involved, and you need the money.

STEALTHY

You're sneaky, slippery, and fast. These talents help you hide, move quietly, and pull off tricks that require sleight of hand. Most likely, you're wiry and small. However, you're not much of a sprinter—you're more dexterous than fleet of foot.

You gain the following benefits:

Quick: +2 to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You're trained in all stealthy tasks.

Skill: You're trained in all interactions involving lies or trickery.

Skill: You're trained in all esoteries or special abilities involving illusions or trickery.

Inability: You're sneaky but not fast. All movement-related tasks are hindered.

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

1. You attempted to steal from one of the other PCs. That character caught you and forced you to come along with them.
2. You were tailing one of the other PCs for reasons of your own, which brought you into the action.
3. An NPC employer secretly paid you to get involved.
4. You overheard the other PCs talking about a topic that interested you, so you decided to approach the group.

LOOKING FOR
Controls Gravity, page 63

Remember that characters are defined as much by what they're not good at as by what they are good at.

STRONG

You're extremely strong and physically powerful, and you use these qualities well, whether through violence or feats of prowess. You likely have a brawny build and impressive muscles.

You gain the following benefits:

Very Powerful: +4 to your Might Pool.

Skill: You're trained in all actions involving breaking inanimate objects.

Skill: You're trained in all jumping actions.

Additional Equipment: You have an extra medium weapon or heavy weapon.

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

1. Against your better judgment, you joined the other PCs because you saw that they were in danger.
2. One of the other PCs convinced you that joining the group would be in your best interest.
3. You're afraid of what might happen if the other PCs fail.
4. There is reward involved, and you need the money.

STRONG-WILLED

You're tough-minded, willful, and independent. No one can talk you into anything or change your mind when you don't want it changed. This quality doesn't necessarily make you smart, but it does make you a bastion of willpower and resolve. You likely dress and act with unique style and flair, not caring what others think.

You gain the following benefits:

Willful: +4 to your Intellect Pool.

Skill: You're trained in resisting mental effects.

Skill: You're trained in tasks requiring incredible focus or concentration.

Inability: Willful doesn't mean brilliant. Any task that involves figuring out puzzles or problems, memorizing things, or using lore is hindered.

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

1. Against your better judgment, you joined the other PCs because you saw that they were in danger.
2. One of the other PCs convinced you that joining the group would be in your best interest.
3. You're afraid of what might happen if the other PCs fail.
4. There is reward involved, and you need the money.

SWIFT

You move quickly, able to sprint in short bursts and work with your hands with dexterity. You're great at crossing distances quickly but not always smoothly. You are likely slim and muscular.

You gain the following benefits:

Fast: +4 to your Speed Pool.

Skill: You're trained in initiative actions (to determine who goes first in combat).

Skill: You're trained in running actions.

Inability: You're fast but not necessarily graceful. Any task involving balance is hindered.

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

1. Against your better judgment, you joined the other PCs because you saw that they were in danger.
2. One of the other PCs convinced you that joining the group would be in your best interest.
3. You're afraid of what might happen if the other PCs fail.
4. There is reward involved, and you need the money.

TOUGH

You're strong and can take a lot of physical punishment. You might have a large frame and a square jaw. Tough characters frequently have visible scars.

You gain the following benefits:

Resilient: +1 to Armor.

Healthy: Add 1 to the points you regain when you make a recovery roll.

Skill: You're trained in Might defense actions.

Additional Equipment: You have an extra light weapon.

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

1. You're acting as a bodyguard for one of the other PCs.
2. One of the PCs is your sibling, and you came along to watch out for them.
3. You need money because your family is in debt.
4. You stepped in to defend one of the PCs when they were threatened. While talking to them afterward, you heard about the group's task.

Might Pool, page 22

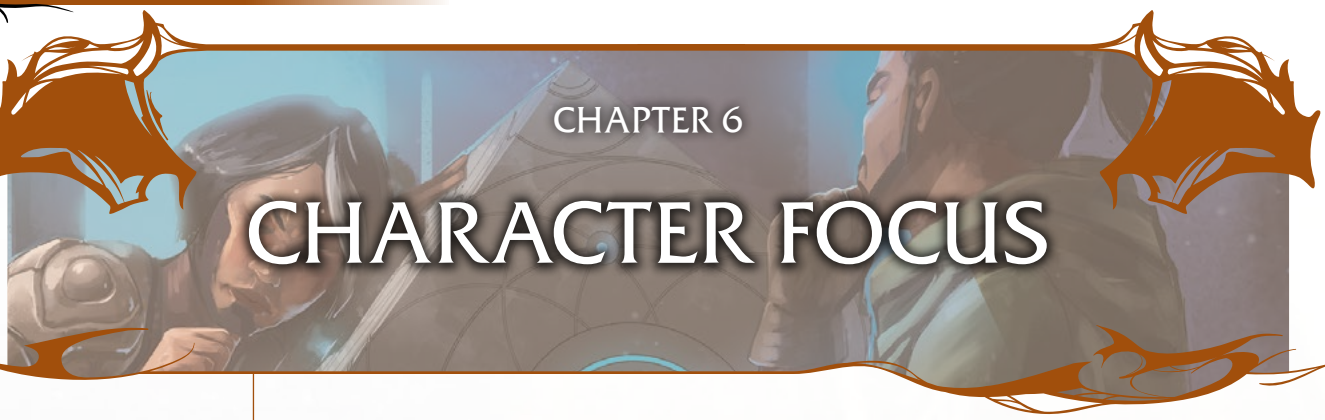
Armor, page 109

Intellect Pool, page 22

Recovery roll, page 111

Light weapon, page 96

LOOKING FOR
Crafts Illusions, page 65



CHAPTER 6

CHARACTER FOCUS

Focus is what makes your character unique. No two PCs in a group should have the same focus. Your focus gives you benefits when you create your character and each time you ascend to the next tier. It's the verb of the sentence "I am an *adjective noun* who *verbs*."

When you choose a character focus, you get a special connection to one or more of your fellow PCs, a first-tier ability, and perhaps additional starting equipment. A few foci offer slight alterations of type special abilities (fighting moves for Glaives, tricks of the trade for Jacks, and esoteries for Nanos). Each focus also offers suggestions to the GM and the player for possible effects or consequences of really good or really bad die rolls.

As you progress to a new tier, your focus grants you more abilities. Each tier's benefit is usually labeled "action" or "enabler." If an ability is labeled "action," you must take an action to use it. If an ability is labeled "enabler," it makes other actions better or gives some other benefit, but it's not an action. An ability that allows you to blast foes with rays is an action. An ability that grants you additional damage when you make attacks is an enabler. You can use an enabler in the same turn as you perform another action.

Each tier's benefits are independent of and cumulative with benefits from other tiers (unless indicated otherwise). So if your first-tier ability grants you +1 to Armor and your fourth-tier ability also grants you +1 to Armor, when you reach fourth tier, you have a total of +2 to Armor.

Armor, page 109

Fighting moves, page 31

Tricks of the trade, page 47

Esoteries, page 40

BEARS A HALO OF FIRE

You can create a sheath of flames around your body. You leave scorch marks wherever you go, and you can't handle combustible objects without first dousing your inherent flames. Your special abilities (such as Nano esoteries) are tainted with flame. Fiery visuals accompany your powers, and in some cases, your predilection for flame actually reshapes your abilities to take on a fiery nature where none existed before.

You probably wear red and yellow, or perhaps black.

Although most of those who take up this mantle are Nanos, flame-wielding Glaives and Jacks are fearsome indeed.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. Through a quirk of fate, your fire cannot harm that character.

2. Pick one other PC. You burned this character by accident, and they still have a scar.

Bears a Halo of Fire GM intrusions: *Fire burns flammable material. Fire spreads, perhaps beyond the control of the one who started it. Primitive creatures fear fire and often attack what they fear.*

FOCI

Bears a Halo of Fire
Commands Mental Powers
Controls Beasts
Controls Gravity
Crafts Illusions
Employs Magnetism
Entertains
Exists Partially Out of Phase
Explores Dark Places
Fights With Panache
Focuses Mind Over Matter
Fuses Flesh and Steel
Howls at the Moon
Hunts
Lives in the Wilderness
Masters Defense
Masters Weaponry
Murders
Rages
Rides the Lightning
Speaks With a Silver Tongue
Talks to Machines
Wears a Sheen of Ice
Wields Power With Precision
Wields Two Weapons at Once
Works the Back Alleys
Works Miracles

3. Pick one other PC. You're always trying to impress them with your fire, but you're not sure why.

4. Pick one other PC. When you're near this character, sometimes your flames burn with weird patterns.

Additional Equipment: You have an artifact—a device that sprays inanimate objects to make them fire-resistant. All your starting gear has already been treated unless you don't want it to be.

Fire Powers: Your special abilities that would normally use force or other energy (such as electricity) instead use fire. For example, force blasts from Onslaught are blasts of flame, and Flash is a burst of fire. These alterations change nothing except the type of damage and the fact that it might start fires. As another example, Barrier produces a wall of roaring flames. In this case, the alteration changes the esotery so that the barrier is not solid but instead inflicts 1 point of damage to anything that touches it and 4 points of damage to anyone who passes through it. Even fighting moves such as No Need for Weapons might mean your hands and fists are surrounded by flames.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The target or something near the target catches fire.

Major Effect Suggestions: An important item on the target's person is destroyed.

Tier 1: Shroud of Flame (1 Intellect point). At your command, your entire body becomes shrouded in flames that last up to ten minutes. The fire doesn't burn you, but it automatically inflicts 2 points of damage to anyone who tries to touch you or strike you with a melee attack. Flames from another source can still hurt you. While the shroud is active, you gain +2 points of Armor that protect only against damage from fire from another source. Enabler.

Tier 2: Hurl Flame (2 Intellect points). While your Shroud of Flame is active, you can reach into your halo and hurl a handful of fire at a target. This is a ranged attack with short range that deals 4 points of fire damage. Action.

Fiery Power. When you use the Onslaught force blast esotery or the Flash esotery, increase the damage by 1 point. If you don't have either of those abilities, this ability has no effect. Fiery Power does not affect damage from the Onslaught mindslice. Enabler.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Fiery Hand of Doom or Wings of Fire as your tier 3 ability.

Fiery Hand of Doom (3 Intellect points). While your Shroud of Flame is active, you can reach into your halo and produce a hand made of animate flame that is twice the size of a human's hand. The hand acts as you direct, floating in the air. Directing the hand is an action. Without a command, the hand does nothing. It can move a long distance in a round, but it never moves farther away from you than long range. The hand can grab, move, and carry things, but anything it touches takes 1 point of damage per round from the heat. The hand can also attack. It's a level 3 creature and deals 1 extra point of damage from fire when it attacks. Once created, the hand lasts for ten minutes. Action to create; action to direct.

Wings of Fire (4 Intellect points). While your Shroud of Flame is active, you can spread wings of fire and can levitate, moving at a rate of up to 20 feet (6 m) per round in any direction for one minute. You can also take one other non-movement action on your turn. Action.

Tier 4: Flameblade (4 Intellect points). When you wish it, you extend your halo of fire to cover a weapon you wield in flame for one hour. The flame ends if you stop holding or carrying the weapon. While the flame lasts, the weapon inflicts 2 additional points of damage. Enabler.

Tier 5: Fire Tendrils (5 Intellect points). When you wish it, your halo sprouts three tendrils of flame that last for up to ten minutes. As an action, you can use the tendrils to attack, making a separate attack roll for each. Each tendril inflicts 4 points of damage. Otherwise, the attacks function as standard attacks. If you don't use the tendrils to attack, they remain but do nothing. Enabler.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Fire Servant or Inferno Trail as your tier 6 ability.

Fire Servant (6 Intellect points). You reach into your halo and produce an automaton of fire that is your general shape and size. It acts as you direct each round. Directing the servant is an action, and you can command it only when you are within long range of it. Without a command, the servant continues to follow your previous command. You can also give it a simple programmed action, such as "Wait here, and attack anyone who comes within short range until they're dead." The servant lasts for ten minutes, is a level 5 creature, and deals 1 extra point of damage from fire when it attacks. Action to create; action to direct.

Inferno Trail (6 Intellect points). For the next minute, you leave a trail of flame in your wake. The trail matches your path and lasts for up to a minute, creating a wall of flame about 6 feet (2 m) high that inflicts 5 points of damage to any creature that passes through it, potentially catching them on fire for an additional 1 point of damage each round (if they are flammable) until they spend a round putting out the fire. Action.

No Need for Weapons, page 31

Onslaught, page 40

Flash, page 40

LOOKING FOR

Employs Magnetism, page 67

COMMANDS MENTAL POWERS

Commands Mental Powers GM intrusions: *Other beings that have mental or psychic powers often seek to destroy those like themselves out of jealousy and fear. Some beings feed on the mental energies of others, and psychics are the most desired meal of all.*

Mind Control, page 42

Mind Reading, page 41

Crowd Control, page 50

Free level of Effort, page 103

LOOKING FOR

Entertains, page 68
Exists Partially Out of Phase, page 69

You have always had special abilities that others didn't seem to share. Through practice and devotion, you have honed this unique talent so that you can harness the power of your mind to perform deeds.

No one can tell that you have this ability just by looking at you, although you wear a crystal or jewel somewhere on your head to help focus your power. Either this focusing object was given to you by someone who recognized your ability, or you came upon it by accident and it triggered your abilities. Some people with mental powers—often called psychics or psionics by ordinary folks—are secretive and a little paranoid.

Although Nanos frequently command mental powers, psionic characters of every other type are not uncommon.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. You have found that this character is particularly tuned into your mental powers. While you're within short range of them, the two of you are always in telepathic contact, and they are never harmed by your Psychic Bursts.

2. Pick one other PC. For some reason, you can't telepathically interact with them.

3. Pick one other PC. That character and you always enjoy the effect of your Telepathic ability even when you haven't triggered it.



4. Pick one other PC. When they stand next to you and use their action to concentrate on helping you, your Telepathic ability extends to a very long range.

Additional Equipment: You have a crystal or jewel artifact that, when worn against your forehead or temple, adds 1 point to your Intellect Pool. If you're ever without the artifact, subtract 5 points from your Intellect Pool; the points are restored if you regain the item.

Mental Esoteries: When you apply Effort to the special abilities that control minds, like the Mind Control esotery, the Mind Reading esotery, or the Crowd Control trick of the trade, you get a free level of Effort on that task. Enabler.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The range or duration of the mental power is doubled.

Major Effect Suggestions: You can take another action on that same turn.

Tier 1: Telepathic (1+ Intellect points). You can speak telepathically with others who are within short range. Communication is two-way, but the other party must be willing and able to communicate. You don't have to see the target, but you must know that it's within range. You can have more than one active contact at once, but you must establish contact with each target individually. Each contact lasts up to ten minutes. If you apply a level of Effort to increase the duration rather than affect the difficulty, the contact lasts for 28 hours. Action to establish contact.

Tier 2: Mind Reading (2 Intellect points). You can read the surface thoughts of a creature within short range, even if the target doesn't want you to. You must be able to see your target. Once you have established contact, you can read the target's thoughts for up to one minute. If you also have the Mind Reading special ability from your type, you can use this ability at long range, and you don't need to be able to see the target (but you do have to know that the target is within range). Action to initiate.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Psychic Burst or Psychic Suggestion as your tier 3 ability.

Psychic Burst (3+ Intellect points). You blast waves of mental force into the minds of up to three targets within short range (make an Intellect roll against each target). This burst inflicts 3 points of Intellect damage (and thus ignores Armor). For each 2 additional Intellect points you spend, you can make an Intellect attack roll against an additional target. Action.

Psychic Suggestion (4 Intellect points). You attempt to make the target take the action you indicate on its next turn. If the action you wish

ORIGIN OF SPECIAL POWERS

If you want an explanation for some of the more supernatural powers provided by your focus, roll d100 and check the following table, discarding results that don't fit logic.

d100	Explanation
01–05	Natural mutation
06–09	Unexpected viral reconstruction of your body
10–15	Mutation due to ancestral exposure to chemicals, radiation, or virus
16–21	Mutation due to experimental science performed on your ancestor(s)
22–27	An encounter with the iron wind (unexpected nanotech reconstruction of your body)
28	Abduction by extraterrestrial(s) who experimented or performed surgery on you
29	Abduction by rogue Aeon Priest(s) who experimented or performed surgery on you
30	Abduction by machine intelligence that experimented or performed surgery on you
31	Encounter with an ultraterrestrial entity that mysteriously changed you
32–35	Intentional or accidental fusion/implantation with mechanical devices in fingertips
36–39	Intentional or accidental fusion/implantation with mechanical devices in palms
40–43	Intentional or accidental fusion/implantation with mechanical device in head or eye
44–47	Intentional or accidental fusion/implantation with mechanical device in chest
48–51	Intentional or accidental immersion in or treatment with ancient chemicals or radiation
52–56	Hidden artifact(s) secreted on your person
57–60	Cloud of nanotech that follows and responds to you for reasons unknown
61–64	Implant or mutation that provides knowledge and power from the datasphere
65–66	Drugs
67	Training by extraterrestrial entities in strange and mysterious devotions
68–69	Training by secret order that has mastered mysteries passed down from the ancients
70	Training by machine intelligence that shared inhuman knowledge
71–80	Confluence: roll twice and combine results
81–00	Unknown (GM can secretly roll again and keep the result hidden)

the target to take would cause direct harm to the target or its allies, your mental attack is hindered. Action.

Tier 4: Use Senses of Others (4 Intellect points). You can see, hear, smell, touch, and taste through the senses of anyone with whom you have telepathic contact. You can attempt to use this ability on a willing or unwilling target within long range; an unwilling target can try to resist. You don't need to see the target, but you must know that it's within range. Your shared senses last ten minutes. Action to establish.

Tier 5: Precognition (6 Intellect points). You dimly sense the future for the next ten minutes. This has the following effects until the duration expires:

Your defense tasks gain an asset.

You can predict the actions of those around you. You gain an asset to seeing through deceptions and attempts to betray you as well as avoiding traps and ambushes.

You know what people are probably thinking and what they will say before they say it, which gives you an edge. You gain an asset to all interaction skills.

Enabler.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Mind Control or Telepathic Network as your tier 6 ability.

Mind Control (6+ Intellect points). You control the actions of another creature you touch. This effect lasts for one minute. The target must be level 2 or lower. Once you have established control, you maintain mental contact with the target and sense what it senses. You can allow it to act freely or override its control on a case-by-case basis. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to increase the maximum level of the target or increase the duration by one minute. Thus, to control the mind of a level 5 target (three levels above the normal limit) or control a target for four minutes (three levels above the normal duration), you must apply three levels of Effort.

LOOKING FOR

Explores Dark Places, page 71

If you also have the Mind Control special ability from your type, the normal level limit is 3 rather than 2. When the effect ends, the creature doesn't remember being controlled or anything it did while under your command. Action to initiate.

Telepathic Network (0+ Intellect points). When you wish it, you can contact up to ten creatures known to you, no matter where they are. All targets must be willing and able to communicate. You automatically succeed at establishing a telepathic network; no roll is required. All creatures in the network are linked and can communicate telepathically with one another. They can also "overhear" anything said in the network, if they wish. Activating this ability doesn't require an action and doesn't cost Intellect points; to you, it's as easy as speaking out loud. The network lasts until you choose to end it. If you spend 5 Intellect points, you can contact twenty creatures at once, and for every 1 Intellect point you spend above that, you can add ten more creatures to the network. These larger networks last for ten minutes. Creating a network of twenty or more creatures does require an action to establish contact. Enabler.

Creatures, page 222

CONTROLS BEASTS

Controls Beasts GM intrusions: *Most civilized communities are reluctant to welcome dangerous animals and look warily on those who consort with such creatures. Out-of-control beasts can be a real hazard.*

To say that you have a way with animals and nonhuman creatures doesn't begin to cover it. Your mastery and communication with beasts is positively uncanny. They come to you fearlessly, and it's not uncommon for birds to alight on your shoulder or for small animals to climb up your arms or legs.

You probably wear tough clothing and have a disheveled or grizzled appearance that suggests a rugged, outdoor life. Perhaps you even smell like an animal.

Any type of character is likely to have this focus.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. That character seems to disturb your creatures in a way that you can't explain. You know that you must keep your animals away from them if possible, or you might lose control.

2. Pick one other PC. The creature that you're bonded with seems to have a special bond with this other person as well. You must decide whether it brings up feelings of jealousy or camaraderie within you and whether to thwart the connection or help it blossom.

3. Pick one other PC. Recently, they accidentally (or perhaps intentionally) put your beast companion in a position of danger. Your companion is now nervous around them, and you are struggling with your own emotional response to the incident.

4. Pick one other PC. They dislike beasts of all kinds, seeing them as little more than food or prey. You hope that exposing them to your beast companion will change their mind. It's up to that player how their character responds to the experience.

Additional Equipment: You have three days' worth of food for your beast companion, plus a harness, collar, or similar accoutrement.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The duration of calmness or control is doubled.

Major Effect Suggestions: The duration of calmness or control extends to 28 hours.

Other character abilities (such as the Jack's trick of the trade, Critter Companion, page 47) may give you another companion, which means you could have more than one companion creature, each with different levels and abilities.

Tier 1: Beast Companion. A level 2 creature of your size or smaller accompanies you and follows your instructions. You and the GM must work out the details of your creature, and you'll probably make rolls for it in combat or when it takes actions. The beast companion acts on your turn. As a level 2 creature, it has a target number of 6 and 6 health and it inflicts 2 points of damage. Its movement is based on its creature type (avian, swimmer, and so on). If your beast companion dies, you can hunt in the wild for 1d6 days to find a new companion. Enabler.

Tier 2: Soothe the Savage (2 Intellect points). You calm a nonhuman beast within 30 feet (9 m). You must speak to it (although it doesn't need to understand your words), and it must see you. It remains calm for one minute or for as long as you focus all your attention on it. The GM has final say over what counts as a nonhuman beast, but unless some kind of deception is at work, you should know whether you can affect a creature before you attempt to use this ability on it. Aliens, extradimensional entities, very intelligent creatures, and automatons never count. Action.

Communication (2 Intellect points). You can convey a basic concept to a creature that normally can't speak or understand speech. The creature can also give you a very basic answer to a simple question. Action.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Mount or Stronger Together as your tier 3 ability.

Mount. A level 3 creature serves you as a mount and follows your instructions. While you're mounted on it, the creature can move and you can attack on your turn, which provides an asset to your attack. You and the GM must work out the details of the creature, and you'll probably make rolls for it when it takes non-combat actions. The mount acts on your turn. If your mount dies, you can hunt in the wild for 3d6 days to find a new one. Enabler.

LOOKING FOR
Fights With Panache, page 72

Stronger Together. When you and your beast are within immediate distance of each other, you inflict 2 additional points of damage when you attack and both of you gain an asset to defense actions. Enabler.

Tier 4: Beast Eyes (3 Intellect points). You can sense through your beast companion's senses if it is within 1 mile (1.5 km) of you. This effect lasts up to ten minutes. Action to establish.

Improved Companion. Your beast companion increases to level 4. As a level 4 creature, it has a target number of 12 and 12 health, and it inflicts 4 points of damage (though in most cases, instead of attacking, it provides an asset to your attacks). Enabler.

Tier 5: Beast Call (5 Intellect points). You summon a horde of small animals or a single level 4 beast to help you temporarily. These creatures do your bidding for as long as you focus your attention, but you must use your action each turn to direct them. Creatures are native to the area and arrive under their own power, so if you're in an unreachable place, this ability won't work. Action.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either As If One Creature or Control the Savage as your tier 6 ability. Whichever one you choose, you also get Improved Companion.

As If One Creature. When you and your beast are within immediate distance of each other, you can share damage inflicted on either of you. For instance, if one of you is struck by a weapon for 4 points of damage, divide the damage between the two of you as you see fit. Only the Armor and resistances of the target initially damaged come into play. So if you have 2 Armor and are struck by a force blast for 4 points of damage, your beast can take the 2 points of damage you would suffer, but their Armor does not come into play, nor does their immunity to force blasts, if any. Enabler.

Control the Savage (6 Intellect points). You can control a calm nonhuman beast within 30 feet (9 m). You control it for as long as you focus all your attention on it, using your turn each round. The GM has final say over what counts as a nonhuman beast, but unless some kind of deception is at work, you should know whether you can affect a creature before you attempt to use this ability on it. Aliens, extradimensional entities, very intelligent creatures, and automatons never count. Action.

Improved Companion. Your beast companion increases to level 5. As a level 5 creature, it has a target number of 15 and 15 health, and it inflicts 5 points of damage. Enabler.

CONTROLS GRAVITY

Gravity must have been quite a concern for the people of prior epochs because there are many paths within the numenera to control it. Through a quirk of fate, some unique device(s), or supreme devotion (or a combination of all three), you have learned to tap into the power of gravity. With one foot planted in the distant past, you are a mysterious individual. Most likely, you are also older, having spent much of your life honing your odd, ancient talents.

You might prefer billowy garments that display your mastery of gravity's pull and conceal your identity and intentions.

No one type of character is more likely to control gravity than another, but the power is rare.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. In the recent past, while using your gravitational powers, you accidentally sent that character hurtling into the air or plummeting toward the ground. Either way, they barely survived. It is up to the player of that character to decide whether they resent, fear, or forgive you.

Controls Gravity GM intrusions: *Many people are frightened to be around someone who controls gravity. Losing command of such powers could inadvertently send objects careening off into the sky, perhaps even into orbit.*

LOOKING FOR

Focuses Mind Over Matter, page 73





2. Pick one other PC whose focus intertwines with yours. This odd connection affects them in some way. For example, if the character uses a bow, your ability to manipulate gravity sometimes extends the range of their arrows. If they are good at jumping, they seem less bound by the laws of gravity, and jump farther.

3. Pick one other PC. They are deathly afraid of heights. Through your ability to control gravity, you would like to teach them how to be more comfortable with their feet off the ground. They must decide whether or not to take you up on your offer.

4. Pick one other PC. They are skeptical of your ability to control gravity and think it's just one big illusion. They might even attempt to discredit you or discover the "secret" behind your so-called skills.

Additional Equipment: You have a pen-sized oddity that tells the weight of whatever you point it at (within short range). The weight is displayed on a small glass plate in runes that only you can decipher.

Gravity Ability: You can choose to learn Weighty instead of one of the abilities granted by your type:

Weighty (1 Intellect point): You briefly increase the weight of a target within short range enough to stop them in their tracks, preventing the target from moving and hindering any attempted tasks on their next turn. Action.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The duration of the effect is doubled.

Major Effect Suggestions: An important item on the target's person is destroyed.

Tier 1: Hover (1 Intellect point). You float slowly into the air. As your action, you can concentrate to remain motionless in the air, or float up to a short distance, but no more; otherwise, you drift with the wind or with any momentum you have gained. This effect lasts for up to ten minutes. If you also have the Hover ability granted by your type, you can hover for twenty minutes and move your normal speed. Action to initiate.

Tier 2: Lessening Gravity's Pull. By manipulating gravity's pull on yourself, you gain +1 to your Speed Edge. Enabler.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Define Down or Gravity Cleave as your tier 3 ability.

Define Down (4 Intellect points). The natural gravity within an area a short distance across that you are within immediate range of changes directions so that it flows in the direction you determine (up, up and to the south, west, and so on) for a few seconds, then snaps back. Affected targets could be

Oddity, page 304

A character could use Define Down to help propel allies to a location they can't otherwise climb to.

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Fuses Flesh and Steel, page 74
Howls at the Moon, page 76

tossed up to 20 feet (6 m) and take a few points of damage. Action.

Gravity Cleave (3 Intellect points). You can harm a target within short range by rapidly increasing gravity's pull on one portion of the target and decreasing it on another, inflicting 6 points of damage. Action.

Tier 4: Field of Gravity (4 Intellect points). When you wish it, a field of manipulated gravity around you pulls incoming ranged projectile attacks to the ground. You are immune to such attacks until your turn in the next round. You must be aware of an attack to foil it. This ability does not work on energy attacks. Enabler.

Tier 5: Flight (4+ Intellect points). You can float and fly through the air for one hour. For each level of Effort applied, you can affect one additional creature of your size or smaller. You must touch the creature to bestow the power of flight. You direct the other creature's movement, and while flying, it must remain within sight of you or fall. In terms of overland movement, a flying creature moves about 20 miles (32 km) per hour and is not affected by terrain. Action to initiate.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Improved Gravity Cleave or Weight of the World as your tier 6 ability.

Improved Gravity Cleave (9 Intellect points). You can harm a group of targets within long range by rapidly increasing gravity's pull on one portion of each target and decreasing it on another, inflicting 6 points of damage. The targets must be within immediate range of each other. Action.

Weight of the World (6+ Intellect points). You can increase a target's weight dramatically. The target is pulled to the ground and can't move physically under its own power for one minute. The target must be within short range. For each level of Effort applied, you can affect one additional creature. Action.

CRAFTS ILLUSIONS

You use the numenera to create holographic images that appear real. You are, in effect, an artist—a crafter of light and sound. Holographic images can never inflict direct harm or exert real force, but they can fool creatures, changing opinions and even behaviors if you craft them cleverly.

You likely dress with flair and color. The appearance of things is important to you, both their beauty and their ugliness. You are a visual performer who can entertain, terrify, or fool everyone you encounter.

A Nano is the most likely character to be an illusionist, but Jacks find illusions to be helpful as well. The rare Glaive illusionist can find ways to use tricks in battle.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. This character is never fooled by your illusions and is never affected by the trickery of your special abilities. You can choose whether or not you know this fact.

2. Pick one other PC. They have a special angle on your illusions and can sometimes point out potential places of weakness.

3. Pick two other PCs who are willing to be trained as your assistants. When you use your Minor Illusion ability, if both of these characters are in immediate range, they can assist you, working together to ease your action.

4. Pick one other PC. That character's face is so intriguing to you in a way you don't understand that your minor illusions sometimes look like them, even when you don't intend them to.

Crafts Illusions GM intrusions: *Obviously, illusions of things that someone has never seen before are not likely to be believable. An NPC might realize that an illusion is false at just the wrong moment.*

LOOKING FOR

Hunts With Great Skill, page 77 (name changed)



Oddities, page 304

Additional Equipment: You have an oddity that appears to be a piece of clear glass in a synth frame. By manipulating hidden switches on the frame, you can make random moving images appear on the glass. The images are usually strange and sometimes incomprehensible.

Psychedelic Abilities: Your special abilities take on flamboyant visual and auditory qualities of your choosing. This alteration changes nothing other than the appearance of the effects. For example, your attack esoteries might look like monsters made of energy that assail your foes. Your Stasis esotery might look like a tentacled beast that holds the victim in place. Your Teleportation esotery might seem like a hole in space opens up and swallows you. Your Skill With Defense fighting move might look like ghostly echoes mimicking your actions or ephemeral arms blocking attacks against you.

Stasis, page 41

Teleportation, page 43

Skill With Defense, page 32

Minor Effect Suggestions: Your illusion has a special quality to it—perhaps an observer sees an image of something from their past.

Major Effect Suggestions: The illusion lasts for one hour, or if it already lasts that long, it lasts for 28 hours.

Tier 1: Minor Illusion (1 Intellect point). You create a single image of a creature or object within immediate range. The image must fit within a 10-foot (3 m) cube. The image can move (for example, you could make the illusion of a person walk or attack), but it can't leave the area defined by the cube. The illusion includes sound but not smell. It lasts for ten minutes, but if you want to change the original illusion significantly—such as making a creature appear to be wounded—you must concentrate on it again (though doing so doesn't cost additional Intellect points). If you move beyond immediate range of the cube, the illusion vanishes. Action to create; action to modify.

Tier 2: Disguise (2+ Intellect points). You appear to be someone or something else, roughly of your size and shape, for up to one hour. Once created, the disguise requires no concentration. For each additional Intellect point you spend, you can disguise one other creature. All disguised creatures must stay within sight of you or lose their disguise. Action to create.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Cast Illusion or Major Illusion as your tier 3 ability.

Cast Illusion. You can increase the range at which you create and maintain your immediate-range illusions to anywhere within short range that you can perceive. Enabler.

Major Illusion (3 Intellect points). You create a complex scene of images within immediate range. The entire scene must fit within a 100-foot (30 m) cube. The images can move, but they can't leave the area defined by the cube. The illusion includes sound and smell. It lasts for ten minutes and changes as you direct (no concentration is needed). If you move beyond immediate range of the cube, the illusion vanishes. Action to create.

Tier 4: Illusory Selves (4 Intellect points). You create four holographic duplicates of yourself within short range. The duplicates last for one minute. You mentally direct their actions, and the duplicates aren't mirror images—each one can do different things. If struck violently, they either disappear permanently or freeze motionless (your choice). Action to create.

Tier 5: Terrifying Image (6 Intellect points). You use a bit of subtle telepathy to learn which images would appear terrifying to creatures that you choose within long range. Those images appear within that area and menace the appropriate creatures. Make an Intellect attack roll against each creature you want to affect. Success means the creature flees in terror for one minute, pursued by its nightmares. Failure means the creature ignores the images, which do not hamper it in any way. Action.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Grandiose Illusion or Permanent Illusion as your tier 6 ability.

Grandiose Illusion (8 Intellect points). You create a fantastically complex scene of images that fit within a 1-mile (1.5 km) cube that you are also within. You must be able to see the images when you create them. The images can move in the cube and act in accordance with your desires. They can also act logically (such as reacting appropriately to fire or attacks) when you aren't directly observing them. The illusion includes sound and smell. For example, armies can clash in battle, with air support from machines or flying creatures, on and above terrain of your creation. The illusion lasts for one hour (or longer, if you concentrate on it after that time). Action.

Permanent Illusion (9 Intellect points). An illusion (or portion of an illusion) that you create that fits within a 10-foot (3 m) cube becomes permanent. You can permanently end the illusion as an action, but others must expend exceptional ingenuity to prevent the illusion from regenerating even if it has apparently been dispersed. Enabler.

LOOKING FOR

Leads, page 83 in Numenera Destiny

EMPLOYS MAGNETISM

Electromagnetism is a fundamental force in the universe, and it is yours to command. You are a master of metal.

You probably wear a lot of metal, perhaps as part of your clothing or armor, as part of your accessories (such as jewelry or piercings), embedded into your body surgically, or in some combination of these options.

No one type of character is more likely than any other to employ magnetism, although Glaives who wield weapons and wear armor will find it an interesting complement to their powers.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. Whenever you use your powers, the metallic items on that character's body shudder, rattle, clink, and shake if they are within short range.

2. Pick one other PC. You worked together in the past, and the job ended badly.

3. Pick two other PCs. While practicing your Diamagnetism ability, you once accidentally sent them careening into each other. You've never been able to repeat it. Whether you tell them that you've been trying to replicate the strange effect is up to you.

4. Pick one other PC who has metallic elements in their body. You're afraid to use your magnetism abilities near them because you once had a bad experience involving Move Metal and a (probably former) friend's mechanical eyes.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The duration of the effect is doubled.

Major Effect Suggestions: An important item on the target's person is destroyed.

Tier 1: Move Metal (1 Intellect point). You can exert force on metal objects within short range for one round. Once activated, your power has an effective Might Pool of 10, a Might Edge of 1, and an Effort of 2 (approximately equal to the strength of a fit, capable, adult human), and you can use it to move metal objects, push against metal objects, and so on. For example, in your round, you could lift and pull a light metal object anywhere within range to yourself or move a heavy object (like a piece of furniture) about 10 feet (3 m). This power lacks the fine control to wield a weapon or move objects with much speed, so in most situations, it's not a means of attack. You can't use this ability on your own body. The power lasts for one hour or until its Might Pool is depleted, whichever comes first. Action.

Tier 2: Repel Metal. By manipulating magnetism, you are trained in Speed defense tasks against any incoming attack that uses metal. Enabler.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Destroy Metal or Guide Bolt as your tier 3 ability.

Destroy Metal (3 Intellect points). You instantly tear, rip, or burst a metal object that is within sight, within short range, and no bigger than half your size. Attempt an Intellect

Employs Magnetism GM intrusions: *Metal can twist and bend in unexpected ways. A lapse in concentration might cause something to slip or drop at just the wrong time.*

LOOKING FOR

Lives in the Wilderness, page 78



task to destroy the object; the task is eased by three steps compared to breaking it with brute strength. Action.

Guide Bolt (4+ Intellect points). When you make an attack with a metallic bolt or metal-tipped arrow on a target within short range, you can improve the attack's aim and velocity, which grants an asset to the attack and inflicts an additional 2 points of damage. If you apply a level of Effort, you grant the same benefits to a ranged attack made by an ally within immediate range. In any case, you can use this ability only once per round. Enabler.

Tier 4: Magnetic Field (4 Intellect points). When you wish it, a field of magnetism around you pulls incoming, ranged, metallic projectile attacks (such as arrows, bullets, a thrown metal knife, and so on) to the ground. You are immune to such attacks for one round. You must be aware of an attack to foil it. Enabler.

Tier 5: Command Metal (5 Intellect points). You reshape a metallic item as you desire. The item must be within sight and within short range, and its mass can be no greater than your own. You can affect multiple items at once as long as their combined mass falls within these limits. You can fuse multiple items together. You can use this power to destroy a metal object (as the Destroy Metal ability), or you can craft it into another desired shape (crudely, unless you have the proper crafting skills). You can then move the new object anywhere within range. For example, you could take a few metal shields, fuse them together, and use the resulting shape to block a doorway. You can use this ability to make an attack—causing a foe's armor to constrict, rendering a metal item into shards that you fling across the battlefield, and so on—against one target within short range. Regardless of the form of the attack, it is an Intellect action that deals 7 points of damage. Action.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Diamagnetism or Iron Punch as your tier 6 ability.

Diamagnetism. You magnetize any nonmetallic object within short range so that it can be affected by your other powers. Thus, with Move Metal, you can move any object. With Repel Metal, you are trained in all Speed defense tasks, regardless of whether the incoming attack uses metal. And so on. Enabler.

Iron Punch (5+ Intellect points). You pick up a heavy object within short range and hurl it at someone within short range, an Intellect action that deals 6 points of damage to the target and to the hurled object. For each additional level of Effort applied, you can pick up a slightly larger object, allowing you to affect one additional target within short range as long as it is next to the prior target. Action.

Entertains GM intrusions: *Failing to entertain can be worse than not having tried, as you often end up annoying or offending your audience. Musical instruments break, paints dry in their pots, and the words to a poem or song, once forgotten, never return.*

Recovery roll, page 111

LOOKING FOR
Masters Defense, page 80

ENTERTAINS

You are an entertainer: a singer, dancer, poet, storyteller, or something similar. You perform for the benefit of others. Naturally charismatic and talented, you have also studied to master your art. You know all the old poems, songs, jokes, and stories, and you're skilled at creating new ones, too.

You probably wear flamboyant or at least fashionable clothes and use cosmetics, tattoos, or hair stylings for dramatic effect.

The role of the entertainer fits the Jack best, though Glaives and Nanos sometimes entertain as well.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. This character is your worst critic. Your abilities to help or inspire others don't function for them.

2. Pick one other PC. They seem to really enjoy your attempts to entertain, and this brings out the performer in you. It's up to that character whether their appreciation is real or they're just being polite.

3. Pick one other PC. They are so inspired and put at ease by your stories or other forms of entertainment that when you use Levity, they gain +2 to their recovery rolls (instead of +1).

4. Pick one other PC. This person knows the secret to one of your favorite forms of entertainment. You worry constantly that they will steal it or reveal it.

Additional Equipment: You start with a musical instrument or other tools needed to perform.

Minor Effect Suggestions: You enchant the target, who remains enchanted as long as you focus all your attention on keeping them that way.

Major Effect Suggestions: The target is forever favorably disposed toward you.

Tier 1: Levity. Through wit, charm, humor, and grace, you are trained in all social interactions other than those involving coercion or intimidation. During rests, you put friends and comrades at ease so much that they gain +1 to their recovery rolls. Enabler.

Tier 2: Inspiration. Through stories, songs, art, or other forms of entertainment, you inspire your friends. After spending 28 hours with you, once per day each of your friends can ease a task. This benefit is ongoing while

you remain in the friend's company. It ends if you leave, but it resumes if you return to the friend's company within 28 hours. If you leave the friend's company for more than 28 hours, you must spend another 28 hours together to reactivate the benefit. Enabler.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Knowledge or Multitalented as your tier 3 ability.

Knowledge. Your stories and songs contain truth. You are trained in two areas of knowledge of your choice. Enabler.

Multitalented. Being well versed in how to entertain others is reflected in your growing capabilities. You gain 6 new points to divide among your stat Pools however you wish. Enabler.

Tier 4: Calm (3 Intellect points). Through jokes, song, or other art, you prevent a living foe from attacking anyone or anything for one round. Action.

Tier 5: Able Assistance. When you help someone with a task and they apply a level of Effort, they get a free level of Effort on that task. Enabler.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Master Entertainer or Vindictive Performance as your tier 6 ability.



Master Entertainer. Your Inspiration ability works more effectively, easing your friends' tasks by two steps rather than one step. Enabler.

Vindictive Performance (5 Intellect points). When you tell a joke, perform a song or poem, draw a picture, relate an anecdote, or otherwise provide entertainment, you can select one individual from the audience who is able to understand you. During your performance, you heap indirect but biting derision on this target. If you succeed, the target doesn't realize that they've become the victim of your performance until you wrap up the entertainment at a moment you choose in a way that strikes home. The target suffers 6 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) and loses their next turn. One or more actions to initiate.

EXISTS PARTIALLY OUT OF PHASE

You have the ability to change your phase state. In fact, you're always slightly out of phase, giving you a ghostly translucence. With concentration, you can pass your hand through a solid object, allow a solid object to pass harmlessly through you, or literally walk through walls. However, moving in and out of different phase states requires extreme force of will and can be mentally taxing. The explanation for your strange power lies within some aspect of the numenera. Perhaps the ability emerged through the use of (or exposure to) lingering transdimensional technology or as the result of an encounter with a creature not native to this world or dimension. Perhaps one of your ancestors first developed the power and passed it down through generations.

You might do whatever you can to play up your translucent appearance by wearing diaphanous, billowy clothing, or, depending on your personality, you might do just the opposite.

Jacks enjoy the infiltration possibilities of changing their phase state, and Nanos appreciate the defensive capabilities. Glaives can use the offensive and defensive aspects but might find them a bit hindering as well.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. You have known that character for a while, and they helped you gain control of your phase states.

2. Pick one other PC. Sometime in this character's past, they had a devastating experience with going out of phase. Whether they choose to tell you about it is up to them.

3. Pick one other PC. You once accidentally moved your hand right through them. It was an unnerving experience for you both.

Exists Partially Out of Phase GM intrusions: *Losing your grip on your phase state could send you into another dimension or even out of existence for a time. People are likely to panic if they see someone who looks ghostly.*

Free level of Effort, page 103

"I translated what I think reads as 'phase-altered orbital observation platform,' but I'm not sure what that means." ~Sir Arthour

LOOKING FOR

Masters Weaponry, page 80

4. Pick two other PCs. They both really want to go out of phase and have been pestering you about it. But you're not convinced they even know what that phrase means.

Minor Effect Suggestions: While out of phase, you also have an asset to your Speed defense tasks.

Major Effect Suggestions: While out of phase, you are also invisible.

Tier 1: Walk Through Walls (2 Intellect points). You can slowly pass through physical barriers at a rate of 1 inch (2.5 cm) per round (minimum of one round to pass through any barrier). You can't act (other than moving) or perceive anything until you pass entirely through the barrier. You can't pass through energy barriers. Action.

Tier 2: Defensive Phasing (2 Intellect points). You can change your phase so that some attacks pass through you harmlessly. For the next ten minutes, you gain an asset to your Speed defense tasks, but during this time you lose any benefit from armor you wear. Action to initiate.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Phased Attack or Phase Door as your tier 3 ability.

Phased Attack (3 Intellect points). The attack you make on this turn ignores your foe's armor. The ability works for whatever kind of attack you use (melee, ranged, energy, and so on). Enabler.

Phase Door (4 Intellect points). You can phase into a solid object's surface and then phase out of any other solid object within long range of the first, even if the two objects are not connected. There must not be any intervening barriers between the two objects, and you must be aware of or able to see the destination object. Action.

Tier 4: Ghost (4 Intellect points). For the next ten minutes, you gain an asset to sneaking tasks. During this time, you can move through solid barriers (but not energy barriers) at a rate of 1 foot (30 cm) per round, and you can perceive while phased within a barrier or object, which allows you to peek through walls. Action to initiate.

Tier 5: Untouchable (6 Intellect points). You change your phase state for the next minute so that you can't affect or be affected by normal matter or energy. Only mental attacks and special transdimensional energies, devices, or abilities can affect you, but likewise you can't attack, touch, or otherwise affect anything. Action to initiate.

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Murders, page 82



Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Enhanced Phased Attack or Phase Foe as your tier 6 ability.

Enhanced Phased Attack (5 Intellect points). This ability works like the third-tier Phased Attack ability except that your attack also disrupts the foe's vitals, dealing an additional 5 points of damage. Enabler.

Phase Foe (6+ Intellect points). You gather disrupting energy in your fingertip and touch a creature. If the target is an NPC or a creature of level 3 or lower, it becomes phased as if it had used your Ghost ability. However, unless it can figure out how to control its movement while being phased, which most creatures have no experience with, it begins to sink through solid matter. If it can't control itself or end the effect, it might be gone for good because when it becomes solid again after ten minutes, it's probably deep in the earth. For each additional level of Effort you apply, you can attempt to affect a target of one level higher. Action.

EXPLORES DARK PLACES

You explore the foreboding ruins and mysterious locales of the ancient eras, trained in such activities by those who have gone before you. You're the archetypical treasure hunter, scavenger, and finder of lost things. You spend so much of your time in the dark that you slowly adapt to it, almost becoming a creature of the gloom yourself. Even in civilized areas, you prefer to keep to the shadows.

Most likely, you wear dark clothing to help you blend into the blackness. On the other hand, you might wear sensible garments and gear because you have serious and dangerous business to attend to in the dark.

Jacks are suited to exploring dark places; those who do so are called shadowjacks. Glaives who follow this path are known as shadow warriors, and Nanos are called shadowcasters.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. This character was your companion on previous expeditions, and the two of you work so well together that you both gain an asset to any die rolls to collaborate on the same task, fight the same foe, and so on.

2. Pick two other PCs. You think you once saw them through a keyhole doing something illegal. You can choose whether or not to share that information. The characters can choose whether it was really them (it could have been neither, one, or both), and they may or may not share that information in return.

3. Pick one other PC. This person always seems to hear you, no matter how stealthy you try to be.

4. Pick one other PC. This character is so loud in everything they do that you feel obligated to try to help them learn to move more quietly through the world. Whether or not they're interested is up to them.

Additional Equipment: You start with an explorer's pack. If you already have one, you can instead take 50 extra feet (15 m) of rope, rations for two more days, and two minor glowglobes.

Explorer's pack, page 98

Glowglobe, page 98

Darkness Powers: Your special abilities (such as Nano esoteries) make almost no sound, and whatever visual displays they produce are dark and shadowy. These alterations change nothing other than the appearance of the effects. A Flash esotery is a silent burst of shadows, a Barrier esotery is a mass of shadowy wisps, and so on.

Esoteries, page 40

Flash, page 40

Barrier, page 41

Minor Effect Suggestions: The target is also dazed for one round, during which time all of its tasks are hindered.

Major Effect Suggestions: The target is also stunned and loses its next turn.

Tier 1: Superb Explorer. You are trained in searching, listening, climbing, balancing, and jumping tasks. Enabler.

Tier 2: Superb Infiltrator. You are trained in lockpicking and tinkering with devices in an effort to make them work, or at least work for you. Enabler.

Eyes Adjusted. You can see in extremely dim light as though it were bright light. You can see in total darkness as if it were extremely dim. Enabler.

Explores Dark Places GM intrusions: *Sometimes items fall out of pockets or bags in the dark, never to be found again. Or at least, not to be found by the one who lost them.*

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Nightstrike or Slippery Customer as your tier 3 ability.

Nightstrike. When you attack a foe in dim light or darkness, you get a free level of Effort on the attack. Enabler.

Free level of Effort, page 103

Slippery Customer. When you apply Effort to tasks involving escaping from bonds, fitting in tight spaces, and other contortionist tasks, you get a free level of Effort on the task. Thanks to your experience, you are also trained in Speed defense tasks while wearing light armor or no armor. Enabler.

Tier 4: Resilient. In your explorations of dark places, you've been exposed to all sorts of terrible things and are developing a general resistance. You gain +1 to Armor and are trained in Might defense tasks. Enabler.

Armor, page 109

Tier 5: Dark Explorer. You ignore penalties for any action (including fighting) in extremely dim light or in cramped spaces. Combined with your Eyes Adjusted ability, you can act without penalty even in total darkness. You are trained in sneaking tasks while in dim or no light. Enabler.

LOOKING FOR

Rages, page 83
Rides the Lightning, page 83

Fights With Panache GM intrusions: *Looking silly, clumsy, or unattractive can be the swashbuckler's greatest fear.*

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Blinding Attack or Embraced by Darkness as your tier 6 ability.

Blinding Attack (3 Speed points). If you have a source of light, you can use it to make a melee attack against a target. If successful, the attack deals no damage, but the target is blinded for one minute. Action.

Embraced by Darkness (6 Intellect points). For the next hour, you take on some characteristics of a shadow thanks to a fundamental adaptation of your flesh or a device you've kept secret. Your appearance is a dark silhouette. When you apply a level of Effort to sneaking tasks, you get a free level of Effort on the task. During this time, you can move through the air at a rate of a short distance per round, and you can move through solid barriers (even those that are sealed to prevent the passage of light or shadow), but not energy barriers, at a rate of 1 foot (30 cm) per round. You can perceive while passing through a barrier or object, which allows you to peek through walls. As a shadow, you can't affect or be affected by normal matter. Likewise, you can't attack, touch, or otherwise affect anything. However, attacks and effects that rely on light can affect you, and sudden bursts of light can potentially make you lose your next turn. Action to initiate.



LOOKING FOR
Talks to Machines, page 86

FIGHTS WITH PANACHE

You know that style is at least as important as substance. Defeating foes is secondary to looking good while doing it. Some might call you a swashbuckler or daredevil. You leap through the air, make a flourish with your weapon, and attack, usually with a clever, biting show of wit. Your enemies hate you, but your allies adore you. Just watching you fight is entertaining.

You very likely wear no armor, instead preferring stylish clothing—perhaps even a hat with a feather.

Jacks and Glaives make the best swashbucklers, and they are the most common types of characters to fight with panache.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. You're always trying to impress this character with your skill, wit, appearance, or bravado. Perhaps they are a rival, perhaps you need their respect, or perhaps you're romantically interested in them.

2. Pick one other PC. This character seems to anticipate your next move almost before you even begin it. When they collaborate with you on the same task or fight the same foe, you gain an asset on the task.

3. Pick one other PC. You fear that the character is jealous of your abilities and worry that it might lead to problems.

4. Pick one other PC. This character is so enamored of your swashbuckling, entertaining ways during combat that they sometimes forget to take their own action.

Additional Equipment: You begin with a set of extremely stylish clothes and a jeweled weapon.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The target is so dazzled by your style that it is dazed for one round, during which time all of its tasks are hindered.

Major Effect Suggestions: Make an additional attack with your weapon on your turn.

Tier 1: Attack Flourish. With your attack, you add stylish moves, entertaining quips, or a certain "something" that entertains or impresses others. One creature you choose within short range who can see you gains an asset to its next task if taken within a round or two. Enabler.

Tier 2: Quick Block. If you use a light or medium weapon, you are trained in Speed defense tasks. Enabler.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Acrobatic Attack or Flamboyant Boast as your tier 3 ability.

Acrobatic Attack (1+ Speed points). You leap into the attack, twisting or flipping through the air. If you roll a natural 17 or 18, you can

choose to have a minor effect rather than deal extra damage. If you apply Effort to the attack, you get a free level of Effort on the task. You can't use this ability if your Speed is reduced from wearing armor. Enabler.

Flamboyant Boast (1 Intellect point). You boastfully describe an act that you will accomplish, and then as part of the same action, you attempt it. If an average person would find the action difficult (or impossible) and you succeed on it, creatures who witnessed it who are not your allies are potentially dazed on their next turn, and all tasks they attempt are hindered. The GM will help you determine whether your boast is something that would impress onlookers so significantly. If you attempt the task you boast about but fail to accomplish it, all your attempts to affect or attack onlookers who saw you are hindered for about ten minutes. Enabler.

Tier 4: Mobile Fighter (3 Speed points). As part of your attack, you can leap on or over obstacles, swing from ropes, run along narrow surfaces, or otherwise move around the battlefield at your normal speed as if such tasks were routine (difficulty 0). You can't use this ability if your Speed is reduced from wearing armor. Enabler.

Tier 5: Block for Another. If you use a light or medium weapon, you can block attacks made against an ally near you. Choose one creature within immediate range. You provide an asset to that creature's Speed defense tasks. You can't use Quick Block while using Block for Another. Enabler.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Agile Wit or Return to Sender as your tier 6 ability.

Agile Wit. When attempting a Speed task, you instead can roll (and spend points) as if it were an Intellect action. If you apply Effort to this task, you can spend points from your Intellect Pool instead of your Speed Pool (in which case you also use your Intellect Edge instead of your Speed Edge). Enabler.

Return to Sender (3 Speed points). If you succeed at a Speed defense task against a melee attack, you can make an immediate melee attack against your foe. You can use this ability only once per round. Enabler.

FOCUSES MIND OVER MATTER

Telekinesis. Psychokinesis. Mind over matter. The power has many names, but in the end, it all boils down to one thing—the molecules that make up all matter are yours to command. You likely call yourself a telekinetic or just a TK.

Many telekinetics prefer to wear tight clothing without much accoutrement, so there is little that another TK could grab hold of psychically. On the other hand, you have the power to create very minor telekinetic effects at will, so your hair might always be in motion, you could have a few tiny objects floating around you, or you might wear a long cape that's always billowing.

Jacks are the most likely characters to be telekinetics, but Glaives find that the abilities add to their combat prowess, and Nanos, of course, appreciate the additional power.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. This character can cause your telekinetic powers to act oddly. Every once in a while, if the character stands directly next to you, your powers are canceled, but at other times, they seem improved when used near the PC.
2. Pick one other PC. This person thinks that your powers are completely hypothetical.
3. Pick one other PC. You once joked that you could read their mind. Whether they found that exciting or utterly terrifying is up to them.
4. Pick one other PC. You feel strangely protective of that character and plan to do your best to keep them from harm.

Mental Powers: Your special abilities that would normally use force or other energy instead use psychokinetic force. For example, a Flash or an Onslaught force blast is a psychokinetic blast from your mind. This alteration changes nothing except that you don't need a free hand to perform those abilities. In addition, you can choose to learn Impetus instead of one of the abilities granted by your type. Enabler.

Impetus (2 Intellect points): A loose object within short range that you could carry in one hand is drawn to your free hand. If the object is stuck or held by another creature, you must succeed on a Might roll to rip it free, or the object remains where it was. Action.

Minor Effect Suggestions: An object moves faster or more efficiently.

Major Effect Suggestions: You can move or affect twice as much as normal.

Tier 1: Deflect Attacks (1 Intellect point). Using your mind, you protect yourself from incoming attacks. For the next ten minutes, you are trained in Speed defense tasks. Action to initiate.

Tier 2: Telekinesis (2 Intellect points). You can exert force on objects within short range. Once activated, your power has an effective Might

Minor effect, page 105

Free level of Effort, page 103



Focuses Mind Over Matter GM intrusions: *One mental slip, and moving objects drop or fragile objects break. Sometimes the wrong item moves, falls, or breaks.*

LOOKING FOR

Charm Machine, page 86
Wears a Sheen of Ice, page 87

Psychokinesis doesn't necessarily mean "mental powers." Someone using mind over matter might be accessing a mechanical or bioengineered portion of their brain to direct nanobots prevalent in the Ninth World environment. The character could, knowingly or unknowingly, direct these nanites to move or change the matter to be affected.

If you're just using Telekinesis to move an object across the room, and an average fit human could do it with their arms, you can do it with your psychokinesis. You only have to use the power's Might Pool, Might Edge, and Effort if a PC would have to do so, such as if a character tried to push open a barred door.

Pool of 10, a Might Edge of 1, and an Effort of 2 (approximately equal to the strength of a fit, capable, adult human), and you can use it to move objects, push against objects, and so on. For example, you could lift and pull a light object anywhere within range to yourself or move a heavy object (like a piece of furniture) about 10 feet (3 m). This power lacks the fine control to wield a weapon or move objects with much speed, so in most situations, it's not a means of attack. You can't use this ability on your own body. The power lasts for one hour or until its Might Pool is depleted, whichever comes first. Action.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Cloak of Opportunity or Enhance Strength as your tier 3 ability.

Cloak of Opportunity (5 Intellect points). You set small objects from the environment (rocks, broken cyphers, clumps of drit, and so on) swirling about you for up to ten minutes, which grants you +2 Armor. Action to initiate.

Enhance Strength (3 Intellect points). For the next ten minutes, you gain an asset on tasks that depend on brute force, such as moving a heavy object, smashing down a door, or hitting someone with a melee weapon. Action to initiate.

Tier 4: Apportation (4 Intellect points). You call a physical object to you. You can choose any piece of normal equipment on the standard equipment list, or (no more than once per day) you can allow the GM to determine the object randomly. If you call a random object, it has a 10 percent chance of being a cypher or artifact, a 10 percent chance of being an oddity, a 40 percent chance of being a piece of standard equipment, and a 40 percent chance of being a bit of worthless junk. You can't use this ability to take an item held by another creature. Action.

Equipment, page 97

Tier 5: Psychokinetic Attack (5 Intellect points). You can use this attack in one of two ways. The first is to pick up a heavy object and hurl it at someone within short range. This attack is an Intellect action, and if successful, it deals 6 points of damage to the target and to the hurled object (which could be another foe, although that would require two rolls—one roll to grab the first foe and another roll to hit the second foe with the first). The second way is to unleash a shattering burst of power that works only against an inanimate object no larger than half your size. Make an Intellect roll to instantly destroy the object; the task is eased by three steps compared to breaking it with brute strength. Action.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Improved Apportation or Reshape Matter as your tier 6 ability.

Improved Apportation (6 Intellect points). You call a creature of up to level 3, which appears next to you. You can choose a creature that you've previously encountered, or (no more than once per day) you can allow the GM to determine the creature randomly. If you call a random creature, it has a 10 percent chance of being a creature of up to level 5. The creature has no memory of anything before being called by you, though it can speak and has the general knowledge a creature of its type should possess. The creature is receptive to communication and helping you (unless shown that it should do otherwise). Action.

Reshape Matter (6 Intellect points). Your mastery of telekinesis is so great that you can reshape objects on a molecular level. You can affect a single object no larger than you, and the object must be visible and close enough for you to touch. You can use this ability to damage the object (as if using Psychokinetic Attack, except the task is eased by four steps instead of three), or you can attempt a crafting task to reshape the object into another form. Reshaping an object usually has a difficulty equal to 1 plus the level of the finished object.

FUSES FLESH AND STEEL

Fuses Flesh and Steel GM intrusion: *People in most societies are afraid of someone who is revealed to have mechanical parts.*

At some point in your past, some of your organic parts were replaced with artificial components. (Alternatively, you belong to a secret species of biomechanical hybrids.) These artificial components might be subdermal, or they might resemble more overt metal or synth plating on your skin. They can also take the form of threadlike tendrils of

LOOKING FOR
Wields Power with Precision, page 89

circuitry winding across your flesh. Whatever their appearance, these components give you special abilities. As you advance, you can add to, modify, or discover new functions for them. Unfortunately, your artificial body also has special requirements when it takes damage.

You might wear a cloak with a hood or something similar to hide your artificial parts from those who would persecute you. Because your components are tricky to repair, as time goes on, it might become more difficult to conceal your true nature, with exposed circuitry, metal plates, and more in a state of partial disassembly.

Anyone might be a cybernetic organism.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. This character knows your true nature, even if no one else does. If your components are not particularly hidden, they know a different secret of yours, such as a preprogrammed word that will shut you down for ten minutes.

2. Pick one other PC. Being close to this person sometimes makes your mechanical parts vibrate slightly. You can decide whether this sensation is unnerving or pleasant.



3. Pick one other PC. You're pretty sure that this character is just here to mine you for parts. They choose whether or not this is true.

4. Pick one other PC who also has mechanical parts. The two of you have bonded over conversations about this element you share, and you feel a special connection.

Additional Equipment: You have a bag of light tools and a variety of parts to repair yourself.

Minor Effect Suggestions: Your servos learn from your successful actions. You gain an asset to similar actions involving the same task (such as making attacks against the same foe or operating the same device).

Major Effect Suggestions: You discharge a small pulse of power into your foe. Make an immediate attack against that foe (using the same stat as the action that caused the major effect). If the attack succeeds, it deals 4 points of electrical damage.

Tier 1: Enhanced Body. You gain +1 to Armor, +3 to your Might Pool, and +3 to your Speed Pool. Enabler.

Special Healing. Traditional healing skills, medicines, and techniques work only half as well for you. Each time you start at full health, the first 5 points of damage you take can never be healed in these ways or recovered normally. Instead, you must use repairing skills and abilities to restore those points. For example, if you start with a full Might Pool of 10 and take 8 points of damage, you can use recovery rolls to restore 3 points, but the remaining 5 points must be restored with repair tasks.

Tier 2: Interface. By directly plugging into a device, you can identify and learn to operate it as though the task were 1 level lower. Enabler.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Sensing Package or Weaponization as your tier 3 ability.

Sensing Package. You can see in dim light and darkness as if it were bright light, and you can see up to a short distance through fog, smoke, and other obscuring phenomena. In addition, if you apply a level of Effort to perception or searching tasks, you get a free level of Effort on that task. Enabler.

Weaponization. One light or medium melee weapon of your choice is built into your body, and you are trained in using it. The weapon is concealed until you wish to use it. Enabler.

Tier 4: Fusion. You can fuse your cyphers and artifacts with your body. These fused devices function as if they were 1 level higher. Enabler.

"Steel can't feel, but when it gets cold out, the places where it joins to my flesh sting and ache worse than anything."
~Grandpa Iron

Free level of Effort, page 103

Cypher, page 272

Artifact, page 289

LOOKING FOR

Wields Two Weapons at Once, page 90
Works Miracles, page 92



Tier 5: Deep Reserves. Once each day, you can transfer up to 5 points between your Pools in any combination, at a rate of 1 point per round. For example, you could transfer 3 points of Might to Speed and 2 points of Intellect to Speed, which would take a total of five rounds. Action.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Power Surge or Ultra Enhancement as your tier 6 ability.

Power Surge. In addition to your normal recovery rolls each day, you can—at any time between ten-hour rests—recover 1d6 + 6 points to your Intellect Pool. Action.

Recovery roll, page 111

Ultra Enhancement. You gain +1 to Armor and +5 to each of your three stat Pools. Enabler.

HOWLS AT THE MOON

Howls at the Moon GM intrusions: *People are terrified of monsters, and savage beasts that can take the form of ordinary folks are even more frightening.*

Sometimes the numenera is a double-edged sword. You are cursed and blessed to be able to transform into a powerful creature, drawing additional mass from a transdimensional source. You and the GM should work out the exact nature of the creature, including its appearance, but it's a wild beast of rage and blood—at least until you learn to control it. Creatures like you are often called "lycanthropes."

Style and appearance are probably low on your list of concerns. Your clothes might be ragged because your transformation is hard on them (or they're cheap because you know they'll be destroyed the next time you transform).

LOOKING FOR

Works the Back Alleys, page 90

Anyone can be a lycanthrope. A Glaive likely benefits the most from the transformation.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. That character is able to soothe you when you're in beast form. You'll never attack them while transformed, and if they spend three consecutive turns using their action to calm you down, you can revert to your normal form without having to make a roll.

2. Pick one other PC. You believe that this character intends to convince you to join an entertainment venue (or capture you for the same). They choose whether or not this is true.

3. Pick two other PCs. They know that it's beneficial for you to kill and eat a creature while you're in beast form, and they often work together to make sure that happens.

4. Pick one other PC. Since this character saw you in beast form, they have been terrified of you. You are determined to show them that you're not as dangerous as they believe.

Additional Equipment: You have an accurate chronometer artifact that always lets you know when the next transformation is coming.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The target is so intimidated by your bestial attack that it is dazed for one round, hindering its tasks.

Major Effect Suggestions: Your attack conveys a small bit of your lycanthropy. If your foe survives, one month later, the target transforms into an uncontrolled beast. The GM decides what happens from there.

Tier 1: Beast Form. On five consecutive nights each month, you change into a monstrous beast for up to one hour each night. In this new form, you gain +8 to your Might Pool, +1 to your Might Edge, +2 to your Speed Pool, and +1 to your Speed Edge. While in beast form, you can't spend Intellect points for any reason other than to try to change to your normal form before the one-hour duration is over (a difficulty 2 task). In addition, you attack any and every living creature within short range. After you revert to your normal form, you take a –1 penalty to all rolls for one hour. If you did not kill and eat at least one substantial creature while in beast form, the penalty increases to –2 and affects all your rolls for the next 28 hours. Action to change back.

Tier 2: Controlled Change. You can try to change into your beast form on any night you wish (a difficulty 3 Intellect task). Any transformations you make using this power are in addition to the five nights per month that you change involuntarily. Action to change.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Bigger or Greater Beast Form as your tier 3 ability.

Bigger. Your beast form grows bigger than before, during which time you achieve a height of 12 feet (4 m). Being so large, your beast form gains the following additional bonuses: +1 to Armor, +5 to your Might Pool, and you are trained in using your fists as heavy weapons (if you weren't already). However, your Speed defense tasks are hindered. While bigger, you also gain an asset to tasks that are easier for a larger creature to perform, like climbing, intimidating, wading rivers, and so on. Enabler.

Greater Beast Form. Your beast form gains the following additional bonuses: +1 to your Might Edge, +2 to your Speed Pool, and +1 to your Speed Edge. Enabler.

Tier 4: Greater Controlled Change. It's easier to change into and out of your beast form. Transforming either way is now a difficulty 2 Intellect task. Enabler.

Tier 5: Enhanced Beast Form. Your beast form gains the following additional bonuses: +3 to your Might Pool, +2 to your Speed Pool, and +2 to Armor. Enabler.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Lethal or Perfect Control as your tier 6 ability.

Lethal. When you attack in your beast form, you inflict +5 points of damage. Enabler.

Perfect Control. You no longer need to make a roll to change into your beast form or your normal form. You can change back and forth as your action. When you return to your normal form, you no longer take a penalty to your rolls. Enabler.

HUNTS

You are a tracker. Perhaps you hunt animals or more deadly creatures. Perhaps you go after people as a bounty hunter, law enforcer, or killer for hire. Whatever form your hunting takes, you are trained in stalking your quarry and bringing it down. You are a dangerous individual.

If you hunt animals or creatures, you might carry the trophies of past kills, such as teeth or skins. If you're a bounty hunter, you probably wear whatever your quarry would find most intimidating so it feels as though it has no chance of getting away from you.

Most hunters are Glaives, but Jacks and Nanos bring unique skills to the chase.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. That person once saw you show surprising mercy toward your prey, and now you hope they keep it quiet—it might harm your reputation.

2. Pick one other PC. You accidentally caught them in one of your traps, and they had to get free.

3. Pick one other PC. Back in your bounty hunter days (which may or may not be over), you were hired to track down someone who was close to this character.

4. Pick one other PC. You've noticed that it's almost impossible to track this character, but you're determined to figure out a way.

Additional Equipment: You wear boots that muffle your footsteps, giving you an asset on any roll made involving sneaky movement.

Minor Effect Suggestions: You can attempt an intimidating task to cause your foe to immediately surrender.

Major Effect Suggestions: Your foe pauses, terrified by your prowess, and takes no action on their turn.

Tier 1: Tracker. You are trained in following and identifying tracks. Enabler.

Stalker. You gain an asset to all types of movement tasks (including climbing, swimming, jumping, and balancing). Enabler.

Tier 2: Sneak. You ease stealth and initiative tasks. Enabler.

Quarry (2 Intellect points). Choose a quarry (a single individual creature that you can see). You are trained in all tasks involving following, understanding, interacting with, or fighting that creature. You can have only one quarry at a time. Action to initiate.

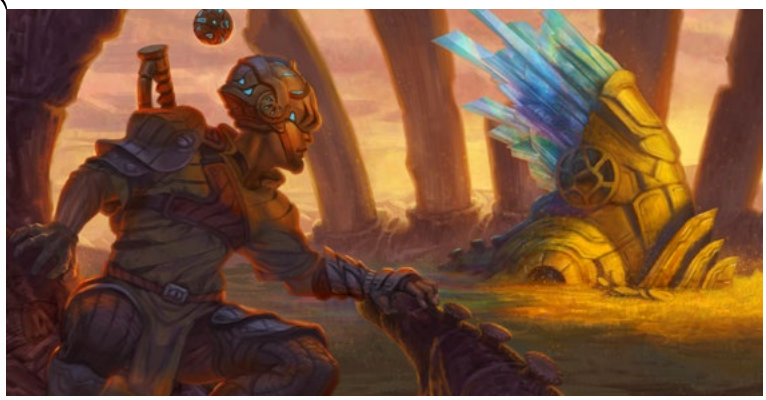
Although the people of the Ninth World look upon a creature that transforms into another creature as mystical lycanthropy, it instead almost certainly involves accessing other dimensions of reality. A character either draws mass from an extradimensional space (perhaps somehow warping higher-dimensional mass into our lower dimensions) or switches places with a larger, more savage ultraterrestrial creature for a time. In this latter case, the character and the creature have a bond that allows them to share general intentions. The character, while shunted to another dimension, likely remains in stasis, unaware of anything until returning to the normal world.

Hunts GM intrusions: *Even the slightest noise or movement can alert the quarry that it's being hunted.*

Initiative, page 107

LOOKING FOR

Adamant silk, page 93
Azure steel, page 93
Shapestone, page 93
Stronglass, page 94



LIVES IN THE WILDERNESS

You dwell in the wilds. You probably have done so most, if not all, of your life, coming to understand the mysteries of nature, weather, and survival. The ways of flora and fauna are your ways.

Your rough, rugged clothing shows little concern for style. Most of the time, covering yourself in natural smells to keep your scent from arousing suspicion in the wilderness is more important than bathing to keep yourself presentable to other humans.

Glaives and Jacks are the most likely characters to live in the wilderness, perhaps working as guides, hunters, trappers, scouts, or trackers. A Nano who does so might be seen as a nature priest or wild wizard.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC who isn't from the wilderness. You can't help but feel a little contempt for that character and their "civilized" ways, which show disdain for all things natural and (to your mind) true.

2. Pick one other PC. This character is one of the few people that you are completely comfortable around, and you are often surprised at how easily you let down your guard near them.

3. Pick one other PC. This character once saved you from an uncomfortable social situation, and you still feel grateful.

4. Pick one other PC. This person seems to understand civilization in the same way that you understand the wilderness. You could choose to help each other or despise each other for this different way of seeing the world.

Additional Equipment: You have a directional compass.

Minor Effect Suggestions: A foe that is a natural creature flees rather than continue to fight you.

Major Effect Suggestions: A foe that is a natural creature becomes warily passive.

Tier 1: Wilderness Life. You are trained in two of the following: climbing, swimming, navigation, or identifying plants and creatures. Enabler.

Wild Hardiness. You gain 3 points to your Might Pool. Enabler.

Tier 2: Living off the Land. Given an hour or so, you can always find edible food and potable water in the wilderness. You can even find enough for a small group of people, if need be. Further, since you're so hardy and have gained resistance over time, you are trained in resisting the effects of natural poisons (such as those from plants or living creatures). You're also immune to natural diseases. Enabler.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Horde Fighting or Sprint and Grab as your tier 3 ability.

Horde Fighting. When two or more foes attack you at once in melee, you can use them against each other. You are trained in either Speed defense rolls or attack rolls (your choice) against them. Enabler.

Sprint and Grab (2 Speed points). You can run a short distance and make a melee attack to grab a foe of your size or smaller. A successful attack means you grab the foe and bring it to a halt if it was moving (this can be treated as a tackle, if appropriate). Action.

Tier 4: Surprise Attack. If attacking from a hidden vantage, with surprise, or before your opponent has acted, you get a free level of Effort on the attack. On a successful hit, you inflict 2 additional points of damage. Enabler.

Free level of Effort, page 103

Tier 5: Hunter's Drive (5 Intellect points). Through force of will, when you wish it, you grant yourself greater prowess in the hunt for ten minutes. During this time, you gain an asset to all tasks involving your quarry, including attacks. Your quarry is the creature you selected with your second-tier ability. Enabler.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Master Combatant or Multiple Quarry as your tier 6 ability.

Master Combatant. Choose one type of attack in which you are already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are specialized in attacks using that type of weapon. Enabler.

Multiple Quarry (6 Intellect points). This ability functions like the second-tier Quarry ability except that you can select up to three creatures as quarry. You must be able to see all three creatures when you initiate this ability. Your Hunter's Drive ability applies to all three creatures. Action to initiate.

Lives in the Wilderness GM intrusions: *People in cities and towns sometimes disparage those who look (and smell) like they live in the wilds, as if they were ignorant or barbaric.*

LOOKING FOR
Synth, page 94

Wilderness Explorer. While taking any action (including fighting) in the wild, you ignore any penalties due to natural causes such as tall grass, thick brush, rugged terrain, weather, and so on. Enabler.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Animal Senses and Sensibilities or Wilderness Encouragement as your tier 3 ability.

Animal Senses and Sensibilities. You are trained in listening and spotting things. In addition, most of the time, the GM should alert you if you're about to walk into an ambush or a trap that is lower than level 5. Enabler.

Wilderness Encouragement (3 Intellect points). While in the wilderness, or when talking about your time in the wilderness, your stirring words of encouragement grant a target within short range that can understand you 1d6 points to one Pool. You can't use this ability on the same creature again until they've made a recovery roll. Action.

Tier 4: Wilderness Awareness (4 Intellect points). Your connection to the natural world extends to a degree that some would call supernatural. While in the wilderness, you can extend your senses up to a mile in any direction and ask the GM a very simple, general question about that area, such as "Where is the margr camp?" or "Is my friend Deithan still alive?" If the answer you seek is not in the area, you receive no information. Action.

Tier 5: The Wild Is on Your Side (5 Intellect points). While you're in the wilderness, foes within short range are tripped by rocks, tangled in vines, bitten by insects, and distracted or confused by small animals, which hinders all their tasks for ten minutes. Action to initiate.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either One With the Wild or Wild Camouflage as your tier 6 ability.

One With the Wild (6 Intellect points). For the next hour, natural animals and plants within long range will not knowingly harm you or those you designate. In addition, your Might Edge, Speed Edge, and Intellect Edge increase by 1, and if you make any recovery rolls during this period, you recover twice as many points. Action to initiate.

Wild Camouflage (4 Intellect points). By drawing your clothing about you just so and using various tricks and your deep knowledge of your surroundings, you become invisible in the wilderness for ten minutes. While you are invisible, this asset eases your stealth and Speed defense tasks by two steps. This effect ends if you do something to reveal your presence or position—attacking, using an ability, moving a large object, and so on. If this occurs, you can regain the remaining invisibility effect by taking an action to focus on hiding your position. Action to initiate or reinitiate.

Recovery roll, page 111

Margr, page 240

LOOKING FOR

Armor prices, page 95
Buzzer, page 95
Heavy armor, page 95



MASTERS DEFENSE

Masters Defense GM intrusions: *Shields break when hit, as do weapons used to parry. Armor straps break.*

Protecting yourself is obviously important in dangerous situations, and you are particularly good at it. Cautious and prudent, you learn techniques to defend against all kinds of attacks, both physical and mental. The winner is often the last person standing, and you've done all you can to ensure that person will be you.

You carry a shield and probably wear the best armor you can find.

Glaives make excellent defensive masters, but Jacks and Nanos also find at least some of these skills of great value.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. This character protected you from harm recently, and you feel indebted to them for saving your life.

2. Pick one other PC. This person thinks you are an incredibly selfish person, perhaps based on their belief that you always save yourself first.

3. Pick one other PC. You once fought on opposite sides of a combat.

4. Pick one other PC. This character seems to be a jinx for you. Whenever they are next to you, your Speed defense tasks are hindered.

Additional Equipment: You have a shield.

Minor Effect Suggestions: You gain an asset to Speed defense rolls for one round.

Major Effect Suggestions: If an attack would hit you next round, it harmlessly strikes your shield instead if you choose.

Tier 1: Shield Master. When you use a shield, in addition to the asset it gives you (easing Speed defense tasks), you can act as if you are trained in Speed defense tasks. However, in any round in which you use this benefit, your attacks are hindered. Enabler.

Tier 2: Sturdy. You are trained in Might defense tasks. Enabler.

Armor Expert. When you wear any armor, the Speed cost for wearing it is reduced by 1. Enabler.

Armor Speed cost, page 95

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Dodge and Resist or Dodge and Respond as your tier 3 ability.

Dodge and Resist (3 Speed points). You can reroll any of your Might, Speed, or Intellect defense rolls and take the better of the two results. Enabler.

Dodge and Respond (3 Might points). If a melee attack misses you, you can immediately make a melee attack in return, but no more than once per turn. Enabler.

Tier 4: Tower of Will. You are trained in Intellect defense tasks and gain +3 points to your Intellect Pool. Enabler.

Armor Master. You reduce the Speed cost of any armor you wear to 0 (if it isn't already 0). Enabler.

Tier 5: Nothing but Defend. If you do nothing on your turn but defend, you are specialized in all defense tasks for one round. Action.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Defense Master or Wear It Well as your tier 6 ability.

Defense Master. Every time you succeed at a Speed defense task, you can make an immediate attack against your foe. (This ability replaces Dodge and Respond, if you took that; you can exchange that ability for Dodge and Resist.) Your attack must be the same type (melee weapon, ranged weapon, or unarmed) as the attack you defend against. If you don't have an appropriate type of weapon ready, you can't use this ability. Enabler.

Wear It Well. When you wear armor of any kind, you gain an additional +1 to Armor. Enabler.

MASTERS WEAPONRY

Masters Weaponry GM intrusions: *Weapons break. Weapons can be stolen. Weapons can be dropped or forced out of your hand.*

You have worked long and hard with one particular type of weapon: bows, swords, axes, daggers, whips, or whatever you choose. Thus, you are an archer, a swordsman, an axe master, a mistress of knives, or whatever is appropriate to your chosen weapon. A master of the rapier is different than a master of the warhammer, and an archer is different than a whip wielder.

You might wear a symbol—a badge, a pin, a tattoo, an amulet, certain colors, or the like—that indicates the school in which you trained, the style of fighting you have mastered, or the name of your mentor. Your weapon is almost certainly your finest possession. Not only is it well cared for and of high quality, but you probably keep it in a beautiful scabbard, harness, belt, case, or something similar.

Many Glaives are weapon masters, but sometimes a Jack might choose this path, particularly with lighter weapons.

Connection: Choose one of the following

1. Pick one other PC. That character shows potential in the use of your weapon. You would like to train them, but you're not necessarily qualified to teach (that's up to you), and they might not be interested (that's up to them).

2. Pick one other PC. If that person is within immediate range when you're in a fight, sometimes they grant you an asset, and sometimes they hinder you (50% chance either way, determined per fight).

LOOKING FOR

Greatsword, page 96
Verred, page 96
Weapon prices, page 96
Weapons, page 95

3. Pick one other PC. You once saved this person's life, and they feel indebted to you. You wish they didn't; it's all just part of the job.

4. Pick one other PC. This person recently mocked your combat stance. How you deal with this (if at all) is up to you.

Additional Equipment: You have a high-quality weapon of your choosing.

Weaponry Powers: If you have "supernatural" special abilities (such as some esoteries), these look like your chosen weapon. So the force blast of the Onslaught esotery appears to be a large weapon made of force, and the Flash esotery produces a flurry of weaponry. These alterations change nothing other than the appearance of the effects. As another example, Barrier becomes a wall of swirling blades of energy. This alteration changes the esotery such that it is not a solid barrier but rather inflicts 1 point of damage to anyone who touches it and 4 points of damage to anyone who passes through it.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The target is so dazzled by your expertise that it is dazed for one round, hindering all of its tasks.

Major Effect Suggestions: Make an immediate additional attack with the weapon as part of your turn.

Tier 1: Weapon Master. You gain a +1 bonus to damage with your chosen weapon. Enabler.

Weapon Crafter. You are trained in crafting tasks associated with your chosen weapon. For instance, if your weapon is a bow, you are trained in tasks related to crafting bows and fletching arrows; if your weapon is a sword, you are trained in tasks for forging swords and sharpening blades; and so on. Enabler.

Tier 2: Weapon Defense. While your chosen weapon is in your hand(s), you are trained in Speed defense rolls. Enabler.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Disarming Strike or Rapid Attack as your tier 3 ability.

Disarming Strike (3 Speed points). Your attack inflicts 1 point less damage and disarms your foe so that their weapon is now 10 feet (3 m) away on the ground. (If your chosen weapon is a whip, you can instead deposit the disarmed weapon into your hands; if your chosen weapon is a bow or other ranged weapon that fires physical rounds, you can instead "nail" the disarmed weapon to a nearby object or structure. Choosing to do either of these hinders your attack.) Action.

Rapid Attack (3 Speed points). Once per round, you can make an additional attack with your chosen weapon. Enabler.

Tier 4: Never Fumble. If you roll a natural 1 when attacking with your chosen weapon, you can ignore or countermand the GM intrusion for that roll. You can never be disarmed of your chosen weapon, nor will you ever drop it accidentally. Enabler.

Tier 5: Extreme Mastery (6 Might or 6 Speed points). When using your chosen weapon, you can reroll any attack roll you wish and take the better of the two results. Enabler.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose Damage Dealer, Death Dealer, or Master Combatant as your tier 6 ability.

Damage Dealer. You gain a +3 bonus to damage with your chosen weapon. This bonus adds to the one from the Weapon Master ability, giving you a total bonus of +4. Enabler.

Death Dealer (5 Might points). If you strike a foe of level 3 or less with your chosen weapon, you kill the target instantly. Action.

Master Combatant. Choose one type of attack in which you are already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are specialized in attacks using that type of weapon. Enabler.



GM intrusion, page 123

Esoteries, page 40

Onslaught, page 40

Flash, page 40

Barrier, page 41

LOOKING FOR

Disguise kit, page 97
Equipment prices, page 97
Other Equipment, page 97



MURDERS

Murders GM intrusions: *Most people do not react well to a professional killer.*

The murderous assassin is a master of dealing death. No one is better at sneaking into a location, eliminating a target, and slipping out again. Obviously, a professional killer is not likely to have a lot of friends.

You probably wear dark colors—black, charcoal grey, or midnight blue—to help blend into the shadows. But since you're also a master of disguise, in truth you could look like anyone.

Any character could be an assassin. Jacks are the most likely choice, but Nanos with their esoteries or Glaives with their combat abilities would make efficient killers as well.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. That character knows your real identity, profession, and background. To all others, the truth about you is a closely guarded secret.

2. Pick one other PC. You were recently approached by someone who wanted to hire you to take that character out. You haven't yet decided whether to take the job or warn them that their life is in danger.

3. Pick two other PCs. One night after perhaps too much celebrating, you loudly claimed responsibility for a murder you didn't commit. These two characters were the only ones who heard. Whether they believe you or not is up to them.

4. Pick one other PC. That character is the one who got you started down the path of taking lives, whether they know it or not.

Disguise kit, page 97

Poison, page 112

There are other ways for characters to learn how to make poisons, such as the Jack trick of the trade, Create Deadly Poison, page 47.

Additional Equipment: You start with a disguise kit and three doses of a level 2 blade poison that inflicts 5 points of damage.

Minor Effect Suggestions: No one but the foe notices that you make the attack.

Major Effect Suggestions: If you have poison amid your belongings, you were able to apply it just before the strike, adding the poison's effects to the normal attack damage.

Tier 1: Surprise Attack. If attacking from a hidden vantage, with surprise, or before an opponent has acted, you gain an asset to your attack. On a successful hit with this surprise attack, you inflict 2 additional points of damage. Enabler.

Natural Assassin. You are trained in stealth and disguise tasks. Enabler.

Tier 2: Quick Death (2 Speed points). You know how to kill quickly. When you hit with a melee or ranged attack, you deal 4 additional points of damage. You can't make this attack in two consecutive rounds. Action.

Infiltrator. You are trained in interactions involving lies or trickery. Enabler.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Awareness or Poison Crafter as your tier 3 ability.

Awareness (3 Intellect points). You become hyperaware of your surroundings in order to better locate your next victim. For ten minutes, you are aware of all living things within long range (including their general position), and by concentrating (another action), you can attempt to learn the general health and power level of any one of them. Action.

Poison Crafter. You are trained in crafting, sensing, identifying, and resisting poisons. Your poison crafting has given you some immunity to poisons; you have +5 Armor that applies specifically to poison damage. Enabler.

Tier 4: Better Surprise Attack. If attacking from a hidden vantage, with surprise, or before an opponent has acted, your attack is eased by two steps instead of one. On a successful hit with this surprise attack, you inflict 2 additional points of damage (for a total of 4 additional points of damage). Enabler.

Tier 5: Slayer (5 Speed points). With a swift and sudden attack, you strike a foe in a vital spot. If the target is level 3 or lower, it is killed outright. Action.

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Glowglobe, page 98
Sprayflesh, page 98

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Escape Plan or Murderer as your tier 6 ability.

Escape Plan. When you kill a foe, you can attempt a sneaking action to immediately hide from anyone around, assuming that a suitable hiding place is nearby. Enabler.

Murderer (8+ Speed points). With a swift and sudden attack, you strike a foe in a vital spot. If the target is level 4 or lower, it is killed outright. For each additional level of Effort you apply, you can increase the level of the target by 1. Action.

RAGES

The berserker is a feared fighter who cannot be stopped. You put yourself into a howling battle frenzy that can make you a terror on the battlefield. You might hail from a less civilized society, perhaps even a tribal one.

You likely wear little or no armor so as not to restrict your speed or maneuverability. Your clothing is probably simple and utilitarian.

Glaives make the best berserkers.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Choose one other PC. You feel strangely protective toward that character and don't want to see them come to harm.

2. Pick one other PC. That character knows a secret about your past that is tied to your Frenzy ability.

3. Pick one other PC. The first time you went into a frenzy was in an attempt to save their loved one from an attack. You failed, partly because of your inexperience.

4. Choose one other PC. That character is terrified by your rage and sometimes can't help but flee at inopportune times.

Minor Effect Suggestions: When fighting multiple foes, you knock one into another, putting both off balance and hindering them for one round.

Major Effect Suggestions: Your foe is terrified of your rage and uses its next two actions to flee.

Tier 1: Frenzy (1 Intellect point). When you wish, while in combat, you can enter a state of frenzy. While in this state, you can't use Intellect points, but you gain +1 to your Might Edge and your Speed Edge. This effect lasts as long as you wish, but it ends if no combat is taking place within range of your senses. Enabler.

Tier 2: Hardy. You gain +5 to your Might Pool. These additional points can be used only to absorb damage. You can't spend them to apply Effort to rolls. Enabler.

Mobile Fighter. You are trained in climbing and jumping tasks. Enabler.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Ignore the Pain or Power Strike as your tier 3 ability. Whichever one you choose, you also gain Unarmored Fighter.

Ignore the Pain. Your rage makes minor wounds seem insignificant. While you are in a state of frenzy, gain +1 to your Armor. Enabler.

Power Strike (3+ Might points). If you successfully attack a target, you knock it prone in addition to inflicting damage. The target must be your size or smaller. You can knock down a target larger than you if you apply a level of Effort to do so (rather than to ease the attack). Enabler.

Unarmored Fighter. While unarmored, you are trained in Speed defense tasks. Enabler.

Tier 4: Greater Frenzy (4 Intellect points). When you wish, while in combat, you can enter a state of frenzy. While in this state, you can't use Intellect points, but you gain +2 to your Might Edge and your Speed Edge. This effect lasts as long as you wish, but it ends if no combat is taking place within range of your senses. You can use this ability or your first-tier Frenzy ability, but you can't use both at the same time. Enabler.

Tier 5: Attack and Attack Again. Rather than granting additional damage or a minor or major effect, a natural 17 or higher on your attack roll allows you the option of immediately making another attack. Enabler.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Not Dead Yet or Tough and Fast as your tier 6 ability.

Not Dead Yet. When you would normally die, you instead fall unconscious for one round and then awaken. You immediately gain 1d6 +6 points to restore your stat Pools and are treated as if debilitated (which for you is like being impaired, thanks to your Ignore the Pain ability) until you rest for ten hours. If you die again before you make your ten-hour recovery roll, you are truly dead. Enabler.

Tough and Fast. You gain +6 to your Might Pool and your Speed Pool. Enabler.

RIDES THE LIGHTNING

The ancients harnessed electricity in strange and wonderful ways. Through practice and inherent ability (or the subtle use of hidden or implanted devices), you control the same energy. Not only can you create and discharge electrical power, but you can eventually learn to use it to transport yourself.

You probably wear tight-fitting clothing that allows you to move quickly. Your garments

Rages GM intrusions: *It's easy for a berserker to lose control and attack friend as well as foe.*

Minor and major effects, page 105

If you also have the Not Dead Yet ability granted by your type, your healing from this ability increases to 1d6 + 12.

Rides the Lightning GM intrusions: *Overcharged batteries explode.*

might be blue and black, perhaps with a lightning-bolt motif.

Although Nanos seem most suited to wielding lightning, Jacks can make good use of the varied lightning abilities.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. This character has been your friend for a long time, and you have learned to bring them along when you ride the lightning. If the character is standing right next to you, you can take them with you when you use the Bolt Rider or Electrical Flight powers. (Normally, neither ability allows you to transport other creatures.)

2. Pick two other PCs. You know about an important connection between them that even they don't know about.

3. Pick one other PC. This character has interesting ideas about electricity and how it can be harnessed. If you are trained with machines, after you talk to this character for an hour, you gain an asset on any task involving identifying, crafting, or repairing a machine that uses electricity.

4. Pick one other PC. This person has the worst luck with electrical devices of anyone you've ever met. You want to help them, but you aren't sure how or even whether they will be open to your assistance.

Additional Equipment: You have a bag of miscellaneous batteries and power cells. Whenever you find a new device that operates on batteries or cells (GM's discretion), there is a 75 percent chance that the bag contains one that will power the device if it depletes.

Electrical Abilities: If you have abilities that would normally use force or other energy, they instead use electricity. For example, a Flash or an Onslaught force blast is a blast of lightning. This alteration changes nothing other than the type of damage and the fact that it might start fires.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The target is dazed by electricity for one round, hindering all of its tasks. Electricity can also shut down an automaton for one round.

Major Effect Suggestions: Devices filled with electrical power explode. You can target and destroy an artifact that a foe is holding or wearing.

Depletion, page 289

Flash, page 40

Onslaught, page 40

Artifact, page 289

Cypher, page 272



Tier 1: Shock (1 Intellect point). Your hands crackle with electricity, and the next time you touch a creature, you inflict 3 points of damage. Alternatively, if you wield a weapon, for ten minutes it crackles with electricity and inflicts 1 additional point of damage per attack. Action for touch; enabler for weapon.

Charge (1+ Intellect points). You can charge an artifact or other device (except a cypher) so that it can be used once. The cost is 1 Intellect point plus 1 point per level of the device. Action.

Tier 2: Bolt Rider (4 Intellect points). You can move a long distance from one location to another almost instantaneously, carried by a bolt of lightning. You must be able to see the new location, and there must be no intervening barriers. Action.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Drain Charge or Electric Armor as your tier 3 ability. Whichever you choose, you also gain Lightning Swift.

Drain Charge. You can drain the power from an artifact or device, allowing you to regain 1 Intellect point per level drained. You regain points at the rate of 1 point per round and must give your full concentration to the process each round. The GM determines whether the device is fully drained (likely true of most handheld or smaller devices) or retains some power (likely true of large machines). Action to initiate; action each round to drain.

Electric Armor (4 Intellect points). When you wish it, electricity crackles across your body for ten minutes, granting you +1 to Armor. While electrified, you have an additional +2 to Armor versus electrical damage specifically, and you inflict 2 points of damage on any creature that touches you or attacks you with a melee weapon that conducts electricity. Enabler.

Lightning Swift. You gain +1 to your Speed Edge. Enabler.

Tier 4: Bolts of Power (5+ Intellect points). You blast a fan of lightning out to short range in an arc that is approximately 50 feet (15 m) wide at the end. This discharge inflicts 4 points of damage. If you apply Effort to increase the damage rather than to ease the task, you deal 2 additional points of damage per level of Effort (instead of 3 points); however, targets in the area take 1 point of damage even if you fail the attack roll. Action.

Tier 5: Electrical Flight (5 Intellect points). You exude an aura of crackling electricity that lets you fly a long distance each round for ten minutes. You can't carry other creatures with you. Action to activate.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Flash Across the Miles or Wall of Lightning as your tier 6 ability.

Flash Across the Miles (6+ Intellect points). You can move to an open location on the earth that you're familiar with almost instantaneously, transformed into a bolt of lightning. If you apply a level of Effort, you can attempt to penetrate covered locations that you're aware of as long as a route exists from the open air to the area you want to reach that electricity can easily follow. Action.

Wall of Lightning (6 Intellect points). You create a barrier of crackling electricity up to 2,500 square feet (230 sq. m) in size, shaped as you wish. The wall is a level 7 barrier. Anyone within immediate distance of the wall automatically takes 10 points of damage. The wall lasts for one hour. Action to create.

SPEAKS WITH A SILVER TONGUE

You are poetry incarnate. The words flow from your tongue like liquid metal. Your voice is golden and captivating. With enough time and focus, you can convince almost anyone to do almost anything for you, with you, or in spite of you. Words—words are what matter. You believe they have power. There's a chance you don't care much about your appearance, as long as you can say what you want to say.

Some might call you the "face" because when your friends or allies need to put forth their best face, they send you. You're a charmer. The word "charisma" was coined for people like you—there's just something about you that people seem to like.

Since words are important to you, you may have covered your skin with tattooed words or have written things on your outfit. You might play an instrument, write books, or compose songs in your spare time.

Jacks, with their ability to take a related flex skill each day, make excellent speakers, but Nanos and Glaives might choose this route to inspire their companions.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. That character seems overly affected by your words. You've accidentally made them cry or laugh just by talking to them.
2. Pick one other PC. That character believes that you speak falsely and is never affected by your words.
3. Pick one other PC. You'd like to get to know them better, but don't want to use your skills to do so.
4. Pick one other PC. That character would like to learn your storytelling techniques, and you're trying to decide whether to teach them.

Additional Equipment: You have a book in which you keep notes of your favorite words, inspirational stories, and speech anecdotes.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The next time you attempt to influence, persuade, or deceive the same foe, the task is eased.

Major Effect Suggestions: You speak with extra conviction, increasing the effect, duration, or range of your action.

Tier 1: Poetic License. You are trained in all social interactions, including persuasion, deception, and intimidation. You also know two languages other than the Truth. Enabler.

Tier 2: A Smile and a Word. When you use Effort on any action involving interactions—even those having to do with calming animals or communicating with someone or something whose language you do not speak—you gain a free level of Effort on the task. Action.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Verbal Misdirection or Play to the Crowd as your tier 3 ability.

Verbal Misdirection (2+ Intellect points). With fast talk and bewildering words, you can confuse and distract anyone that you're speaking with, giving you an asset on social

"Everything's got a spark of alive in it, even this dead bit of numenera. You just have to know how to touch it properly." ~Alerra

Truth, page 133

Free level of Effort, page 103

Speaks With a Silver Tongue GM intrusions: *Distractions can ruin interactions. Sometimes even the smoothest words can strike the listener the wrong way. Language can be a barrier.*

interactions with that person for ten minutes. For each level of Effort you use with this ability, you can affect an additional creature. Enabler.

Play to the Crowd (3 Intellect points). You give a speech that is both rousing and terrifying. Those within short range who can hear and understand you have their next action either eased (an asset) or hindered—you choose, and it can be different for each individual.



Tier 4: Castigate (4 Intellect points). You intimidate any opponent within long range who understands speech (even if it is not your language) so much that they lose their next action and all the rest of their actions are hindered for one minute. Action.

Tier 5: Stay the Course (5 Intellect points). When your companions are flagging, you can help inspire them with a well-timed word or two. Any ally (except you) within immediate range can make a recovery roll that is not an action and does not count toward their daily limit. Action.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Entrancing Speech or Command as your tier 6 ability.

Entrancing Speech (6 Intellect points). Everyone within long range who can hear and understand you takes no action for as long as you do not move and use your action to speak soothing and calming words. If an affected creature is attacked during this time, they break out of the trance immediately. Action to initiate.

Command (7 Intellect points). A target within short range obeys any command you give as long as they can hear and understand you. Further, as long as you continue to do nothing but issue commands (taking no other action), you can give that same target a new command. This effect ends when you stop issuing commands or they are out of short range. Action to initiate.

TALKS TO MACHINES

Since you were young, you had an affinity for machines. It seemed almost like you were speaking to them.

You were. You have the ability to use your organic brain like an intelligent machine, interfacing "wirelessly" with any electronic device. You can control and influence them in ways that others can't. Intelligent machines are your friends and companions. You have also learned to repair machines of all kinds because the better they work, the better off you are as well.

You likely wear a tool belt full of various implements, and machine oils stain your clothes and fingertips.

All types of characters can spend their time talking to machines, although this practice is best suited to Nanos.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. That character seems to have a terrible relationship with machines—or at least the machines that you communicate with. If that person is next to a machine that you interact with in a friendly manner, that machine is treated in all ways as being 1 level lower than normal (unless doing so benefits you or them, in which case the level does not change).
2. Pick one other PC. That person seems especially leery of you, though this could just be your perception.
3. Pick one other PC. That character has a small machine among their equipment but won't tell you any details about it or let you see it.
4. Pick one other PC. You know that this character knows an incriminating or embarrassing secret about you, and you hope that they do not reveal it.

Additional Equipment: A bag of small tools.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The duration of influence or control is doubled.

Major Effect Suggestions: The duration of influence or control becomes 28 hours.

Tier 1: Machine Affinity. You are trained in tasks involving electrical machines. Enabler.

Distant Activation (1 Intellect point). You can activate or deactivate any machine you can see within short range, even if normally you would have to touch or manually operate the device. To use this ability, you must understand the function of the machine, it must be your size or smaller, and it can't be connected to another intelligence (or be intelligent itself). Action.

Tier 2: Coaxing Power (2 Intellect points). You boost the power or function of a machine so that it operates at 1 level higher than normal for one hour. Action to initiate.

Charm Machine (2 Intellect points). You convince an unintelligent machine to "like" you. A machine that likes you is 50 percent less likely to function if said function would cause you harm. Thus, if a foe attempts to detonate a bomb near you controlled by a detonator that likes you, there is a 50 percent chance that it won't explode. Action to initiate.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Command Machine or Intelligent Interface as your tier 3 ability.

Command Machine (4 Intellect points). If you've charmed an unintelligent machine or have spoken telepathically with an intelligent

Talks to Machines GM intrusions: *Sometimes machines malfunction or act unpredictably. Many people look upon someone who interfaces so well with machines as a witch—or at least as a dangerous individual.*



machine, you can attempt to command it to take one action within its capabilities on its next turn. (If you command an intelligent machine with this power, it likely becomes hostile to you afterward.) Action.

Intelligent Interface (3 Intellect points). You can speak telepathically with any intelligent machine within long range. Further, you are trained in all interactions with intelligent machines. Such machines and automatons that normally would never communicate with a human might talk to you. Enabler.

Tier 4: Machine Companion. You create a level 3 animate, intelligent machine that accompanies you and acts as you direct. As a level 3 machine companion, it has a target number of 9 and 9 health, and it inflicts 3 points of damage. If it's destroyed, it takes you one month to create a new one. Enabler.

Automaton Fighter. When fighting an automaton or intelligent machine, you are trained in attacks and defense. Enabler.

Tier 5: Information Gathering (5 Intellect points). You speak telepathically with any or all machines within 1 mile (1.5 km). You can ask one basic question about themselves or anything happening near them and receive a simple answer. For example, while in an area with many machines, you could ask "Where is the ravage bear?" and if the creature is within a mile of you, one or more machines will probably provide the answer. Action.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Improved Machine Companion or Control Machine as your tier 6 ability.

Improved Machine Companion. Your machine companion improves, becoming a level 5 creature with the ability either to fly a long distance each round (and carry you) for up to ten minutes at a time, or to carry an extra cypher for you that doesn't count against your cypher limit. Enabler.

Control Machine (6 Intellect points). You can attempt to control the functions of any machine, intelligent or otherwise, within short range for ten minutes. Action.

WEARS A SHEEN OF ICE

Through your studies, you have learned to focus your natural talents to command the powers of ice and cold. People might refer to you as an ice mage. Sometimes ice mages are thought to come into conflict with those known as fire mages, but this is a fallacy believed by ordinary folks more than anything based in truth.

You likely wear white or blue garments that are heavier than they need to be—unless you live in a cold region or wintry clime, in which case you probably wear less clothing than other people do because the cold doesn't bother you.

Wears a Sheen of Ice GM intrusions: *Ice makes surfaces slippery. Extreme cold causes objects to crack and break.*

Ravage bear, page 249

Most ice mages are Nanos, but a Glaive armored in ice, perhaps wielding an ice sword, would be quite impressive.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. Due to a quirk of the numenera, if that character is standing next to you when you use your Ice Armor ability, they are also protected by a sheen of ice. (They do not get the added protection of your Resilient Ice Armor ability.)

2. Pick one other PC. For a reason unknown to you, their very presence seems to heat the air around you, making it more difficult to command the powers of ice and cold. If they are within immediate range, their presence occasionally hinders your attempts to hit a target with a focus ability.

3. Pick one other PC. That person is especially susceptible to the cold that radiates from you. How they handle that vulnerability is up to them.

4. Pick one other PC. The two of you have a long history and almost always disagree about the best way to handle situations.

Additional Equipment: You have a bladed weapon made of stronglass that looks like ice.

Stronglass, page 94

Ice Abilities: If you possess abilities that would normally use force or other energy, they instead use cold and ice. For example, a force blast is a ray of frost. This alteration changes nothing other than the type of damage. As another example, Barrier creates a wall of ice. This alteration changes nothing except the wall's appearance and the fact that it takes 2 additional points of damage from fire.

Barrier, page 41

Minor Effect Suggestions: The surface around the target becomes slick and difficult to stand on.

Major Effect Suggestions: The target is covered in ice that slows its movement and hinders its tasks for one minute.

Tier 1: Ice Armor (1 Intellect point). When you wish it, your body is covered in a sheen of ice for ten minutes that gives you +1 to Armor. While the sheen is active, you feel no discomfort from normal cold temperatures and have an additional +2 to Armor versus cold damage specifically. Enabler.

Tier 2: Frost Touch (1 Intellect point). Your hands become so cold that the next time you touch a creature, you inflict 3 points of damage. Alternatively, you can use this ability on a weapon, and for ten minutes, it inflicts 1 additional point of damage from the cold. Action for touch; enabler for weapon.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Freezing Touch or Ice Creation as your tier 3 ability.

Freezing Touch (4 Intellect points). Your hands become so cold that, in addition to inflicting damage as described under Frost Touch, your touch freezes solid a living target of your size or smaller, rendering it immobile for one round. Action.

Ice Creation (4+ Intellect points). You create a solid object of ice that is your size or smaller. The object is crude and can have no moving parts, so you can make a sword, a shield, a short ladder, and so on. Your ice objects are as strong as iron, but if you're not in constant contact with them, they function for only 1d6 + 6 rounds before breaking or melting. For example, you can make and wield an ice sword, but if you give it to another PC, the sword won't last as long for that character. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use Effort to create objects larger than you. For each level of Effort used in this way, you can create an object up to twice again as large as you. Action.

Tier 4: Resilient Ice Armor. The sheen of ice you generate using your Ice Armor ability gives you an additional +1 to Armor. Enabler.

Tier 5: Cold Burst (5+ Intellect points). You emit a burst of cold in all directions, up to short range. All within the burst take 5 points of damage. If you apply Effort to increase the damage rather than to ease the task, you deal 2 additional points of damage per level of Effort (instead of 3 points); however, targets in the area take 1 point of damage even if you fail the attack roll. Action.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Ice Storm or Winter Gauntlets as your tier 6 ability.

Ice Storm. You attempt an additional Intellect task as part of your Cold Burst attack, and if successful, you blind foes for up to one minute with a layer of freezing ice. All tasks of blinded creatures are hindered by two steps. Enabler.

Winter Gauntlets. When you use Frost Touch, you inflict a total of 5 points of damage if you touch a creature, or +2 points of damage if you infuse a weapon. In addition, damaged targets are frozen in place (if standing on a solid surface) and can't move from their location until they use an action to break free. The target can still attack and defend. Action for touch; enabler for weapon.

LOOKING FOR

Distract, page 105
Major Effect, page 105
Minor Effect, page 105
Special Rolls, page 104

WIELDS POWER WITH PRECISION

Not only are you blessed with a great command of the numenera, but you are also trained to exploit esoteries in ways that elevate you above other Nanos. Some people believe that those who perform esoteries are born with the ability, but you know that skill and intelligence play important roles. The ancients created the numenera through knowledge, discovery, and intellect, and to use it properly, you must follow the same path.

You probably wear spectacles and dapper outfits, carrying extra books, notebooks, and pens so you can continually focus on your studies and experiments.

Nanos usually receive this instruction and focus, but some Jacks do as well. Glaives never do.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. You've placed an immutable, one-time ward that renders them immune to the esoteries you perform unless they want to be affected.

2. Pick one other PC. Due to some quirk of the numenera, you can occasionally (and accidentally) share your powers with them, which gives them an asset on any task they attempt using their esoteries.

3. Pick one other PC. That character doesn't seem to trust or like you, but you feel compelled to win them over.

4. Pick one other PC. You've noticed that they have a book in their possession that you'd very much like to study, but you're unsure how to ask them about it.

Additional Equipment: You have an additional book about the numenera.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The special ability overwhelms and dazzles the target for one round, hindering it.

Major Effect Suggestions: The special ability terrifies the target, who uses its next two turns to flee.

Tier 1: Genius. Your Intellect Pool increases by 5 points. Enabler.

Tier 2: Training and Precision. You are trained in all esoteries. As a result, you ease any task involved in the use of an esotery. Enabler.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Enhanced Esoteries or Versatile Mind as your tier 3 ability.

Enhanced Esoteries. Your esoteries that have durations last twice as long. Your esoteries that have short ranges reach to long range instead. Your esoteries that inflict damage deal 1 additional point of damage. Enabler.

Versatile Mind. When you make a Speed defense roll, you can use your Intellect in place of your Speed. Enabler.

Tier 4: Greater Repertoire. You can learn one additional esotery of fourth tier or lower. Enabler.

Tier 5: Greater Training. You are specialized in all esoteries. As a result, you ease any task involved in the use of an esotery by two steps. Enabler.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Enhanced Esoteries or Supra-Genius as your tier 6 ability.

Enhanced Esoteries. If you chose Enhanced Esoteries as your tier 3 option, your esoteries that have durations last three times as long. Your esoteries that have short ranges reach to very long range instead. Your esoteries that inflict damage deal 2 additional points of damage. If you didn't take Enhanced Esoteries at tier 3, you gain the advantages noted there now. Enabler.

Supra-Genius. Your Intellect Pool increases by 5, and your Intellect Edge increases by 1. Enabler.

Wields Power With Precision GM intrusions: *Even if one tries to remain humble, skill and power might betray an arrogance that others find annoying or insulting. Creatures from beyond time and space take special notice of people who command the mysterious and strange.*

The GM should determine which Jack abilities count as esoteries for this focus.

LOOKING FOR

Initial Cost, page 106
Retrying, page 106



WIELDS TWO WEAPONS AT ONCE

Wields Two Weapons at Once GM intrusions: *With so many strikes and slices, it's easy to imagine a blade snapping in two or a weapon flying loose from its bearer's grip.*

You bear steel with both hands, ready to take on any foe. You fight with two weapons in melee, sometimes called dual wielding. A fearsome warrior, quick and strong, you believe that the best defense is a strong offense.

You probably sheathe one weapon on each side or both crossed behind your back. They are likely your most prized possessions, and you might have names for them.

Many Glaives and Jacks train to fight with two weapons at once. Very rarely would other characters spend the time required to learn such a purely physical art, but it's possible.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. You have trained with this character so much that if the two of you stand back to back in a fight, you both gain an asset to Speed defense tasks.

Free level of Effort, page 103

2. Pick one other PC. This character always seems to inadvertently foil your actions, or at least make them more difficult. If they are within immediate range, actions related to this focus are hindered.

3. Pick one other PC. You recently had a weapon go missing, and you're becoming convinced that they took it. Whether or not they did is up to them.

4. Pick one other PC. You used to dislike them immensely, but as you get to know this person, you're growing more fond of them against your better judgment.

Additional Equipment: You start with an additional light melee weapon.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The target is intimidated and flees as its next action.

Major Effect Suggestions: You can make an immediate additional attack with one of your weapons.

Tier 1: Dual Light Wield. You can use two light weapons at the same time, making two separate attacks on your turn as a single action. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action, but because you make separate attacks, your opponent's Armor applies to both. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to both attacks, unless it's specifically tied to one of the weapons. Enabler.

Effort, page 23

Armor, page 109

Tier 2: Double Strike (3 Might points). When you wield two weapons, you can choose to make one attack roll against a foe. If you hit, you inflict damage with both weapons plus 2 additional points of damage, and because you made a single attack, the target's Armor is subtracted only once. Action.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Dual Medium Wield or Precise Cut as your tier 3 ability.

Dual Medium Wield. You can use two light weapons or medium weapons at the same time (or one light weapon and one medium weapon), making two separate attacks on your turn as a single action. This ability otherwise works like the Dual Light Wield ability. Enabler.

Precise Cut. You inflict +1 damage with light weapons. Enabler.

Tier 4: Dual Defense. When you wield two weapons, you are trained in Speed defense tasks. Enabler.

Tier 5: Dual Distraction (1+ Speed points). When you wield two weapons, your opponent's next attack is hindered, and if you apply Effort to your next attack against that same foe, you get a free level of Effort on the task. Enabler.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Disarming Attack or Whirling Dervish as your tier 6 ability.

Disarming Attack (5 Speed points). You attempt a Speed task to disarm a foe as part of your melee attack. If you succeed, your attack inflicts 3 additional points of damage and the target's weapon is knocked from their grip, landing up to 20 feet (6 m) away. If you fail, you still attempt your normal attack, but you don't inflict the extra damage or disarm the opponent if you hit. Action.

Whirling Dervish. When you wield two weapons, you can attack up to six times in one round as a single action, but you must make each attack against a different foe. Make a separate attack roll for each attack. You remain limited by the amount of Effort you can apply on one action, but because you make separate attacks, Armor applies to each of them. Anything that modifies your attack or damage applies to all attacks (positively or negatively), unless it's specifically tied to one of the weapons, in which case it applies to only half of the attacks. Enabler.

WORKS THE BACK ALLEYS

Works the Back Alleys GM intrusions: *When things go wrong for thieves, they end up in jail. Even when things go right, thieves can earn the enmity of powerful people, including criminals.*

The thief, the burglar, the pickpocket: these are the dangerous individuals who haunt the back alleys of every community. You are a thief in a city or town, making your livelihood at the expense of the wealthy. Your talents, however, prepare you for all kinds of pursuits, even when you're not crouching in an alley or climbing into a window.

Usually, you dress to blend in with the crowd. When you're on a mission, black, form-fitting clothing allows you to swim in the shadows.

Most thieves are Jacks, but Nanos make interesting burglars as well. A Glaive thief likely adds a little more physicality to their crimes.

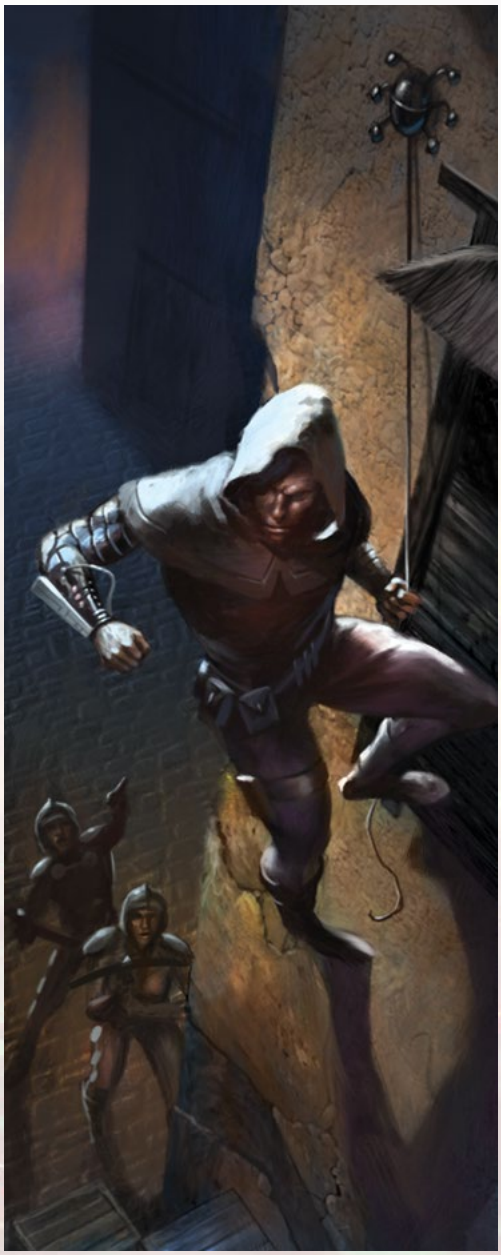
Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. The character knew you beforehand and convinced you to leave your life of crime for other pursuits—at least temporarily.

2. Pick one other PC. A while back, you attempted to "borrow" something from this person, but they caught you in the process. You managed to convince them that it was a simple misunderstanding, but they may not entirely trust you.

3. Pick one other PC. You never seem to be able to hide so that this person can't see you.

4. Pick one other PC. This character knows your real identity (if it's a secret) or that you work secretly as a thief (if it's a secret) and has kept the knowledge safe so far. It's up to them whether they continue to do so.



Additional Equipment: You start with a bag of light tools.

Bag of light tools, page 97

Minor Effect Suggestions: You can immediately attempt to hide after this action.

Major Effect Suggestions: You can immediately take a second action during this turn.

Tier 1: Thief. You are trained in sneaking, pickpocketing, and lockpicking tasks. Enabler.

Tier 2: Underworld Contacts. You know many people in a variety of communities who engage in illegal activities. These people are not necessarily your friends and might not be trustworthy, but they recognize you as a peer. You and the GM should work out the details of your underworld contacts. Enabler.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Pull a Fast One or Guild Training as your tier 3 ability.

Pull a Fast One (3 Intellect points). When you're running a con, picking a pocket, fooling or tricking a dupe, sneaking something by a guard, and so on, you gain an asset on the task. Enabler.

Guild Training. Your type abilities that have durations last twice as long. Your type abilities that have short ranges reach to long range instead. Your type abilities that inflict damage deal 1 additional point of damage. Enabler.

"The alleyways are the true streets. The main thoroughfares are just for prey."
~Kaliss, a Clever Jack who Works the Back Alleys

Tier 4: Master Thief. You are trained in climbing, escaping from bonds, slipping through narrow places, and other contortionist moves. Enabler.

Tier 5: Dirty Fighter (2 Speed points). You distract, blind, annoy, hamper, or otherwise interfere with a foe, hindering their attacks and defenses for one minute. Action.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Alley Rat or All-Out Con as your tier 6 ability.

Alley Rat (6 Intellect points). While in a city, you find or create a significant shortcut, secret entrance, or emergency escape route where it looked like none existed. Doing so requires that you succeed on an Intellect action whose difficulty is set by the GM based on the situation. You and the GM should work out the details. Action.

All-Out Con (7 Intellect points). You put everything into it. You add three free levels of Effort to the next task you attempt. You can't use this ability again until after you've taken a ten-hour recovery action. Action.

WORKS MIRACLES

Works Miracles GM intrusions: *Attempts to heal might cause harm instead. Sometimes, a community or individual needs a healer so desperately that they hold one against his will.*

You manipulate matter and time to help others and are beloved by everyone you encounter. Some people consider you a representative of the gods or a power from beyond this world. Perhaps they're right—transdimensional experiments in the prior worlds might be what created the energies that you now wield.

You probably wear simple clothes—nothing too flashy or stylish. There's no need to call more attention to yourself.

A Glaive who can heal himself is an interesting and dangerous proposition.

Connection: Choose one of the following.

1. Pick one other PC. This character quietly suspects that you're a messiah or supernatural being.

2. Pick one other PC. This person knows a secret of yours, and you desperately hope that they do not tell anyone. You can choose whether or not you're aware of their suspicion.

3. Pick one other PC. This character believes that you cured someone close to them of a deadly disease, and they are grateful. You aren't sure whether you actually helped or if that person wasn't as sick as was thought.

4. Pick one other PC. You secretly believe that this person might be a hypochondriac, and you're never sure whether they actually need your help.

Minor Effect Suggestions: The target is healed for 1 additional point.

Major Effect Suggestions: The target is healed for 2 additional points.

Damage track, page 110

A character who works miracles might be using nanites—knowingly or unknowingly—to repair wounds or improve the physiology of the creature being helped. Alternatively, perhaps a part of the character's brain can speak to individual cells in a creature's body, directing and speeding up their mitotic phase or even the migration of cells in the system, reorganizing entire biological structures.

Tier 1: Healing Touch (1 Intellect point). With a touch, you restore 1d6 points to one stat Pool of any creature. This ability is a difficulty 2 Intellect task. Each time you attempt to heal the same creature, the task difficulty increases by one step. The difficulty returns to 2 after that creature rests for ten hours. Action.

Healing an NPC, page 109



Tier 2: Alleviate (3 Intellect points). You attempt to cancel or cure one malady (such as disease or poison) in one creature. Action.

Tier 3: Ability Choice. Choose either Font of Healing or Miraculous Health as your tier 3 ability.

Font of Healing. With your approval, other creatures can touch you and regain 1d6 points to either their Might Pool or their Speed Pool. This healing costs them 2 Intellect points. A single creature can benefit from this ability only once each day. Enabler.

Miraculous Health. When you would descend a step on the damage track, you can attempt a Might task to resist, with a difficulty equal to the level of the foe or effect that harmed you. If successful, you don't descend the step and you regain 1 point in any Pool that is bereft of points. You can't use this ability again until after your next ten-hour rest. Enabler.

Tier 4: Inspiration (4 Intellect points). Through mental inspiration and the manipulation of time, one creature you choose within short range is granted an additional, immediate action, which it can take out of turn. Action.

Tier 5: Undo (5 Intellect points). You turn back time a few seconds, effectively undoing a single creature's most recent action. That creature can then immediately repeat the same action or try something different. Action.

Tier 6: Ability Choice. Choose either Greater Healing Touch or Restore Life as your tier 6 ability.

Greater Healing Touch (4 Intellect points). You touch a creature and restore its Might Pool, Speed Pool, and Intellect Pool to their maximum values, as if it were fully rested. A single creature can benefit from this ability only once each day. Action.

Restore Life (9+ Intellect points). You can attempt to restore life to a dead creature of up to level 3, as long as the corpse is no more than a day old and is mostly intact. You can also attempt to restore life to a corpse that is much older but is especially well preserved. The difficulty of the Intellect task is equal to the level of the creature you're attempting to restore to life. For each additional level of Effort applied, you can attempt to restore the life of a creature whose level is 1 higher. When first restored to life, a creature is dazed for at least a day, and all tasks they attempt are hindered. Action; one minute to initiate.



CHAPTER 7

EQUIPMENT

The Ninth World is a dichotomy of past and future, of the primitive and the extremely advanced, of limitations and limitlessness. Nowhere does this dichotomy become more evident than in the tools the inhabitants use, the clothing they wear, the weapons they wield, and the gear they carry. This section looks at currency, materials, and gear in the Ninth World.

Although some of the equipment and materials described in this section are products of the distant past, actual cyphers, artifacts, and oddities are not listed here; they're covered in Part 6: The Numenera.

CURRENCY

Thanks to the mining and metallurgy of the prior worlds, and their ability to create anything they wished (or so it seems, anyway), no metal is rarer than any other. People in the Ninth World have no concept of gold, silver, gemstones, or even diamonds as being valuable due to their scarcity. Such materials are valuable based on their beauty or usefulness alone. Most civilized societies use generic coins commonly referred to as *shins*.

Shins are usually metal but can be made of glass, plastic, or substances that have no name. Some are jagged bits of interesting material or small, coinlike objects (such as highly decorative buttons from a machine), and others are properly minted and stamped, with writing and images. No minted coin in existence today comes from a prior world—no coins survive from the ancients, if indeed they used such currency at all.

Some regions of the Ninth World only accept coins that were minted in that realm; others accept all coins, regardless of origin. This custom varies from place to place and society to society.

Because shins are from the Ninth World, they rarely turn up in old locations. Occasionally, explorers of ancient or forgotten sites find a smattering of items—buttons or doodads—that can be salvaged as shins.

MATERIALS

Most objects built in the Ninth World are made of wood, leather, cloth, stone, glass, or metal. Smithies and forges can produce high-quality steel objects, but they generally work in iron or bronze. However, plastic (called "synth"), organic stone or steel, exotic crystal, and even stranger materials are not unknown. Items made of those substances are left over from the prior worlds, so many people are familiar with them, although very few know how to produce more. Unlike gold or gemstones, some of these materials are indeed recognized as being rare, but none are valuable for their rarity alone. Ninth Worlders are too practical for that. Such materials include (but are not limited to):

Adamant silk: This fabric is five times as strong as regular silk and extremely resistant to stains and dirt.

Azure steel: This bluish metal is not steel and may not be from Earth at all. While somewhat lighter than steel, it is at least ten times harder and tougher.

Molded foam: This substance has the mass of soap foam but has been molded firmly into other shapes, such as dishes, boxes, or other common objects. Most kinds of molded foam are brittle, but some types are more durable.

Organic stone: Although it has the appearance and strength of granite (or sometimes other minerals, such as marble or quartz), this material is grown rather than quarried. Some varieties of organic stone are half as light as normal stone, but other types are just as heavy—if not heavier.

Pliable metal: This material retains the strength and durability of steel but is pliable enough to make bags, boots, or similar objects. Sometimes pliable metal temporarily molds to the shape of whatever is pressed against it, similar to 21st-century memory foam.

Shapestone: Like stone out of precise molds, shapestone has the durability of granite but is actually ceramic.

While some materials can readily be found in various parts of the Ninth World, others are more unique to a particular area:

Culat is a particularly hard wood that is favored by the Horges of Castle Sarrat (page 146).

Goldgleam and silster are decorative elements harvested from insects in the Slant Milieu (page 174).

Redstone is a brick-colored stone quarried only in the village of Redstone (page 197).

Part 6: The Numenera, page 269

Mineral rarity is not an issue in the Ninth World, so gems and jewels are not intrinsically valuable. People still prize well-made jewelry and art objects, but real "treasure" comes in the form of oddities or artifacts of the prior worlds.

LOOKING FOR

Ambient damage, page 110
Damage track, page 110



Stronglass: Although this material looks, feels, and is worked like glass, it has the strength of steel.

Synth: This is a Ninth World name for any of a number of materials similar to various plastics common to 21st-century Earth. They are durable but not particularly strong.

Synthsteel: Similar in appearance to normal synth, this somewhat misnamed substance is harder and tougher than synth, making it stronger but far lighter than steel.

Confusingly, sometimes synthsteel is just called synth when the context makes it obvious that it is very strong, such as with synth armor.

Most common Ninth World items are made of conventional materials, but it's not strange to find a few objects made of these more exotic substances. For instance, amid a rack of steel and iron axes, a character might find one with a synthsteel head (likely a piece of synthsteel originally designed for another purpose and adapted for use as an axe head). Usually, the cost of an item made of exotic materials is the same as that of a normal item, but if the material makes a big difference—such as in the case of a shield made of stronglass so you can hold it in front of you and still see through it—the seller might charge up to twice the normal price.

Special Equipment, page 97

Oddity, page 304

Cypher, page 272

Artifact, page 289

LOOKING FOR

Falling and falling damage, page 111
Recovery roll, page 112

ENCUMBRANCE

Weights of objects are not listed. In fact, it would be futile to do so because the weight of an object depends on what materials were used to make it. An iron axe and a ceramic axe weigh different amounts.

There's no need to keep track of how much a character carries. If the GM determines that a character is carrying too much equipment, the GM should either (1) assign a difficulty and ask for a Might action, or (2) assign the weight a cost to be added to the character's Speed Effort. Method 1 is useful when a character wants to carry a single heavy object for a limited time—for example, moving a hefty iron box out of a ruin and loading it onto a cart for transport back to civilization. Method 2 works well for long-term encumbrance, such as when a character dons a second backpack full of machine parts and continues exploring. As a guideline for what the Speed Effort penalty should be, compare the character's burden to the encumbrance for wearing armor, and assign the penalty according to that assessment (1 for light, 2 for medium, or 3 for heavy).

EQUIPMENT LISTS AND PRICES

The items presented in this chapter are general examples, not exhaustive lists. Equipment in the Ninth World is often much like that found in ancient or medieval societies but can be far more advanced. For example, a simple tent or bedroll might be constructed of synthetic fiber that makes it entirely water-resistant as well as far lighter and warmer than cloth. A chainmail hauberk could be made in whole or in part from glassy links that are harder and lighter than steel.

It's worth noting that some Ninth World tools and devices would never be found in a medieval setting because they're relics from a previous world or were created with knowledge salvaged from a previous world. Examples of these kinds of objects are ink pens, clothing made from denim or spandex, liquid soap, screw-top metal canisters, rubber gloves, umbrellas, sticky tape, nylon fishing line, spray bottles, and a hundred more similar items. They also include the objects listed under Special Equipment, as well as random oddities and occasional cyphers and artifacts—although finding either of the latter for sale like ordinary goods is quite uncommon.

When in doubt, light weapons cost 1 shin, medium weapons cost 3, and heavy weapons cost 5. Light armor costs 3 shins, medium armor costs 5, and heavy armor costs 15. Most other common objects cost 1, 2, or 3 shins. Sellers usually discount for bulk purchases.

ARMOR

Characters expecting danger frequently wear armor. Even the simplest of protective coverings helps against slingstones and sword-strokes, and more sophisticated or heavier armor protects against graver threats.

You can wear only one type of armor at a time—you cannot wear chainmail hauberk and scale armor, for example. However, Armor bonuses from multiple sources combine to provide a total Armor rating. For example, if you have subdermal implants that give you +1 Armor, a force field that offers another +1 Armor, and beastskin armor that grants +2 Armor, you have a total of 4 Armor.



ARMOR

Light (1 point of Armor)	Price
Leather jerkin	3 shins
Hides and furs	2 shins

Special Light (2 points of Armor)	Price
Armoring cloth	40 shins
Micromesh	50 shins

Medium (2 points of Armor)	Price
Beastskin	5 shins
Brigandine	5 shins
Chainmail hauberk	6 shins

Special Medium (3 points of Armor)	Price
Metalweave vest	40 shins
Synth breastplate	50 shins

Heavy (3 points of Armor)	Price
Plate armor	15 shins
Scale armor	12 shins

USING ARMOR

Anyone can wear any armor, but it can be taxing. Wearing armor increases the cost of using Speed Effort (see the table). So if you're wearing light armor and want to use two levels of Effort on a Speed-based roll to run across difficult terrain, it costs 7 points from your Speed Pool rather than 5 (3 for the first level of Effort, plus 2 for the second level of Effort, plus 1 per level for wearing light armor). Edge reduces the overall cost as normal.

Glaives and Jacks have abilities that reduce the cost of wearing armor.

Armor	Speed Effort additional cost
Light	1
Medium	2
Heavy	3

WEAPONS

Not all characters are familiar with all weapons. Glaives know their way around most types. Jacks prefer light or medium weapons and have an inability with heavy weapons. Nanos usually stick to light weapons and have an inability with medium and heavy weapons. (See the chart on page 96 for additional details on weapons).

Glaive, page 28

Jack, page 44

Inability, page 101

Nano, page 36

Light weapons inflict only 2 points of damage, but they ease the attack roll because they are fast and easy to use. Light weapons are punches, kicks, knives, handaxes, darts, and so on. Weapons that are particularly small are light weapons.

Medium weapons inflict 4 points of damage. Medium weapons include broadswords, 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.

Players probably shouldn't be able to select weapons or armor referred to as "special" in the Equipment chapter for their beginning character. GMs may even want to put a price limit of 5 shins on starting weapons and 15 shins on starting armor. If a player doesn't select a free weapon or armor they are entitled to, those are the amounts they should get as compensation. Players should always select weapons and armor they can use.

WEAPON NOTES

Buzzer: This handheld weapon fires thumbnail-sized bladed disks up to short range. It holds five disks in a magazine and requires an action to reload. It can be used as a rapid-fire weapon.

Crank Crossbow: This long-range weapon is similar to a standard crossbow, but it has a magazine that holds five bolts, requiring a small crank to advance to the next bolt. Action to reload. It can be used as a rapid-fire weapon.

Forearm Blade: This metal weapon is basically a bracer with a mounted blade on it. A favorite of berserkers as well as the Jaekels of Aras Island.

Berserkers, page 83

Jaekels, page 164

Razor ring: This short-range weapon is just what it sounds like: a ring with a razor-sharp outer edge. The inner edge is often padded for holding.

Sisk: This solid, bladed throwing disk is about the diameter of a human head. This short-range weapon is used most frequently by the warriors of Milave.

Milave, page 158

Verred: This weapon resembles a sword with two forked blades. It is short and useful in defense as well as offense.

Yulk: This weapon resembles a splayed metal claw mounted on a 2-foot (60 cm) haft. It is used mainly by raiders and wildmen of the Beyond.

Beyond, page 206

LOOKING FOR

Blindness, page 113
Disease, page 112
Paralysis, page 113
Poison, page 112
Stunned, page 112
Surprise, page 113

WEAPONS



Light Weapons (2 points of damage)	Price	Notes
Blowgun	1 shin	Short range
12 darts	3 shins	
Buzzer	25 shins	See Weapon Notes (page 95)
5-disk buzzer magazine	1 shin	
Club	1 shin	
Dagger	1 shin	Can be thrown up to short range
Dart thrower	8 shins	Long range
12 darts	3 shins	
Forearm blade	4 shins	See Weapon Notes (page 95)
Knife	1 shin	Can be thrown up to short range
Punching dagger	1 shin	
Rapier	2 shins	
Razor ring	1 shin	See Weapon Notes (page 95)
Sisk	1 shin	See Weapon Notes (page 95)
Unarmed (punch, kick, etc.)	—	
Whip	2 shins	



Medium Weapons (4 points of damage)	Price	Notes
Battleaxe	3 shins	
Bow	3 shins	Long range
12 arrows	5 shins	
Broadsword	3 shins	
Crank crossbow	10 shins	See Weapon Notes (page 95)
12 medium bolts	5 shins	
Crossbow	5 shins	Long range
12 medium bolts	5 shins	
Flail	3 shins	
Hammer	2 shins	
Javelin	2 shins	Long range
Mace	2 shins	
Polearm	3 shins	Often used two-handed
Quarterstaff	2 shins	Often used two-handed
Spear	2 shins	Can be thrown up to long range
Verred	2 shins	See Weapon Notes (page 95)
Yulk	2 shins	See Weapon Notes (page 95)



Heavy Weapons (6 points of damage)	Price	Notes
Greataxe	5 shins	
Greatsword	5 shins	
Heavy crossbow	7 shins	Long range; action to reload
12 heavy bolts	5 shins	
Maul	4 shins	
Sword-staff	5 shins	

LOOKING FOR

Range, page 113
Fighting in dim light, page 114
Illumination (darkness) rules, page 114
Invisible, page 114
Invisible target, page 114



OTHER EQUIPMENT

Items for Exploring	Price	Other Equipment Notes
Backpack	2 shins	
Bag of light tools	10 shins	See Other Equipment Notes (page 98)
Bag of heavy tools	12 shins	See Other Equipment Notes (page 98)
Bedroll	2 shins	
Book	5–20 shins	See Other Equipment Notes (page 98)
Burlap sack	1 shin	
Compass	10 shins	
Crowbar	2 shins	
Disguise kit	12 shins	See Other Equipment Notes (page 98)
Explorer's pack	20 shins	See Other Equipment Notes (page 98)
First aid kit	10 shins	See Other Equipment Notes (page 98)
Grappling hook	3 shins	
Lockpicks	5 shins	
Matchsticks (10)	1 shin	
Musical instrument	5–10 shins	
Pouch or other small container	1 shin	
Rope (50 feet / 15 m)	2 shins	
Shield	3 shins	See Other Equipment Notes (page 98)
Tent	3 shins	Large enough for two people
Torches (2)	1 shin	

Food and Mundane Items	Price	Notes
Ale/wine/other alcohol (glass)	1 shin	
Ale/wine/other alcohol (bottle)	3 shins	
Boots or shoes	1 shin	
Cigarettes (12)	2 shins	
Clothing	1 shin	Very nice clothing: up to 5 shins
Meal	1 shin	High-quality meal: up to 5 shins
Rations for one day	2 shins	

An explorer can be appraised by their gear. If you see someone in the wilderness and they don't have the right equipment, they're either a short-lived fool, or they're very, very dangerous.

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Common	Price	Special Equipment Notes
Clear synth bag (small)	1 shin	
Clear synth bag (large)	2 shins	
Compass	10 shins	
Glowglobe, minor	5 shins	See Special Equipment Notes (page 98)
Ink pen	2 shins	

Rare	Price	Special Equipment Notes
Binoculars/Telescope	50 shins	
Ecledda clothing	15 shins	Made of extremely durable fabric (such as adamant silk)
Glow ink	10 shins	Glows in the dark permanently
Glowglobe, major	30 shins	See Special Equipment Notes (page 98)
Shock ring	500 shins	See Special Equipment Notes (page 98)

Very Rare	Price	Special Equipment Notes
Brilliance cloth	100 shins	See Special Equipment Notes (page 98)
Floatstone	20 shins	See Special Equipment Notes (page 98)
Memory ants	10 shins	See Special Equipment Notes (page 98)
Shaper key	20 shins	See Special Equipment Notes (page 98)
Sprayflesh	100 shins	See Special Equipment Notes (page 98)
Spraymetal	50 shins	See Special Equipment Notes (page 98)
Stingcharge	750 shins	See Special Equipment Notes (page 98)
Whisperlock	20 shins	See Special Equipment Notes (page 98)

LOOKING FOR
Low gravity, page 115

OTHER EQUIPMENT

OTHER EQUIPMENT NOTES

Claras the glaive was said to carry an axe with a blade so thin and sharp that you could see through it, and yet it could still cut through stone.

Bag of Light Tools: Contains small tongs, pliers, screwdriver, small hammer, small pry bar, lockpicks, 10 feet (3 m) of string, 3 feet (1 m) of wire, and miscellaneous screws and nails.

Bag of Heavy Tools: Contains hammer, six spikes, crowbar, large tongs, chisel, and 10 feet (3 m) of light but strong metal cable.

Book: Provides an asset to any roll made concerning the subject of the book as long as the character has the book in their possession, can read it, and can devote half an hour to the task (or twice as long as normal, whichever is greater).

Disguise Kit: Contains cosmetics, facial prostheses, and a few other tricks. Provides an asset to disguise tasks, easing the task when you attempt to disguise yourself as another person.

Explorer's Pack: Contains 50 feet (15 m) of rope, rations for three days, three spikes, hammer, warm clothes, sturdy boots, three torches, and two minor glowglobes.

First Aid Kit: Contains bandages, a few tools, salves, and so on. Provides an asset to ease healing tasks.

Shield: Provides an asset to Speed defense rolls.

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Nothing on the special equipment list (page 97) is regularly manufactured by Ninth World crafters. Most likely, these items are recovered from old sites, but they're found often enough and in large enough quantities that many communities offer them for sale. The GM is the final arbiter of whether or not the characters can obtain these items, but as a general rule, common special items are always available, rare special items are available 50 percent of the time, and very rare special items are available 25 percent of the time.

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT NOTES

Brilliance Cloth: This synthcloth obeys the thoughts of anyone touching it. It has the ability to slowly change shape and color (but not consistency). A major change requires about ten minutes. A garment of brilliance cloth can be made into any other garment, for example, but it can't be made protective.

Floatstone: A piece of rock, usually about the size of a brick, that pulls against gravity. Most people think of it as having a "negative weight" of about –10 pounds. Thus, if attached to anything lighter, it floats away.

Glowglobe: This device illuminates everything in short range with soft light. It can hover in place on its own, or it can be attached to something. The minor glowglobe lasts for an hour when activated. The major glowglobe functions continuously.

Memory Ants: This is a small jar of tiny insects that run across a page of text and then return to the jar. When spilled out again and given ink, they replicate the text once and then die.

Shaper Key: A shaper key is a wad of putty that can be inserted into a conventional lock. It takes on the form of the key for that lock and then hardens, permanently, into a functional key.

Shock Ring: This weapon is a razor ring with a charged outer edge that inflicts 4 additional points of damage. If it misses, it returns unerringly to the thrower's hand. Its power is normally never depleted.

Sprayflesh: This tiny synth canister sprays out a sticky gelatin that covers and seals wounds instantly. Its use restores 6 points to a character's Might Pool.

Spraymetal: Similar to sprayflesh, but instead of restoring flesh, it repairs minor damage (breaks, tears, and holes) in any simple object—even a flexible object like cloth or a leather bag—but not devices or anything as complex as a crossbow. It has the strength of steel.

Stingcharge: This handheld weapon fires an electrical bolt that inflicts 3 points of damage at immediate range and 2 points of damage at short range. It cannot be made to fire farther than that. A stingcharge can be used as a rapid-fire weapon. Its power is normally never depleted.

Whisperlock: This is similar to a padlock, made of powerful synthsteel or stronglass, except that it has no keyhole. It opens with a secret word selected when it is initially locked. The word must be spoken into the lock itself.



LOOKING FOR

Fighting in zero gravity, page 115
High gravity, page 115
Zero gravity, page 115

PART 3:
PLAYING THE GAME



Chapter 8: Rules of the Game 100

CHAPTER 8

RULES OF THE GAME

Cragworm, page 230



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. 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.

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 102). The GM doesn't have to tell the player what the target number is, but they can give the player 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 they roll equal to or higher than the target number, they succeed.

Might, page 22

Speed, page 22

Intellect, page 22

Training, page 15

Equipment, page 93

Special abilities, page 26

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.

LOOKING FOR

High gravity, page 117
Long-term movement, page 117
Low gravity, page 117
Movement modifiers, page 117
Moving in deep water, page 117
Zero gravity, page 117

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, and throwing a stone into a nearby bucket are 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.

Some actions require a minimum expenditure of Might, Speed, or Intellect points. If a character cannot spend the minimum number of points needed to complete the action, they automatically fail at the task.

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

KEY CONCEPTS

ACTION: Anything a character does that is significant—punch a foe, leap a chasm, activate a device, use a special power, and so on. Each character can take one action in a round.

CHARACTER: Any creature in the game capable of acting, whether it is a player character (PC) run by a player or a nonplayer character (NPC) run by the game master (GM). In Numenera, even bizarre creatures, sentient machines, and living energy beings can be "characters."

DIFFICULTY: A measure of how easy it is to accomplish a task. Difficulty is rated on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest). Altering the difficulty to make a task harder is called "hindering." Altering it to make a task easier is called "easing." All changes in difficulty are measured in steps. Difficulty often equates directly with level, so opening a level 3 locked door probably has a difficulty of 3.

EASE: A decrease in a task's difficulty, usually by one step. If something doesn't say how many steps it eases a task, then it reduces the difficulty by one step.

EFFORT: Spending points from a stat Pool to reduce the difficulty of a task, increase an attack's damage, or improve certain character abilities. A PC decides whether to apply Effort on their turn before they roll. NPCs never apply Effort.

HINDER: An increase in a task's difficulty, usually by one step. If something doesn't say how many steps it hinders a task, then it increases the difficulty by one step.

INABILITY: The opposite of trained—you're hindered whenever you attempt that task. If you become trained in a task that you have an inability in, they cancel each other out.

LEVEL: A way to measure the strength, difficulty, power, or challenge of something in the game. Everything has a level. NPCs and objects have levels that determine the difficulty of any task related to them. For example, an opponent's level determines how hard they are to hit or avoid in combat. A door's level indicates how hard it is to break down. A lock's level determines how hard it is to pick. Levels are rated on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest). PC tiers are a bit like levels, but they go only from 1 to 6 and mechanically work very differently—for example, a PC's tier does not determine a task's difficulty.

ROLL: A d20 roll made by a player to determine whether an action is successful. Although the game occasionally uses other dice, when the text simply refers to "a roll," it always means a d20 roll.

ROUND: A length of time about five to ten seconds long. There are about ten rounds in a minute. When it's really important to track precise time, use rounds. Basically, it's the length of time to take an action in the game, but since everyone more or less acts simultaneously, all characters get to take an action each round.

SPECIALIZED: Having an exceptional amount of skill in a task. Being specialized eases the task by two steps. So, if you are specialized in climbing, all your climbing tasks are eased by two steps.

STAT: One of the three defining characteristics for PCs: Might, Speed, or Intellect. Each stat has two values: Pool and Edge. Your Pool represents your raw, innate ability, and your Edge represents knowing how to use what you have. Each stat Pool can increase or decrease over the course of play. For example, you can lose points from your Might Pool when struck by an opponent, spend points from your Intellect Pool to activate a special ability, or rest to recover points in your Speed Pool after a long day of marching. Anything that damages a stat, restores a stat, or boosts or penalizes a stat affects the stat's Pool.

TASK: Any action that a PC attempts. The GM determines the difficulty of the task. In general, a *task* is something that you do and an *action* is you performing that task, but in most cases they mean the same thing.

TRAINED: Having a reasonable amount of skill in a task. Being trained eases the task. For example, if you are trained in climbing, all climbing tasks for you are eased. If you become very skilled at that task, you become specialized instead of trained. You do not need to be trained to attempt a task.

TURN: The part of the round when a creature takes its actions. For example, if a Nano and a Jack are fighting an abhuman, each round the Nano takes an action on his turn, the Jack takes an action on her turn, and the abhuman takes an action on its turn. Some abilities or effects last only while a creature takes its turn or end when a creature starts its next turn.

A player can choose to roll even if the difficulty is 0. This gives them the chance for a special effect, but there is the risk of rolling a 1 and having a GM intrusion.

Pool, page 22

Edge, page 23



Nano, page 36

Jack, page 44

Abhuman, page 13

LOOKING FOR

Draw or take an attack, page 118

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 and may determine how your other abilities affect the roll. For example, a Nano may have an ability that makes them better at Intellect rolls, and a Jack may have an ability that makes them better at Speed rolls.

Effort, page 23

DETERMINING TASK DIFFICULTY

The most frequent thing a GM does during the game—and probably the most important thing—is set 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.

Part 7: Running the Game, page 309, offers much more guidance for setting difficulty.

TASK 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 hindering or easing, which is measured in steps. For example, reducing a difficulty 5 task to a difficulty 4 task is "easing the difficulty by one step" or just "easing the difficulty" or "easing the task."

Most 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.

LOOKING FOR
Wait, page 119

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 ease a task and thus lower the target number to something they *can* roll on a d20.

A character's tier does not determine a task's level. Things don't get more difficult just because a character's tier increases—the world doesn't instantly become a more difficult place. Fourth-tier characters don't deal only with level 4 creatures or difficulty 4 tasks (although a fourth-tier character probably has a better shot at success than a first-tier character does). Just because something is level 4 doesn't necessarily mean it's meant only for fourth-tier characters. Similarly, depending on the situation, a fifth-tier character could find a difficulty 2 task just as challenging as a second-tier character does. Therefore, when setting the difficulty of a task, the GM should rate the task on its own merits, not on the power of the characters.

MODIFYING THE DIFFICULTY: EASING AND HINDERING

Once the GM sets the difficulty for a task, the player can try to modify it for their character. Any such modification applies only to this particular attempt at the task. In other words, rewiring an electronic door lock normally might be difficulty 6, but since the character doing the work is skilled in such tasks, has the right tools, and has help from another PC, the difficulty *in this instance* might be much lower. That's why it's important for the GM to set a task's difficulty without taking the character into account. The character comes in at this step.

By using skills and assets, working together, and—perhaps most important—applying Effort,

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).

a character can ease a task by multiple steps to make it easier. Rather than adding bonuses to the player's roll, easing lowers the target number that they need to reach. If the player can reduce the difficulty of a task to 0, no roll is needed; success is automatic. (An exception is if the GM decides to use a GM intrusion on the task, in which case the player would have to make a roll at the original difficulty.)

There are three basic ways in which a character can ease a task: skills, assets, and Effort. Each of them eases the task by at least one step—never in smaller increments.

SKILLS: Characters may be skilled at performing a specific task. A skill can vary from character to character. For example, one character might be skilled at lying, another might be skilled at trickery, and a third might be skilled in all interpersonal interactions. The first level of being skilled is called being *trained*, and it eases that task by one step. More rarely, a character can be incredibly skilled at performing a task. This is called being *specialized*, and it eases the task by two steps instead of one. Skills can never ease a task by more than two steps—any more than two steps from being trained and specialized don't count.

ASSETS: An asset is anything that helps a character with a task, such as having a really good crowbar when trying to force open a door or being in a rainstorm when trying to put out a fire. Appropriate assets vary from task to task. The perfect awl might help when woodworking, but it won't make a dance performance much better. An asset usually eases a task by one step. Assets can never ease a task by more than two steps—any more than two steps from assets don't count.

EFFORT: A player can apply Effort to ease a task. To do this, the player spends points from the stat Pool that's most appropriate to the task. For example, applying Effort to push a heavy rock off a cliff requires a player to spend points from the character's Might Pool; applying Effort to activate an unusual machine interface requires them to spend points from the Intellect Pool. For every level of Effort spent on a task, the task's difficulty eases by one step. It costs 3 points from a stat Pool to apply one level of Effort, and it costs 2 additional points for every level thereafter (so it costs 5 points for two levels of Effort, 7 points for three levels of Effort, and so on). A character must spend points from the same stat Pool as the type of task or roll—Might points for a Might roll, Speed points for a Speed roll, or Intellect points for an Intellect roll. Every character has a maximum level of Effort they can apply to a single task. Effort can never ease a task by more than six steps—any more than six steps from applying Effort doesn't count.

GM intrusion, page 123

Free Level of Effort: A few abilities give you a free level of Effort (these usually require you to apply at least one level of Effort to a task). In effect, you're getting one more level of Effort than what you paid for. This free level of Effort can exceed the Effort limit for your character, but not the six-step limit for easing a task.

ROLLING THE DIE

To determine success or failure, a player rolls a die (always a d20). If they roll the target number or higher, they succeed. Most of the time, that's the end of it—nothing else needs to be done. Rarely, a character might apply a small modifier to the roll. If they have a +2 bonus when attempting a specific action, they add 2 to the number rolled. However, the original roll sometimes matters (see Special Rolls, page 104).

The important thing to remember is that a skill can reduce the difficulty by no more than two steps, and assets can reduce the difficulty by no more than two steps, regardless of the situation. Thus, no task's difficulty will ever be reduced by more than four steps without using Effort.

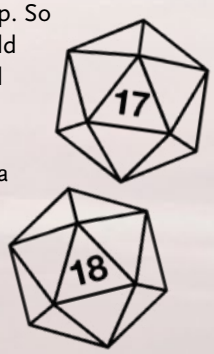
If a character applies a modifier to their die roll, it's possible to get a result of 21 or higher, in which case they can attempt a task with a target number above 20. But if there is no possibility for success—if not even rolling a natural 20 (meaning the d20 shows that number) is sufficient to accomplish the task—then no roll is made. Otherwise, characters would have a chance to succeed at everything, even impossible or ridiculous tasks such as climbing moonbeams, throwing elephants, or hitting a target on the opposite side of a mountain with an arrow.

If a character's modifiers add up to +3, treat them as an asset instead. In other words, instead of adding a +3 bonus to the roll, reduce the difficulty by one step. For example, if a Glaive has a +1 bonus to attack rolls from a minor effect, a +1 bonus to attack rolls from a special weapon quality, and a +1 bonus to attack rolls from a special ability, they do not add 3 to their attack roll—instead, they ease the attack task by one step. So if they attack a level 3 foe, they would normally roll against difficulty 3 and try to reach a target number of 9, but thanks to their asset, they roll against difficulty 2 and try to reach a target number of 6. This distinction is important when stacking skills and assets to ease an action, especially since reducing the difficulty to 0 or lower means no roll is needed.

By using skills, assets, and Effort, you can ease a task by a maximum of ten steps.

LOOKING FOR

Healing, page 121





THE PLAYER ALWAYS ROLLS

In Numenera, players always drive the action. That means they make all the die rolls. If a PC leaps out of a moving vehicle, the player rolls to see if they succeed. If a PC searches for a hidden panel, the player rolls to determine whether they find it. If a rockslide falls on a PC, the player rolls to try to get out of the way. If a PC and an NPC arm wrestle, the player rolls, and the NPC's level determines the target number. If a PC attacks a foe, the player rolls to see if the attack hits. If a foe attacks the PC, the player rolls to see if their PC dodges the blow.

As shown by the last two examples, the PC rolls whether they are attacking or defending. Thus, something that improves defenses might help or hinder their rolls. For example, if a PC uses a low wall to gain cover from attacks, the wall eases the player's defense rolls. If a foe uses the wall to gain cover from the PC's attacks, it hinders the player's attack rolls.

SPECIAL ROLLS

If a character rolls a natural 1, 17, 18, 19, or 20 (meaning the d20 shows that number), special rules come into play. These are explained in more detail in the following sections.

1: GM Intrusion. The GM makes a free GM 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 spent any at all.

GM INTRUSION

GM intrusion is explained in detail elsewhere, but essentially it means that something 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 that something unrelated affects the current situation.

For a GM intrusion on a defense roll, a roll of 1 might just mean that the PC takes 2 additional points of damage from the attack, indicating that the opponent got in a lucky blow.

For complete details on GM intrusion and how to use it to best effect in the game, see page 315.

MINOR EFFECT

A minor effect happens when a player rolls a natural 19. Most of the time, a minor effect is slightly beneficial to the PC, but not overwhelming. A climber gets up the steep slope a bit faster. A repaired machine works a bit better. A character jumping down into a pit lands on their feet. Either the GM or the player can come up with a possible minor effect that fits the situation, but both must agree on what it should be.

Don't waste a lot of time thinking of a minor effect if nothing appropriate suggests itself. Sometimes, in cases where only success or failure matters, it's okay to have no minor effect. Keep the game moving at an exciting pace.

In combat, the easiest and most straightforward minor effect is dealing 3 additional points of damage with an attack. The following are other common minor effects for combat:

Damage object: Instead of striking the foe, the attack strikes what the foe is holding. If the attack hits, the character makes a Might roll with a difficulty equal to the object's level. On a success, the object moves one or more steps down the object damage track.

Distract: For one round, all of the foe's tasks are hindered.

Knock back: The foe is knocked or forced back a few feet. Most of the time, this doesn't matter much, but if the fight takes place on a ledge or next to a pit of lava, the effect can be significant.

Move past: The character can move a short distance at the end of the attack. This effect is useful to get past a foe guarding a door, for example.

Strike a specific body part: The attacker strikes a specific spot on the defender's body. The GM rules what special effect, if any, results. For example, hitting a creature's tentacle that is wrapped around an ally might make it easier for the ally to escape. Hitting a foe in the eye might blind it for one round. Hitting a creature in its one vulnerable spot might ignore Armor.

Usually, the GM just has the desired minor effect occur. For example, rolling a 19 against a relatively weak foe means it is knocked off the cliff. The effect makes the round more exciting, but the defeat of a minor creature has no significant impact on the story. Other times, the GM might rule that an additional roll is needed to achieve the effect—the special roll only gives the PC the *opportunity* for a minor effect. This mostly happens when the desired effect is very unlikely, such as pushing a 50-ton battle automaton off a cliff. If the player just wants to deal 3 additional points of damage as the minor effect, no extra roll is needed.

MAJOR EFFECT

A major effect happens when a player rolls a natural 20. Most of the time, a major effect is quite beneficial to the character. A climber gets up the steep slope in half the time. A jumper lands with such panache that those nearby are impressed and possibly intimidated. A defender makes a free attack on a foe.

Either the GM or the player can come up with a possible major effect that fits the situation, but both must agree on what it should be. As with minor effects, don't spend a lot of time agonizing over the details of a major effect. In cases where only success or failure matters, a major effect might offer the character a one-time asset, easing the task the next time they attempt a similar action. When nothing else seems appropriate, the GM can simply grant the PC an additional action on their turn that same round.

In combat, the easiest and most straightforward major effect is dealing 4 additional points of damage with an attack. The following are other common major effects for combat.

Disarm: The foe drops one object that it is holding.

Impair: For the rest of the combat, all tasks the foe attempts are hindered.

Knock down: The foe is knocked prone. It can get up on its turn.

Stun: The foe loses its next action.

As with minor effects, usually the GM just has the desired major effect occur, but sometimes the GM might require an extra roll if the major effect is unusual or unlikely.

Minor and major effects are a great way for players to spice up a combat encounter with an unexpected twist. A creative player uses them to gain a short-term advantage and to make the fight more exciting and cinematic.

"I thought we'd be overrun once the abhumans started swarming up the walls, but Josten had the clever idea to knock them backward and send them crashing down into the next wave of climbers. We'd be dead if it wasn't for her."
~Telm of Kordech

Attacking objects, page 116

Prone, page 113

Distance, page 106

OPTIONAL RULE: CHOOSING A COMBAT EFFECT AHEAD OF TIME

While normally you get a minor or major effect based on your die roll, sometimes a character in combat tries to achieve a minor or major effect as a part of a deliberate strategy, such as disarming a foe they don't want to harm or shooting a huge beast in the eye to blind it so they can run away. A character can choose a minor or major combat effect ahead of time so they can achieve it without rolling a natural 19 or 20 on the die, but the attack is modified in these ways:

- For a minor effect, you subtract 4 from your damage, and the attack is hindered.
- For a major effect, you subtract 8 from your damage, and the attack is hindered by two steps.

In either case, if your attack would deal 0 points of damage or less, there is no damage or effect at all.

RETRYING A TASK AFTER FAILURE

If a character fails a task (whether it's climbing a wall, picking a lock, trying to figure out a mysterious device, or something else), they can attempt it again, but they must apply at least one level of Effort to do so. A retry is a new action, not part of the same action that failed, and it takes the same amount of time as the first attempt did.

Sometimes the GM might rule that retries are impossible. Perhaps a character has one chance to convince the leader of a group of bandits not to attack, and after that, no amount of talking will stop them.

This rule doesn't apply to something like attacking a foe in combat because combat is always changing and fluid. Each round's situation is new, not a repeat of a previous situation, so a missed attack can't be retried.

The words "immediate" and "close" can be used interchangeably to talk about distance. If a creature or object is within arm's reach of the character, it can be considered immediate or close.

INITIAL COST

The GM can assign a point cost to a task just for trying it. Called an *initial cost*, it's simply an indication that the task is particularly taxing. For example, let's say a character wants to try a Might action to open a heavy iron door that is partially rusted shut. The GM says that forcing the door open is a difficulty 5 task, *and* there's an initial cost of 3 Might points simply to try. This initial cost is in addition to any points the character chooses to spend on the roll (such as when applying Effort), and the initial cost points do not affect the difficulty of the task. In other words, the character must spend 3 Might points to attempt the task at all, but that doesn't help them open the door. If they want to apply Effort to ease the difficulty, they'd have to spend more points from their Might Pool.

Onslaught, page 40

Edge helps with the initial cost of a task, just as it does with any expenditure from a character's Pool. In the previous example, if the character had a Might Edge of 2, they would have to spend only 1 point (3 points minus 2 from their Might Edge) for the initial cost to attempt the task. If they also applied a level of Effort to open the door, they couldn't use their Edge again—Edge applies only once per action—so using the Effort would cost the full 3 points. Thus, they'd spend a total of 4 points (1 for the initial cost plus 3 for the Effort) from their Might Pool.

Culova, page 231

The rationale of the initial cost optional rule is that even in Numenera, where things like Effort can help a character succeed on an action, logic still suggests that some actions are very difficult and taxing, particularly for some PCs more than others.

LOOKING FOR
Repair rules, page 120

DISTANCE

Distance is simplified into four basic categories: immediate, short, long, and very 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.

Very long distance is anything greater than long distance but less than 500 feet (150 m) or so.

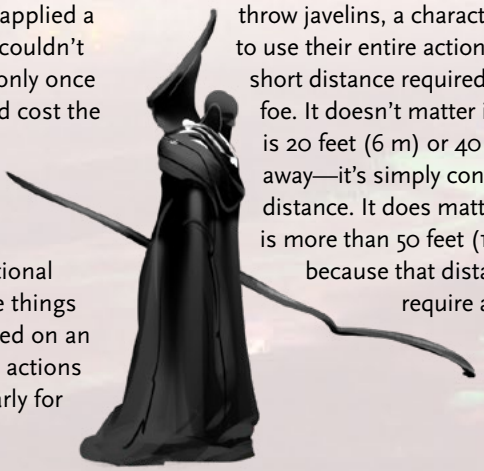
Beyond that range, distances are always specified—1,000 feet (300 m), 1 mile (1.5 km), and so on.

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 has short range (as do most other thrown weapons). A Nano's Onslaught ability also has short range. A bow has long range.

A character can move an immediate distance as a part of another action. In other words, they can take a few steps 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 make a difficulty 4 Speed roll to see if the character slips, trips, or stumbles while moving so far so quickly.

GMs and players don't need to determine exact distances. For example, if the PCs are fighting a group of culovas, any character can likely attack any culova in the general melee—they're all within immediate range. However, if one culova stays back to throw javelins, 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 culova is 20 feet (6 m) or 40 feet (12 m) away—it's simply considered short distance. It does matter if the culova is more than 50 feet (15 m) away because that distance would require a long move.



TIMEKEEPING

Generally, keep time the same way that you normally would, using minutes, hours, days, and weeks. Due to a slow but steady change in the Earth's rotation over the past billion years, days in the Ninth World are 28 hours long (though because the Earth's period of revolution around the sun is still more or less the same, years in the Ninth World are only 312 days long). Thus, if the characters walk overland for 15 miles (24 km), about eight hours pass, even though the journey can be described in only a few seconds at the game table. Precision timekeeping is rarely important. Most of the time, saying things like "That takes about an hour" works fine.

This is true even when a special ability has a specific duration. In an encounter, a duration of "one minute" is mostly the same as saying "the rest of the encounter." You don't have to track each round that ticks by if you don't want to. Likewise, an ability that lasts for ten minutes can safely be considered the length of an in-depth conversation, the time it takes to quickly explore a small area, or the time it takes to rest after a strenuous activity.



It's entirely appropriate to use measurements of time such as "minutes," "days," "weeks," "months," and "seasons." Just remember that those mean slightly different things to the people of the Ninth World than they do to us today.

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."

Might Pool, page 22

Jiraskar, page 238

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 their 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), go around the table, go 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.

Abhuman, page 13

After all PCs and NPCs in the combat have 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.

As with all other rolls, an initiative roll is a d20 roll. The fact that it's a Speed roll simply means that if Effort is used, the points come from your Speed Pool.

Cypher, page 272

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.

Esoteries, page 40

Faster Initiative (Optional Rule): To make an encounter move faster, if at least one character rolls high enough to beat the target number of the NPC(s), all the characters act before the NPC(s). If nobody rolls high enough to beat the target number of the NPCs, all the characters act after the NPC(s). On the characters' turn, go clockwise around the table.

ACTIONS

Anything that your character does in a round is an action. It's easiest to think of an action as a single thing that you can do in five to ten seconds. For example, if you use your dart thrower to shoot a strange floating orb, that's one action. So is running for cover behind a stack of barrels, prying open a stuck door, using a rope to pull your friend up from a pit, or activating a cypher (even if it's stored in your pack).

Opening a door and attacking an abhuman on the other side are two actions. It's more a matter of focus than time. Drawing your sword and attacking a foe is all one action. Putting away your bow and pushing a heavy bookcase to block a door are two actions because each requires a different train of thought.

If the action you want to accomplish is not within reach, you can move a little bit. Essentially, you can move up to an immediate distance to perform your action. For example, you can move an immediate distance and attack a foe, open a door and move an immediate distance into the hallway beyond, or grab your hurt friend lying on the ground and pull them back a few steps. This movement can occur before or after your action, so you can move to a door and open it, or you can open a door and move through it.

The most common actions are:
Attack
Activate a special ability (one that isn't an attack)
Move
Wait
Defend
Do something else

LOOKING FOR
GM Intrusion, page 123



ACTION: ATTACK

An attack is anything that you do to someone that they don't want you to do. Slashing a foe with a curved dagger is an attack, blasting a foe with a lightning artifact is an attack, wrapping a foe in magnetically controlled metal cables is an attack, and controlling someone's mind is an attack. An attack almost always requires a roll to see if you hit or otherwise affect your target.

In the simplest kind of attack, such as a PC trying to stab a bandit with their spear, the player rolls and compares their result against the opponent's target number. If their roll is equal to or greater than the target number, the attack hits. Just as with any kind of task, the GM might modify the difficulty based on the situation, and the player might have a bonus to the roll or might try to ease it using skills, assets, or Effort.

A less straightforward attack might be a special ability that stuns a foe with a mental blast. However, it's handled the same way: the player makes a roll against the opponent's target number. Similarly, an attempt to tackle a foe and wrestle it to the ground is still just a roll against the foe's target number.

Attacks are sometimes categorized as "melee" attacks, meaning that you hurt or

affect something within immediate reach, or "ranged" attacks, meaning that you hurt or affect something at a distance.

Melee attacks can be Might or Speed actions—player choice. Physical ranged attacks (such as bows and thrown weapons) are almost always Speed actions, but those that come from special abilities like esoteries are probably Intellect actions.

Esoteries or effects that require touching the target require a melee attack. If the attack misses, the power is not wasted, and you can try again each round as your action until you hit the target, use another ability, or take a different action that requires you to use your hands. These attempts in later rounds count as different actions, so you don't have to keep track of how much Effort you used when you activated the ability or how you used Edge. For example, let's say that on the first round of combat, you activate an esotery, use Effort to ease the attack, and miss your foe. On the second round of combat, you can try attacking again and use Effort to ease the attack.

The GM is encouraged to describe every attack with flavor and flair. One attack roll might be a stab to the foe's arm. A miss might be the PC's sword slamming into the wall. Combatants lunge, block, duck, spin, leap, and make all kinds of movements that should keep combat visually interesting and compelling. The game mastering section has much more guidance in this regard.

Common elements that ease or hinder a combat task are cover, range, and darkness. The rules for these and other modifiers are explained in the Attack Modifiers and Special Situations section.

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 their health. Unless described otherwise, an NPC's health is always equal to their 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 don't have stat Pools or health. They have an object damage track, just like how PCs have a damage track. Attacking objects might move them down their damage track.

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.

ARMOR

Pieces of equipment and special abilities protect a character from damage by giving them Armor. Each time a character takes damage, subtract their Armor value from the damage before reducing their stat Pool or health. For example, if a Jack with 2 Armor is hit by a sword that deals 4 points of damage, the Jack takes only 2 points of damage (4 minus 2 from their Armor). If Armor reduces the incoming damage to 0 or lower, the character takes no damage from the attack. For example, the Jack's 2 Armor protects them from all physical attacks that deal 1 or 2 points of damage.

The most common way to get Armor is to wear physical armor, such as a leather coat, heavy animal hides, or metal plates. All physical armor comes in one of three categories: light, medium, or heavy. Light armor gives the wearer 1 point of Armor, medium gives 2 points of Armor, and heavy gives 3 points of Armor.

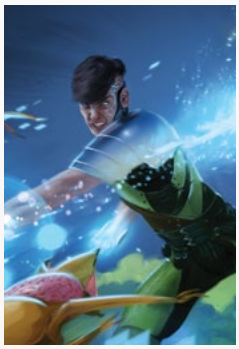
When you see the word "Armor" capitalized in the game rules (other than as the name of a special ability), it refers to your Armor characteristic—the number you subtract from incoming damage. When you see the lowercase word "armor," it refers to any physical armor you might wear.

Other effects can add to a character's Armor. If a character is wearing chainmail (2 points of Armor) and has an ability that covers them in a protective sheen of ice (1 point of Armor), their total is 3 Armor. If they also have a cypher that creates a force field (1 point of Armor), their total is 4 Armor.

Some types of damage ignore physical armor. Attacks that specifically deal Speed damage or Intellect damage ignore Armor; the creature

Healing an NPC or creature restores health instead of Might, Speed, or Intellect.

Attacking objects, page 116



Part 7: Running the Game, page 309

Attack Modifiers and Special Situations, page 113

Even if you mainly use a melee weapon, it's a good idea to have a ranged weapon as a backup, just in case you have to attack something that's out of your immediate reach. A cypher or even something you can throw will do in a pinch.

"The prison guards took away all my knives, but they didn't realize I was wearing an eye-lens ray emitter. It's less intimate than a blade, but a kill is a kill."
~Dalk the Ravenous

When NPCs (who have only health) suffer Speed or Intellect damage, normally this is treated the same as Might damage. However, the GM or the player has the option to suggest an appropriate alternate effect (the NPC suffers a penalty, moves more slowly, is stunned, and so on).

takes the listed amount of damage without any reduction from Armor. Ambient damage (see below) usually ignores Armor as well.

A creature may have a special bonus to Armor against certain kinds of attacks. For example, a protective suit made of a sturdy, fire-resistant material might normally give its wearer 1 point of Armor but count as 3 points of Armor against fire attacks. An artifact worn as a helmet might add 2 points of Armor only against mental attacks.

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.

Stasis, page 41

Sarrak, page 250

DAMAGE FROM HAZARDS

Attacks aren't the only way to inflict damage on a character. Experiences such as falling from a great height, being burned in a fire, and spending time in severe weather also deal damage. Although no list of potential hazards could be comprehensive, the Damage From Hazards table includes common examples.

Damage From Hazards table, page 110

THE EFFECTS OF TAKING DAMAGE

The damage track allows you to know how far from death you are:

If you're hale, you're three steps from death.

If you're impaired, you're two steps from death.

If you're debilitated, you are only one small step from death's door.

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

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

GMs should always remember that above all else, describing the action and how it fits into the situation at hand is more important than the mechanics of it.

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 creature's claw for 3 points of damage, it still counts as Might damage, so the Glaive's 2 Armor reduces the damage to 1 point, which then is applied to their Speed Pool. In other words, even though the Glaive takes the damage from their 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.

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 their rolls, and they don'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, they are dead.

Dead is dead.

LOOKING FOR

Spending experience points, page 125

DAMAGE FROM HAZARDS

Source	Damage	Notes
Falling	1 point per 10 feet (3 m) fallen (ambient damage)	—
Minor fire	3 points per round (ambient damage)	Torch
Major fire	6 points per round (ambient damage)	Engulfed in flames; lava
Acid splash	2 points per round (ambient damage)	—
Acid bath	6 points per round (ambient damage)	Immersed in acid
Cold	1 point per round (ambient damage)	Below freezing temperatures
Severe cold	3 points per round (ambient damage)	Liquid nitrogen
Shock	1 point per round (ambient damage)	Often involves losing next action
Electrocution	6 points per round (ambient damage)	Often involves losing next action
Crush	3 points	Object or creature falls on character
Huge crush	6 points	Roof collapse; cave-in
Collision	6 points	Large, fast object strikes character

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 and add your tier. 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 for ten minutes to make a recovery roll. The third time you rest each day, you must rest for one hour to make a recovery roll. The fourth time you rest each day, you must rest for 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 point per tier) and then immediately rest for ten minutes (regaining another 1d6 points + 1 point per tier). Thus, in one full day of doing nothing but resting, you could recover 4d6 points + 4 points per tier.





Each character chooses when to make recovery rolls. If a party of five PCs 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

RESTORING THE DAMAGE TRACK

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.

Diabolis powder is a concoction of certain crushed leaves and the dried blood of a small rodent called a crovel. It is a level 4 poison that inflicts 4 points of damage every hour until the victim makes a successful Might defense roll, checking each hour.

Blackroot oil is used by assassins in Qi on dart throwers. It is a level 5 poison that paralyzes the victim for one minute.

SPECIAL DAMAGE

In the course of playing the game, characters face all manner of threats that can harm them in a variety of ways, only some of which are easily represented by points of damage.

Dazed and Stunned: Characters can be dazed when struck hard on the head, exposed to extremely loud sounds, or affected by a mental attack. When this happens, for the duration of the daze effect (usually one round), all of the character's tasks are hindered. Similar but more severe attacks can stun characters. Stunned characters lose their turn (but can still defend against attacks normally).

Poison and Disease: When characters encounter poison—whether the venom of a serpent, a pinch of diabolis powder slipped into a flagon of ale, or blackroot oil applied to the tip of a dart—they make a Might defense roll to resist it. Failure to resist can result in points of damage, moving down the damage track, or a specific effect such as paralysis, unconsciousness, disability, or something stranger. For example, some numenera poisons affect the brain, making it impossible to say certain words, take certain actions, resist certain effects, or recover points to a stat Pool.

Diseases work like poisons, but their effect occurs every day, so the victim must make a Might defense roll each day or suffer the effects. Disease effects are as varied as

poisons: points of damage, moving down the damage track, disability, and so on. Many diseases inflict damage that cannot be restored through conventional means.

Paralysis: Paralytic effects cause a character to drop to the ground, unable to move. Unless otherwise specified, they can still take actions that require no physical movement.

Other Effects: Other special effects can render a character blind or deaf, unable to stand without falling over, or unable to breathe. Stranger effects might negate gravity for the character (or increase it a hundredfold), transport them to another place, render them out of phase, mutate their physical form, implant false memories or senses, alter the way their brain processes information, or inflame their nerves so they are in constant, excruciating pain. Each special effect must be handled on a case-by-case basis. The GM adjudicates how the character is affected and how the condition can be alleviated (if possible).

NPCs AND SPECIAL DAMAGE

The GM always has final say over what special damage will affect an NPC. Human NPCs usually react like characters, but the Ninth World has too many types of nonhuman creatures to categorize. For example, a tiny bit of venom is unlikely to hurt a gigantic cragworm, and it won't affect an automaton or an ultraterrestrial at all.

If an NPC is susceptible to an attack that would shift a character down the damage track, using that attack on the NPC usually renders it unconscious or dead. Alternatively, the GM could apply the debilitated condition to the NPC, with the same effect as it would have on a PC.

ATTACK MODIFIERS AND SPECIAL SITUATIONS

In combat situations, many modifiers might come into play. Although the GM is at liberty to assess whatever modifiers they think are appropriate to the situation (that's their role in the game), the following suggestions and guidelines might make that easier. Often the modifier is applied as a step in difficulty. So if a situation hinders attacks, that means if a PC attacks an 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.

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

COVER

If a character is behind cover so that a significant portion of their body is behind something sturdy, attacks against the character are hindered.

If a character is entirely behind cover (their entire body is behind something sturdy), they can't be attacked unless the attack can go through the cover. For example, if a character hides behind a thin wooden screen and their opponent shoots the screen with a powered crossbow that can penetrate the wood, the character can be attacked. However, because the attacker can't see the character clearly, this still counts as cover (attacks against the character are hindered).



In certain situations, such as a PC on top of a building looking across an open field, the GM should allow long-range attacks to go farther than 100 feet (30 m). Often much farther. In perfect conditions, a good archer can hit a (large) target with an arrow at 500 feet (150 m).

POSITION

Sometimes where a character stands gives them an advantage or a disadvantage.

Prone Target: In melee, a prone target is easier to hit (attacks against them are eased). In ranged combat, a prone target is harder to hit (attacks against them are hindered).

Higher Ground: In either ranged or melee combat, attacks by an opponent on higher ground are eased.

SURPRISE

When a target isn't aware of an incoming attack, the attacker has an advantage. Attacks by a ranged sniper in a hidden position, an invisible assailant, or the first salvo in a successful ambush are all eased by two steps. For the attacker to gain this advantage, however, the defender truly must have no idea that the attack is coming. If the defender isn't sure of the attacker's location but is still on guard, the attacks are eased by only one step.

Although there are effects and attacks with very long range, characters at that distance would typically not be considered "involved in the combat."

RANGE

In melee, you can attack a foe who is adjacent to you (next to you) or within reach (immediate range). If you enter into melee with one or more foes, usually you can attack most or all of the combatants, meaning they are next to you, within reach, or within reach if you move slightly or have a long weapon that extends your reach.

The majority of ranged attacks have only two ranges: short range and long range (a few have very long range). Short range is generally less than 50 feet (15 m) or so. Long range is generally from 50 feet (15 m) to about 100 feet (30 m). Very long range is generally 100 feet (30 m) to 500 feet (150 m). Greater precision than that isn't important in Numenera. If anything is longer than very long range, the exact range is usually spelled out,

Precise ranges are not important in Numenera. The broadly defined "immediate," "short," "long," and "very long" ranges are there so that the GM can quickly make a judgment call and keep things moving. Basically, the idea is: your target is right there, your target is close, your target is pretty far away, or your target is very far away.

LOOKING FOR

Trading damage for effect, 105

Movement, page 116

GM intrusion, page 123

The GM might allow a character with a ranged weapon to attack beyond extreme range, but the attack would be hindered by two steps for each range category beyond the normal limit. Attacks with hard limits, such as the blast radius of a detonation, can't be modified.

such as with a numenera item that can fire a beam 1,000 feet (300 m) or teleport you up to 1 mile (1.5 km) away.

Thus, the game has four measurements of distance: immediate, short, long, and very long. These apply to movement as well. A few special cases—point-blank range and extreme range—modify an attack's chance to successfully hit.

Point-Blank Range: If a character uses a ranged weapon against a target within immediate range, the attack is eased.

Extreme Range: Targets just at the limit of a weapon's range are at extreme range. Attacks against such targets are hindered.

ILLUMINATION

What characters can see (and how well they can see) plays a huge factor in combat.

Dim Light: Dim light is approximately the amount of light on a night with a bright full moon or the illumination provided by a torch, glowglobe, or desk lamp. Dim light allows you to see out to short range. Targets in dim light are harder to hit. Attacks against such targets are hindered. Attackers trained in low-light spotting negate this modifier.

Very Dim Light: Very dim light is approximately the amount of light on a starry night with no visible moon, or the glow provided by a candle or an illuminated control panel. Very dim light allows you to see clearly only within immediate range and perceive vague shapes to short range. Targets in very dim light are harder to hit. Attacks against targets within immediate range are hindered, and attacks against those in short range are hindered by two steps. Attackers trained in low-light spotting modify these difficulties by one step in their favor. Attackers specialized in low-light spotting modify these difficulties by two steps in their favor.

Darkness: Darkness is an area with no illumination at all, such as a moonless night with cloud cover or a room with no lights. Targets in complete darkness are nearly impossible to hit. If an attacker can use other senses (such as hearing) to get an idea of where the opponent might be, attacks against such targets are hindered by four steps. Otherwise, attacks in complete darkness fail without the need for a roll unless the player spends 1 XP to "make a lucky shot" or the GM uses GM intrusion. Attackers trained in low-light spotting modify this difficulty by one step in their favor. Attackers specialized in low-light spotting modify this difficulty by two steps in their favor.

VISIBILITY

Similar to illumination, factors that obscure vision affect combat.

Mist: A target in mist is similar to one in dim light. Ranged attacks against such targets are hindered. Particularly dense mist makes ranged attacks nearly impossible (treat as darkness), and even melee attacks are hindered.

Hiding Target: A target in dense foliage, behind a screen, or crawling amid the rubble in a ruin is hard to hit because they're hard to see. Ranged attacks against such targets are hindered.

Invisible Target: If an attacker can use other senses (such as hearing) to get an idea of where the opponent might be, attacks against such targets are hindered by four steps. Otherwise, attacks against an invisible creature fail without the need for a roll unless the player spends 1 XP to "make a lucky shot" or the GM uses GM intrusion.

WATER

Being in shallow water can make it hard to move, but it doesn't affect combat. Being in deep water can make things difficult, and being underwater entirely can seem as different as being on another world.

Deep Water: Being in water up to your chest (or the equivalent thereof) hinders your attacks. Aquatic creatures ignore this modifier.



A CLOSER LOOK AT SITUATIONS THAT DON'T INVOLVE PCs

Ultimately, the GM is the arbiter of conflicts that do not involve the PCs. They should be adjudicated in the most interesting, logical, and story-based way possible. When in doubt, match the level of the NPCs (characters or creatures) or their respective effects to determine the results. Thus, if a level 4 NPC fights a blood barm (level 3), they'll win, but if they face a jiraskar (level 7), they'll lose. Because an ithsyn is a level 4 creature, it resists poisons or numenera devices of level 3 or less, but not those of level 5 and above.

The essence is this: in Numenera, it doesn't matter if something is a creature, a poison, or a gravity-dispelling ray. If it's a higher level, it wins; if it's a lower level, it loses. If two things of equal level oppose each other, there might be a long, drawn-out battle that could go either way.

LOOKING FOR
Weakness, page 333

Underwater Melee Combat: For nonaquatic creatures, being completely underwater makes attacking very difficult. Attacks with stabbing weapons are hindered, and melee attacks with slashing or bashing weapons are hindered by two steps. Aquatic creatures ignore these penalties.

Underwater Ranged Combat: As with melee combat, nonaquatic creatures have difficulty fighting underwater. Some ranged attacks are impossible underwater—you can't throw things, fire a bow or crossbow, or use a blowgun. Attacks with weapons that do work underwater are hindered. Ranges underwater are reduced by one category; long-range weapons work only to short range, and short-range weapons work only to immediate range.

MOVING TARGETS

Moving targets are harder to hit, and moving attackers have a difficult time as well.

Target Is Moving: Attackers trying to hit a foe who is moving very fast are hindered. (A foe moving very fast is one who is doing nothing but running, mounted on a moving creature, riding on a vehicle or moving conveyance, and so on.)

Attacker Is Moving: An attacker trying to make an attack while moving under their own power (walking, running, swimming, and so on) takes no penalties. Attacks from a moving mount or moving vehicle are hindered; an attacker trained in riding or driving ignores these hindrances.

Attacker Is Jostled: Being jostled, such as while standing on a listing ship or a vibrating platform, makes attacking difficult. Such attacks are hindered. Characters trained in balancing or sailing ignore this hindrance.

GRAVITY

In the Ninth World, the numenera can cause gravity to fluctuate. In addition, characters who have a large amount of metal (wearing metal armor, using metal weapons, and so on) can be affected by fluctuating magnetism just as a character is affected by gravity.

Low Gravity: Weapons that rely on weight, such as all heavy weapons, deal 2 fewer points of damage (dealing a minimum of 1 point of damage). Weapons with short range can reach to long range, and long-range weapons can reach to very long range. Characters trained in low-gravity maneuvering ignore the damage penalty.

High Gravity: It's hard to make effective attacks when the pull of gravity is very strong. Attacks (and all physical actions) made in high gravity are hindered. Ranges in high gravity are reduced by one category (long-range weapons reach only to short range, and short-range weapons reach only to immediate range). Characters trained in high-gravity maneuvering ignore the change in difficulty but not the range decreases.

Zero Gravity: It's hard to maneuver in an environment without gravity. All physical actions (including attacks) made in zero gravity are hindered. Weapons with short range can reach to long range, long-range weapons can reach to very long range, and very long-range weapons can reach to about 1,000 feet (300 m) instead of 500 feet (150 m). Characters trained in zero-gravity maneuvering ignore the change in difficulty.

SPECIAL SITUATION: COMBAT BETWEEN NPCs

When an NPC attacks another NPC, the GM should designate a player to roll for one of the NPCs. Often, the choice is obvious. For example, a character who has a trained attack animal should roll when their pet attacks enemies. If an NPC ally accompanying the party leaps into the fray, that ally's favorite PC rolls for them.

NPCs cannot apply Effort.

SPECIAL SITUATION: COMBAT BETWEEN PCs

When one PC attacks another PC, the attacking character makes an attack roll, and the other character makes a defense roll, adding any appropriate modifiers. If the attacking PC has a skill, ability, asset, or other effect that would ease the attack if it were made against an NPC, the character adds 3 to the roll for each step reduction (+3 for one step, +6 for two steps, and so on). If the attacker's final result is higher, the attack hits. If the defender's result is higher, the attack misses. Damage is resolved normally. The GM mediates all special effects.

SPECIAL SITUATION: AREA ATTACKS

Sometimes, an attack or effect affects an area rather than a single target. For example, a Nano's Flash esotery or a landslide can potentially harm or affect everyone in the area.

In an area attack, all PCs in the area make appropriate defense rolls against the attack to determine its effect on them.

If there are any NPCs in the area, the attacker makes a single attack roll against all NPCs (one roll, not one roll per NPC) and compares it to the target number of each NPC. If the roll is equal to or greater than the target number of a particular NPC, the attack hits that NPC.

Some area attacks always deal at least a minimum amount of damage, even if the attacks miss or if a PC makes a successful defense roll.

"I knew a blind Glaive who had an artifact that let him sense everything nearby using smell and taste. He could fight as well as any sighted warrior I knew, but it was distracting seeing his tongue out all the time."
~Yaim Three-Shins

Flash, page 40

Esoteries, page 40

Focus, page 58

Cyphers, page 272

Artifacts, page 289

For example, consider a Nano who uses Flash to attack six cultists (level 2; target number of 6) and their leader (level 4; target number of 12). The Nano applies Effort to increase the damage and rolls an 11 for the Flash attack roll. This hits the six cultists, but not the leader, so the Flash deals 4 points of damage to each of the cultists. However, the description of the Flash esotery says that applying Effort to increase the damage also means that targets take 1 point of damage if the Nano fails the attack roll, so the leader takes 1 point of damage. In terms of what happens in the story, the cultists are caught flat-footed by the Nano's burst of energy, but the leader ducks and shields herself from the blast. However, the blast is so intense that, despite the cult leader's best attempt, she is still burned.

SPECIAL SITUATION: ATTACKING OBJECTS

Attacking an object is rarely a matter of hitting it. Sure, you can hit the broad side of a barn, but can you damage it? Attacking an object with a melee weapon is a Might action. Objects have levels and thus target numbers. Objects have a damage track that works like the damage track for PCs.

Damage track for PCs, page 110

Intact is the default state for an object.

Minor damage is a slightly damaged state. An object with minor damage reduces its level by 1.

Major damage is a critically damaged state. An object with major damage is broken and no longer functions.

Destroyed is destroyed. The object is ruined, no longer functions, and cannot be repaired.

If the Might action to damage an object is a success, the object moves one step down the object damage track. If the Might roll exceeded the difficulty by 2 levels, the object instead moves two steps down the object damage track. If the Might roll exceeded the difficulty by 4 levels, the object instead moves three steps down the object damage track. Objects with minor or major damage can be repaired, moving them one or more steps up on the object damage track.

Crafting and repairing objects, page 120

Brittle or fragile objects, like paper or glass, decrease the effective level of the object itself for the purposes of determining if it is damaged. Hard objects, like those made of wood or stone, add 1 to the effective level. Very hard objects, like those made of metal, add 2. (The GM may rule that some exotic materials add 3.)

Special Requirements to Damage an Object: The tool or weapon used to attack the object must be at least as hard as the object itself. Further, if the amount of damage the attack could inflict—not modified by a special die roll—does not equal or exceed the effective level of the object, the attack cannot damage the object no matter what the roll.

ACTION: ACTIVATE A SPECIAL ABILITY

Special abilities are things like esoteries, abilities granted through a character's focus, or powers granted by cyphers or artifacts. If a special ability affects another character in any kind of unwanted manner, it's handled as an attack. This is true even if the ability is normally not considered an attack. For example, if a character has a healing touch, but their friend doesn't want to be healed for some reason, an attempt to heal the unwilling friend is handled as an attack.

However, plenty of special abilities and esoteries do not affect another character in an unwanted manner. For example, a Nano might use Hover to float into the air. A character with a matter-reorganizing device might change a stone wall into glass. A character who Exists Partially Out of Phase might walk through a wall. None of these requires an attack roll (although when turning a stone wall to glass, the character must still make a roll to successfully affect the wall).

If the character spends points to apply Effort on the attempt, they might want to roll anyway to see if they get a major effect, which would reduce the cost for their action.

ACTION: MOVE

As part of another action, a character can adjust their position—stepping back a few feet while performing an esotery, sliding over in combat to take on a different opponent to help a friend, pushing through a door they just opened, and so on. This range is an immediate distance, and a character can move this far as part of another action.

In a combat situation, if a character is in a large melee, they're usually considered to be next to most other combatants, unless the GM rules that they're farther away because the melee is especially large or the situation dictates it.

If they're not in melee but still nearby, they're considered to be a short distance away—usually less than 50 feet (15 m).

If they're farther away than that but still involved in the combat, they're considered to be a long distance away, usually 50 to 100 feet (15 to 30 m).

In a round, as an action, a character can move a short distance—up to about 50 feet (15 m). Some terrain or situations will change how far a character can move, but generally, making a short move is considered to be a difficulty 0 action.

A character can try to make a long move—up to 100 feet (30 m) or so—in one round. This is a Speed task with a difficulty of 4.



A successful roll means the character moved the distance safely. Failure means that at some point during the move, they stop or stumble (the GM determines where this happens).

LONG-TERM MOVEMENT

When talking about movement in terms of traveling rather than round-by-round action, typical characters can travel on a road about 20 miles (32 km) per day, averaging about 3 miles (5 km) per hour, including a few stops. When traveling overland, they can move about 12 miles (19 km) per day, averaging 2 miles (3 km) per hour, again with some stops. Mounted characters—such as those riding an aneen or a snow loper—can go twice as far. Other modes of travel (flying craft, sailing ships, and so on) have their own rates of movement.

MOVEMENT MODIFIERS

Different environments affect movement in different ways.

Rough Terrain: A surface that's considered rough terrain is covered in loose stones or other material, uneven or with unsure footing, unsteady, stairs, or a surface that requires movement across a narrow space, such as a cramped corridor or a slender ledge. Rough terrain hinders move rolls. Rough terrain cuts long-term movement rates in half.

Difficult Terrain: Difficult terrain is an area filled with challenging obstacles—water up to waist height, a very steep slope, an especially narrow ledge, slippery ice, a foot or more of snow, a space so small that one must crawl through it, and so on. Difficult terrain hinders move rolls and halves movement on a round-by-round basis. This means that a short move is about 25 feet (7.5 m), and a long move is about 50 feet (15 m). Difficult terrain reduces long-term movement to a third of its normal rate.

Water: Deep water, in which a character is mostly or entirely submerged, hinders move rolls and reduces round-by-round and long-term movement to one quarter its normal rate. This means that a short move is about 12 feet (4 m), and a long move is about 25 feet (7.5 m). Characters trained in swimming halve their movement only while in deep water.

Low Gravity: Movement in low gravity is easier but not much faster. All move rolls are eased.

High Gravity: In an environment of high gravity, treat all moving characters as if they were in difficult terrain. Characters trained in high-gravity maneuvering negate this penalty. High gravity reduces long-term movement to a third of its normal rate.

Zero Gravity: In an environment without gravity, characters cannot move normally. Instead, they must push off from a surface and succeed at a Might roll to move (the difficulty is equal to one-quarter the distance traveled in feet). Without a surface to push off from, a character cannot move. Unless the character's movement takes them to a stable object that they can grab or land against, they continue to drift in that direction each round, traveling half the distance of the initial push.

"There is every reason to believe that current humans are not at all the product of purely natural evolution."
~Visixtru, varjellen philosopher

Aneen, page 225

Snow loper, page 253

LOOKING FOR

Customizing character types, page 332
Customizing descriptors, page 332

COOPERATIVE ACTIONS

There are many ways multiple characters can work together. None of these options can be used at the same time by the same characters.

Helping: If you use your action to help someone with a task, you ease the task. If you have an inability in a task, your help has no effect. If you use your action to help someone with a task that you are trained or specialized in, the task is eased by two steps. Help is considered an asset, and someone receiving help usually can't gain more than two assets on a single task if that help is provided by another character.

For example, if Veterian the Glaive is trying to climb a steep incline and Jethua the Jack (who is trained in climbing) spends her turn helping him, Veterian's task is eased by two steps.

Sometimes you can help by performing a task that complements what another person is attempting. If your complementary action succeeds, you ease the other person's task. For example, if Veterian the Glaive tries to persuade a noble to sponsor his mission, Jethua the Jack could try to supplement Veterian's words with a flattering lie about the noble (a deception action), a display of knowledge about the region where the mission will take place (a lore action), or a direct threat to the noble (an intimidation action). If Jethua's roll is a success, Veterian's persuasion task is eased.

Distraction: When a character uses their turn to distract a foe, that foe's attacks are hindered for one round. Multiple characters distracting a foe have no greater effect than a single character doing so—a foe is either distracted or not. A distraction might be yelling a challenge, firing a warning shot, or a similar activity that doesn't harm the foe.

Draw the Attack: When an NPC attacks a character, another PC can prominently present herself, shout taunts, and move to try to get the foe to attack her instead.

In most cases, this action succeeds without a roll—the opponent attacks the prominent PC instead of their companions. In other cases, such as with intelligent or determined foes, the prominent character must succeed at an Intellect action to draw the attack. If that Intellect action is successful, the foe attacks the prominent character, whose defenses are hindered by two steps. Two characters attempting to draw an attack at the same time cancel each other out.

Take the Attack: A character can use her action to throw herself in front of a foe's successful attack to save a nearby comrade. The attack automatically succeeds against the sacrificial character, and it deals 1 additional point of damage. A character cannot willingly take more than one attack each round in this way.

Inability, page 101

"It doesn't matter if an enemy hits me, I can take it. It's my job to keep them occupied so they don't see Dalk's poisoned blade coming at them from the opposite side."
~Klendii the Evangelist

In some fights, it might be to your advantage to help another PC who is more effective in combat than you are, either by helping them attack or by distracting their opponent. Just because you're not making an attack roll doesn't mean you're not contributing to your side's success.

LOOKING FOR
Customizing foci, page 332
Weakness, page 333



SPECIAL SITUATION: A CHASE

When a PC is chasing an NPC or vice versa, the player should attempt a Speed action, with the difficulty based on the NPC's level. If the PC succeeds at the roll, they catch the NPC (if chasing) or they get away (if chased). In terms of the story, this one-roll mechanic can be the result of a long chase over many rounds.

Alternatively, if the GM wants to play out a long chase, the character can make many rolls (perhaps one per level of the NPC) to finish the pursuit successfully. For every failure, the PC must make another success, and if they ever have more failures than successes, the PC fails to catch the NPC (if chasing) or is caught (if chased). As with combat, the GM is encouraged to describe the results of these rolls with flavor. A success might mean the PC has rounded a corner and gained some distance. A failure might mean that a basket of fruit topples over in front of them, slowing them down.

ACTION: WAIT

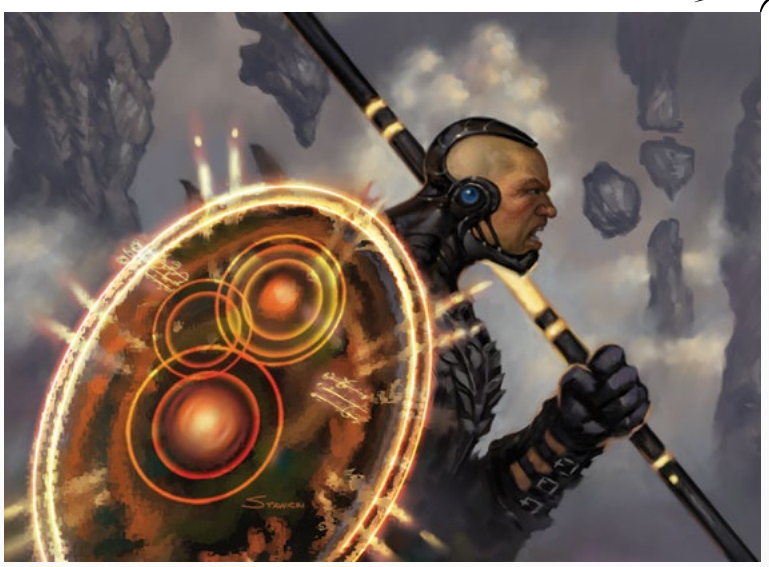
You can wait to react to another character's action. You decide what action will trigger your action, and if the triggering action happens, you get to take your action first (unless going first wouldn't make any sense, like attacking a foe before it comes into view). For example, if an abhuman threatens you with a spear, on your turn you can decide to wait, stating, "If it stabs at me with that spear, I'm going to slash it with my sword." On the abhuman's turn, it tries to stab you, so you make your sword attack before that happens.

Waiting is also a good way to deal with a ranged attacker who rises from behind cover, fires an attack, and ducks back down. You could say, "I wait to see them pop up from behind cover and then I shoot them."

ACTION: DEFEND

Defending is a special action that only PCs can do, and only in response to being attacked. In other words, an NPC uses their action to attack, which forces a PC to make a defense roll. This is handled like any other kind of action, with circumstances, skill, assets, and Effort all potentially coming into play. Defending is a special kind of action in that it does not happen on the PC's turn. It's never an action that a player decides to make; it's always a reaction to an attack. A PC can make a defense action when attacked (on the attacking NPC's turn) and still take another action on their own turn.

The type of defense roll depends on the type of attack. If a foe attacks a character with an axe, the PC can use Speed to duck or block it with what they're holding. If they're struck by a poisoned dart, they can use a Might action to resist its effects. If a psi-worm attempts to control their mind, they can use Intellect to fend off the intrusion.



Sometimes an attack provokes two defense actions. For example, a poisonous reptile tries to bite a PC. They try to dodge the bite with a Speed action. If they fail, they take damage from the bite, and they must also attempt a Might action to resist the poison's effects.

If a character does not know an attack is coming, usually they can still make a defense roll, but they can't add modifiers (including the modifier from a shield) or use skill or Effort to ease the roll. If circumstances warrant—such as if the attacker is right next to the character—the GM might rule that the surprise attack simply hits.

A character can always choose to forgo a defense action, in which case the attack automatically hits.

Some abilities (such as the Countermeasures esotery) allow you to do something special as a defense action.

ACTION: DO SOMETHING ELSE

You can try anything you can think of, although that doesn't mean anything is possible. The GM sets the difficulty—that's their primary role in the game. Still, guided by the bounds of logic, players and GMs will find all manner of actions and options that aren't covered by a rule. That's a good thing.

Players should not feel constrained by the game mechanics when taking actions. Skills are not required to attempt an action. Someone who's never picked a lock can still try. The GM might hinder the difficulty, but the character can still attempt the action.

Players are encouraged to come up with their own ideas for what their characters do rather than looking at a list of possible actions. That's why there is a "Do Something Else" action. PCs are not pieces on a game board—they are people in a story. And, like real people, they can try anything they can think of. (Succeeding is another matter entirely.) The task difficulty system provides GMs with the tools they need to adjudicate anything the players come up with.

Waiting is also a useful tool for cooperative actions (page 118).

Countermeasures, page 41

In Numenera, players are not rewarded for slaying foes in combat, so using a smart idea to avoid combat and still succeed is just good play. Likewise, coming up with an idea to defeat a foe without hammering on it with weapons is encouraged—creativity is not cheating!

LOOKING FOR

XP advance, page 125

Thus, players and GMs can return to the beginning of this chapter and look at the most basic expression of the rules. A player wants to take an action. The GM decides, on a scale of 1 to 10, how difficult that task would be and what stat it uses. The player determines whether they have anything that might modify the difficulty and considers whether they want to apply Effort. Once the final determination is made, the player rolls to see if their character succeeds. It's as easy as that.

As further guidance, some of the more common actions a PC might take are described in the next sections.

For a far more detailed look at crafting and repairing in Numenera, see Numenera Destiny, *page 117.*

CLIMBING

When a character climbs, the GM sets a difficulty based on the surface being climbed. Climbing is like moving through difficult terrain: the move roll is hindered and movement is at half speed. Unusual circumstances, such as climbing while being attacked, pose additional step penalties.

Difficult terrain, page 117

Difficulty	Surface
2	Surface with lots of handholds
3	Stone wall or similar surface (a few handholds)
4	Crumbling or slippery surface
5	Smooth stone wall or similar surface
6	Metal wall or similar surface
8	Smooth, horizontal surface (climber is upside down)
10	Glass wall or similar surface

"Three children used to play around the outside of my lab, but then I conducted the first trial of the inverse multiversal regulator. I must admit, I miss those kids from time to time."
~Sir Arthour

CRAFTING, BUILDING, AND REPAIRING

Crafting is a tricky topic in the Ninth World because the same rules that govern building a spear also cover repairing a teleporter. Normally, the level of the item determines the difficulty of creating or repairing it as well as the time required. For numenera items (cyphers, artifacts, and oddities), add 5 to the item's level to determine the difficulty of creating or repairing it.

Sometimes, if the item is artistic in nature, the GM will add to the difficulty and time required. For example, a crude wooden stool might be hammered together in an hour. A beautiful finished piece might take a week or longer and would require more skill on the part of the crafter.

The GM is free to overrule some attempts at creation, building, or repair, requiring that the character have a certain level of skill, proper tools and materials, and so forth.

A level 0 object requires no skill to make and is easily found in most locations. Sling stones and firewood are level 0 items—producing them is routine. Making a torch from spare wood and oil-soaked cloth is simple, so it's a level 1 object. Making an arrow or a spear is fairly standard but not simple, so it's a level 2 object.

Generally speaking, a device to be crafted requires materials equal to its level and all the levels below it. So a level 5 device requires level 5 material, level 4 material, level 3 material, level 2 material, and level 1 material (and, technically, level 0 material).

The GM and players can gloss over much of the crafting details, if desired. Gathering all the materials to make a mundane item might not be worth playing out—but then again, it might be. For example, making a wooden spear in a forest isn't very interesting, but what if the characters have to make a spear in a treeless desert? Finding the wreckage of something made of wood or forcing a PC to fashion a spear out of the bones of a large beast could be interesting situations.

The time required to create an item is up to the GM, but the guidelines in the crafting table are a good starting point. Generally, repairing an item takes somewhere between half the creation time and the full creation time,

LOOKING FOR
Species options, page 394
Visitant, page 394

CRAFTING ITEMS

Difficulty	Craft	General Time to Build
0	Something extremely simple, like tying a rope or finding an appropriately sized rock	A few minutes at most
1	Torch	5 minutes
2	Spear, simple shelter, or piece of furniture	1 hour
3	Bow, door	1 day
4	Sword, chainmail vest	1 to 2 days
5	Common numenera item (glowglobe, shaper key)	1 week
6	Simple numenera item	1 month
7	Numenera item	1 year
8	Numenera item	Many years
9	Numenera item	Many years
10	Numenera item	Many years

depending on the item, the aspect that needs repairing, and the circumstances. For example, if creating an item takes one hour, repairing it takes between thirty minutes and one hour.

Sometimes a GM will allow a rush job if the circumstances warrant it. This is different than using skill to reduce the time required. In this case, the quality of the item is affected. Let's say that a character needs to create a tool that will cut through solid steel with a heat beam (a level 7 item), but she has to do it in one day. The GM might allow it, but the device might be extremely volatile, inflicting damage on the user, or it might work only once. The device is still considered a level 7 item to create in all other respects.

GUARDING

In a combat situation, a character can stand guard as their action. They do not make attacks, but all their defense tasks are eased. Further, if an NPC tries to get by them or take an action that they are guarding against, they can attempt a hindered Speed action based on the level of the NPC. Success means that the NPC is prevented from taking the action; the NPC's action that turn is wasted. This is useful for blocking a doorway, guarding a friend, and so forth.

If an NPC is standing guard, use the same procedure, but to get past the guard, the PC attempts a hindered Speed action against the NPC. For example, Latora is an NPC human with a level 3 bodyguard. The bodyguard uses their action to guard Latora. If a PC wants to attack Latora, the PC first must succeed at a difficulty 4 Speed task to get past the guard. If the PC succeeds, they can make their attack normally.

HEALING

You can administer aid through bandaging and other succor, attempting to heal each patient once per day. This healing restores points to a stat Pool of your choice. Decide how many points you want to heal, and then make an Intellect action with a difficulty equal to that number. For example, if you want to heal someone for 3 points, that's a difficulty 3 task.

JUMPING

Decide how far you want to jump, and that sets the difficulty of your Might roll. For a standing jump, subtract 4 from the distance in feet to determine the difficulty of the jump. For example, jumping 10 feet has a difficulty of 6.

If you run an immediate distance before jumping, it counts as an asset, easing the jump.

If you run a short distance before jumping, divide the jump distance (in feet) by 2 and then subtract 4 to determine the difficulty of the jump. Because you're running an immediate distance (and then some), you also count your running as an asset. For example, jumping a distance of 20 feet with a short running start has a difficulty of 5 (20 feet divided by 2 is 10, minus 4 is 6, minus 1 for running an immediate distance).

For a vertical jump, the distance you clear (in feet) is equal to the difficulty of the jumping task. If you run an immediate distance, it counts as an asset, easing the jump.

There's nothing wrong with the GM simply assigning a difficulty level to a jump without worrying about the precise distance. The rules here are just so everyone has some guidelines.

LOOKING OR LISTENING

Generally, the GM will describe any sight or sound that's not purposefully difficult to detect. But if you want to look for a hidden enemy, search for a secret panel, or listen for someone sneaking up on you, make an Intellect roll. If it's a creature, its level determines the difficulty of your roll. If it's something else, the GM determines the difficulty of your roll.

INTERACTING WITH CREATURES

The level of the creature determines the target number, just as with combat. Thus, bribing a guard works much like punching them or affecting them with an esotery. This is true of persuading someone, intimidating someone, calming a wild beast, or anything of the kind. Interaction is an Intellect task.

MOVING A HEAVY OBJECT

You can push or pull something very heavy and move it an immediate distance as your action.

The weight of the object determines the difficulty of the Might roll to move it; every 50 pounds (23 kg) hinders the task by one step. So moving something that weighs 150 pounds (68 kg) is difficulty 3, and moving something that weighs 400 pounds (180 kg) is difficulty 8. If you can reduce the difficulty of the task to 0, you can move a heavy object up to a short distance as your action. Being skilled in carrying or pushing reduces the difficulty of this task.

OPERATING OR DISABLING A DEVICE, OR PICKING A LOCK

As with figuring out a device, the level of the device usually determines the difficulty of the Intellect roll. However, unless a device is very complex, the GM will often rule that once you figure it out, no roll is needed to operate it except under special circumstances. So if the PCs find and figure out how to use a hovering platform, they can operate it. However, if they are attacked, they might need to roll to ensure that they don't crash the platform into a wall while trying to avoid being hit.

LOOKING FOR

Reforging, page 395
Varjellen, page 394

The core of gameplay in Numenera is to discover new things or old things that are new again.

"Nobody has been able to figure out why this ball of light followed me back from the Ruins of Ouk, or why it has my face. But I don't have to carry glowglobes anymore."
~Telm of Kordech

Unlike operating a device, disabling a device and picking a lock usually require rolls. These actions often involve special tools and assume that the character is not trying to destroy the device or lock. (If you *are* attempting to destroy it, you probably should make a Might roll to smash it rather than a Speed or Intellect roll requiring patience and know-how.)

RIDING

If you're riding an animal that's trained to be a mount, and you're doing something routine such as riding from one village to another or from one part of a field to another, you don't need to make a roll (just as you wouldn't need to make a roll to walk there). However, staying mounted during a fight or doing something tricky requires a Speed roll to succeed. A saddle or other appropriate gear is an asset and eases the riding task.

Flying mounts include rasters and xi-drakes. A windrider is a technological mount.

Common Numenera mounts include aneen (page 225), snow lopers (page 253), and the reptilian brehm (page 158). Less common mounts include the large, antelope-like espron (page 179).

Rasters, page 248

Xi-drakes, page 259

Windrider, page 303

Difficulty	Maneuver
0	Riding
1	Staying on a mount in a battle or other difficult situation
3	Staying on a mount when you take damage
4	Mounting a moving steed
5	Coaxing a mount to move or jump twice as fast or far as normal for one round

LOOKING FOR

Bursk, page 396
Lattimor, page 396
Neem, page 396



SNEAKING

The difficulty of sneaking by a creature is determined by its level. Sneaking is a Speed roll. Moving at half speed eases the sneaking task. Appropriate camouflage or other gear may count as an asset and ease the task, as will dim lighting conditions and having plenty of things to hide behind.

SWIMMING

If you're simply swimming from one place to another, such as across a calm river or lake, use the standard movement rules, noting the fact that your character is in deep water. However, sometimes, special circumstances require a Might roll to make progress while swimming, such as when trying to avoid a current, being dragged into a whirlpool, and so on.

UNDERSTANDING, IDENTIFYING, OR REMEMBERING

When characters try to identify or figure out how to use a device, the level of the device determines the difficulty of the Intellect roll. For a bit of knowledge, the GM determines the difficulty.

Difficulty	Knowledge
0	Common knowledge
1	Simple knowledge
3	Something a scholar probably knows
5	Something even a scholar might not know
7	Knowledge very few people possess
10	Completely lost knowledge

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Experience points (XP) are the currency by which players gain benefits for their characters. The most common ways to earn XP are through GM intrusions and by discovering new and amazing things. Sometimes experience points are earned during a game session, and sometimes they're earned between sessions. In a typical session, a player might earn 2 to 4 XP, and between sessions, perhaps another 2 XP (on average). The exact amounts depend on the events of the session and the discoveries made.

DISCOVERY

While GM intrusion is interesting, the game also has a more conventional method of awarding XP between sessions. But it has nothing to do with killing monsters.

I know—that's weird for a lot of players. Defeating opponents in battle is the core way you earn XP in many games. But not in Numenera. I'm a firm believer in awarding players experience points for the thing you expect them to do in the game. Experience points are the reward pellets they get for pushing the button—oh, wait, no, that's for rats in a lab. Well, same principle: give the players XP for doing a thing, and that thing is what they'll do.

In Numenera, that thing is discovery.

GM INTRUSION

At any time, the GM can introduce an unexpected complication for a character. When they intrude in this manner, they must give that 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).

Often, the GM intrudes when a player attempts an action that, according to the rules, should be an automatic success. However, the GM is free to intrude at other times. As a general rule, the GM should intrude at least once each session, but 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 1: Through skill and the aid of another character, a fourth-tier PC reduces a wall climbing task from difficulty 2 to difficulty 0. Normally, they 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. They immediately give one of those XP to another player.

Example 2: During a fight, a PC swings their 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 they immediately give one of those XP to another player. Now the character must deal with the dropped weapon, perhaps drawing a different weapon or using their 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.

DISCOVERING NEW THINGS

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.

Last, depending on the GM's outlook and the kind of campaign the group wants to play, a discovery could be as abstract as a truth. This could be an ethical idea such as "What goes around comes around," or it might be an adage such as "Everyone has their price."

Typically, the PCs will earn about half their total experience points by making discoveries.

Artifacts: When the group gains an artifact, award XP equal to the artifact's level and divide it among the PCs (minimum 1 XP for each character). Round down if necessary. For example, if four PCs discover a level 5 artifact, they each get 1 XP.

Cyphers and oddities are not worth XP.

Other Devices: These devices are often large, immobile objects found in the ruins left

It's a fine line, but ultimately the GM decides what constitutes a discovery as opposed to just something weird in the course of an adventure. Usually, the difference is: did the PCs successfully interact with it and learn something about it? If so, it's probably a discovery.

For more details on using GM intrusions, see page 315.

Experience point awards for artifacts should usually apply even if the artifact was given to the PCs rather than found, because often such gifts are the rewards for success.

LOOKING FOR
Mutation, page 397



"My new crystalline heart works better than the one I was born with, but I wish I understood what it's whispering to me as I'm trying to fall asleep."
~Telm of Kordech

behind from the prior worlds, not artifacts that characters can take with them and use. Experimenting with a device to discover what it does might grant 1 XP to each PC involved, particularly if they return to civilization with an interesting tale of the wonders of the past.

Miscellaneous Discoveries: Various other discoveries might grant 1 XP to each PC involved. These aren't always devices, but they're usually some kind of items or contraptions left over from the ancients. They might include:

- A huge vat of a gelatinous substance that alters normal animals submersed into it, slowly transforming them into gigantic versions of themselves.
- A miniature black hole that is used to power a dimension-spanning device.
- A series of replacement organs held in stasis that can be used for transplants—if a qualified chiurgeon is available.
- A storage unit that keeps food fresh indefinitely.
- A tower-mounted turret cannon that can be moved (with great effort) and reassembled to help protect a city against invasion.

Shins are not worth experience points. Finding money can help the characters buy equipment, but it doesn't earn them XP.

LOOKING FOR

Beneficial mutation, page 398
Harmful mutation, page 398
Mutation tables, page 398

GM AWARDS

Sometimes, a group will have an adventure that doesn't deal primarily with uncovering the past or exploring ruins for artifacts. In this case, it's a good idea for the GM to award XP for accomplishing other tasks. A goal or a mission is normally worth 1 to 4 XP for each PC involved, depending on the difficulty and length of the work. As a general rule, a mission should be worth at least 1 XP per game session involved in accomplishing it.

For example, saving a family on an isolated farm beset by abhuman raiders might be worth 1 XP for each character. Of course, saving the family might mean relocating them, parleying with the abhumans, or chasing off the raiders. It doesn't have to mean slaying all the abhumans, although that would work, too.

Delivering a message to a remote village high in the mountains that requires the PCs to climb in dangerous conditions and risk possible attacks by bandits is probably a mission worth 2 XP per character.

On the other hand, if the PCs can fly safely over the mountains or teleport to the village, the mission is probably worth just 1 XP per character. Thus, GM awards are based not only on the task, but on the PCs and their capabilities as well.

However, that doesn't mean the characters should earn fewer XP if they make a lot of

lucky rolls or devise a clever plan to overcome obstacles. Being lucky or smart doesn't make a difficult challenge less difficult—it just means the PCs succeed more easily.

PLAYER-DRIVEN AWARDS

Players can create their own missions by setting goals for their characters. If they succeed, they earn XP just as if they were sent on the mission by an NPC. For example, if the characters decide on their own to help find a lost caravan in the mountains, that's a goal and a mission.

Sometimes character goals are more personal. If a PC vows to avenge the death of her brother, that's still a mission. These kinds of goals that are important to a character's background should be set at or near the outset of the game. When completed, a character goal should be worth at least 1 XP (and perhaps as much as 4 XP) to the PC. This encourages players to develop their character's background and to build in opportunities for action in the future. Doing so makes the background more than just backstory or flavor—it becomes something that can propel the campaign forward. With GM approval, players can also earn XP advances for building a background.

SPENDING EXPERIENCE POINTS

Experience points are meant to be used. Hoarding them is not a good idea, and if a player ever accumulates more than 10 XP at once, the GM can require them to spend some immediately.

Generally, experience points can be spent in four ways: immediate benefits, short-term and medium-term benefits, long-term benefits, and character advancement.

IMMEDIATE BENEFITS

The easiest, most straightforward way for a player to use XP is to reroll any roll in the game—even one that they didn't make. This costs 1 XP per reroll. The player can reroll and use either the new roll or the original, whichever is better. They can continue to spend XP on more rerolls, but this can quickly become an expensive proposition. It's a fine way to attempt to prevent a disaster, but it's not a good idea to use a lot of XP to reroll a single action over and over.

As mentioned earlier, a player can also spend 1 XP to refuse a GM intrusion.

PROGRESSING TO A NEW TIER

Tiers in Numenera aren't entirely like levels in other roleplaying games. In Numenera, gaining levels is not the players' only goal or the only measure of achievement. Starting (first-tier) characters are already competent, and there are only six tiers. Character advancement has a power curve, but it's only steep enough to keep things interesting. In other words, gaining levels is cool and fun, but it's not the only path to success or power. If you spend all your XP on immediate and short-term benefits, you would be different from someone who spends their points on long-term benefits, but you would not be "behind" that character.

The general idea is that most characters will spend half their XP on tier advancement and long-term benefits, and the rest on immediate and short-term benefits (which are used during gameplay). Some groups might decide that XP earned during a game is to be spent on immediate and short-term benefits (gameplay uses), and XP awarded between sessions for discoveries is to be spent on character advancement (long-term uses).

Ultimately, the idea is to make experience points into tools that the players and the GM can use to shape the story and the characters, not just a bookkeeping hassle.

It can't be stressed enough: often the best scenarios are the ones in which the players take the initiative and act proactively toward attaining a goal that they set for themselves. Whether they want to case and rob a noble's estate, start their own business, clear out an area of the wilderness to make their home, or anything else, players should make their own adventures sometimes.

This system would work well for groups that are used to a more traditional level-dependent game and might undervalue spending XP for other things. The expectations of a Numenera campaign aren't quite so rigid, but you can run it that way if it better suits your style.

LOOKING FOR

Face dancing, page 399
Powerful mutation, page 399
Sense numenera, page 399



If a rule gets in the way or detracts from the game, the players and the GM should work together to change it.

GMs and players should work together to make both XP awards and expenditures fit the ongoing story. If a PC stays in a village for two months to learn the inhabitants' unique language, the GM might award her a few XP, which are then immediately spent to grant the character the ability to speak and understand that language.

Character Advancement, page 128

Charmonde, page 138

LOOKING FOR

Distinctive mutation, page 400

SHORT-TERM AND MEDIUM-TERM BENEFITS

By spending 2 XP, a character can gain a skill—or, more rarely, an ability—that provides a short-term benefit. For example, let's say that a character notices that all the locks in the Citadel of the Iron Saint are similar to those crafted by a locksmith who worked in her village when she was young. She spends 2 XP and says that in her youth, she visited the locksmith and learned the inner workings of those locks. As a result, she is trained in picking the locks in the Citadel of the Iron Saint. This is just like being trained in lockpicking, but it applies only to locks found in that particular location. The skill is extremely useful in the citadel, but nowhere else.

Medium-term benefits are usually story based. For example, a character can spend 2 XP while climbing through mountains and say that she has experience with climbing in regions like these, or perhaps she spends the XP after she's been in the mountains for a while and says that she's picked up the feel for climbing there. Either way, from now on, she is trained in climbing in those mountains. This helps her now and any time she returns to the area, but she's not trained in climbing everywhere.

This method allows a character to get immediate training in a skill for half the normal cost. (Normally, it costs 4 XP to become trained in a skill, as explained in Character Advancement.) It's also a way to gain a new skill even if the PC has already gained a new skill as a step toward attaining the next tier.

In rare cases, a GM might allow a character to spend 2 XP to gain an entirely new ability—such as a device, an esotery, or a mental power—for a short time, usually no longer than the course of one scenario. The player and the GM should agree on a story-based explanation for the benefit. Perhaps the esotery or ability has a specific, rare requirement, such as a tool, a battery, a drug, or some kind of treatment.

For example, a character who wants to explore a submerged location has several numenera components, and they spend 2 XP to cobble together a device for breathing underwater. This gives them the ability for a considerable length of time, but not permanently—the device might work for only eight hours. Again, the story and the logic of the situation dictate the parameters.



LONG-TERM BENEFITS

In many ways, the long-term benefits a character can gain by spending XP are a means of integrating the mechanics of the game with the story. Players can codify things that happen to their characters (or that they want to have happen to their characters) by talking to the GM and spending 3 XP.

For example, a Jack named Therik spends a long time posing as a librarian in a huge library in the river city of Charmonde so he can intercept messages secretly disseminated from the head scribe to a group of criminals. During that time, he becomes very familiar with using a library. Therik's player talks with



the GM and says that he would like to have the Jack's experiences have a lasting effect on the character. He spends 3 XP and gains familiarity with research of all kinds.

Some things that a PC can acquire as a long-term benefit are story based. For example, in the course of play, the character might gain a friend (a contact) or build a log cabin (a home). These benefits are probably not the result of spending XP. The new contact comes to the PC and starts the relationship. The new home is granted to them as a reward for service to a powerful or wealthy patron, or maybe the character inherits the home from a relative or just stumbles into it.

Things that affect character abilities, like a familiarity or an artifact, are different. They likely require XP and time, money, and so on.

Long-term benefits can include the following.

Contact: The character gains a long-term NPC contact of importance—someone who will help them with information, equipment, shelter, or physical tasks. The player and GM should work out the details of the NPC and their relationship with the character.

Home: The PC acquires a full-time residence. This can be an apartment in a city, a house, a cabin in the wilderness, a base in an ancient complex, or whatever fits the situation. The residence should be a secure place where the PC can leave their belongings and sleep soundly at night. Conceivably, several characters could combine their XP resources and buy a home together.

Title or job: The PC is granted a position of importance or authority. Although it might come with responsibilities, it probably also comes with prestige and reward. It might also simply be an honorific.

Wealth: The PC comes into a considerable amount of wealth, whether it's a windfall, an inheritance, or a gift. It might be enough to buy a home or a title, but that's not really the point. The main benefit is that the character no longer needs to worry about the cost of simple equipment, lodging, food, and so on. This wealth could mean a set amount—perhaps 500 shins—or it could bestow the ability to ignore minor costs, as decided by the player and GM.

Artifact: The PC creates an artifact that has a power of their choosing. If the item is fairly simple, the GM can skip the crafting details and just say that after a period of time, the PC creates it. For an item that significantly alters gameplay—granting the character vast telepathic powers or giving them the ability to teleport at will—the GM might require difficult rolls, a considerable amount of time, and rare, hard-to-find components and materials.



Experience points should not be a goal unto themselves. Instead, they are a game mechanic to simulate how—through experience, time, toil, travail, and so on—characters become more skilled, more able, and, truthfully, more powerful. Spending XP to explain a change in a character's capabilities that occurred in the course of the story, such as if the PC made a new device or learned a new skill, isn't a waste of XP—it's what XP are for.

Tricks of the trade, page 47

CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

Progressing to the next tier involves four steps. When a character has spent XP on each of the four steps, they advance to the next tier and gain all the benefits of that tier, both from their character type and from their character focus. Each step costs 4 XP. The four steps can be purchased in any order, but each can be purchased only once per tier. In other words, a character must buy all four steps and advance to the next tier before they can buy the same step again.

Increasing Capabilities: You gain 4 new points to add to your stat Pools. You can allocate the points among your Pools however you wish.

"What should you do when you've mastered one type of weapon? Start mastering another one." ~Dalk the Ravenous

Moving Toward Perfection: You add 1 to your Might Edge, your Speed Edge, or your Intellect Edge (your choice).

Extra Effort: Your Effort score increases by 1.

Skills: Chose one skill other than attacks or defense, such as climbing, jumping, persuading, sneaking, history, or understanding numenera. You become trained in that skill. You can even choose a skill based on your character's special abilities. For example, if your character can make an Intellect roll to blast an enemy with mental force, you can become trained in using that ability, easing the task of using it. If you choose a skill that you are already trained in, you become specialized in that skill, easing the task by two steps instead of one. If you choose a skill that you have an inability in, the training and the inability cancel each other out (you aren't eased or hindered in that task). For example, if you have an inability in understanding numenera, becoming trained in that cancels out the inability.

Once you're specialized in a skill, you can't improve your training in that skill further (you can only ease a task by up to two steps with training). You can still make that task easier with assets and a few rare abilities that don't count as an asset or training.

Other Options: Players can also spend 4 XP to purchase other special options. Selecting any of these options counts as purchasing one of the four steps necessary to advance to the next tier. The special options are as follows.

- Reduce the cost for wearing armor. This option lowers the Speed Effort cost by 1.
- Add 2 to your recovery rolls.
- Select another focus ability available to you at tier 3. (You must be tier 3 or higher to do this. Characters advancing beyond tier 6 can use this option to select their other tier 6 focus option.)
- If you're a Glaive, select a new fighting move. The fighting move must be from your tier or a lower tier.
- If you're a Nano, select a new esotery. The esotery must be from your tier or a lower tier.
- If you're a Jack, select a new trick of the trade. The trick must be from your tier or a lower tier.

Fighting moves, page 31

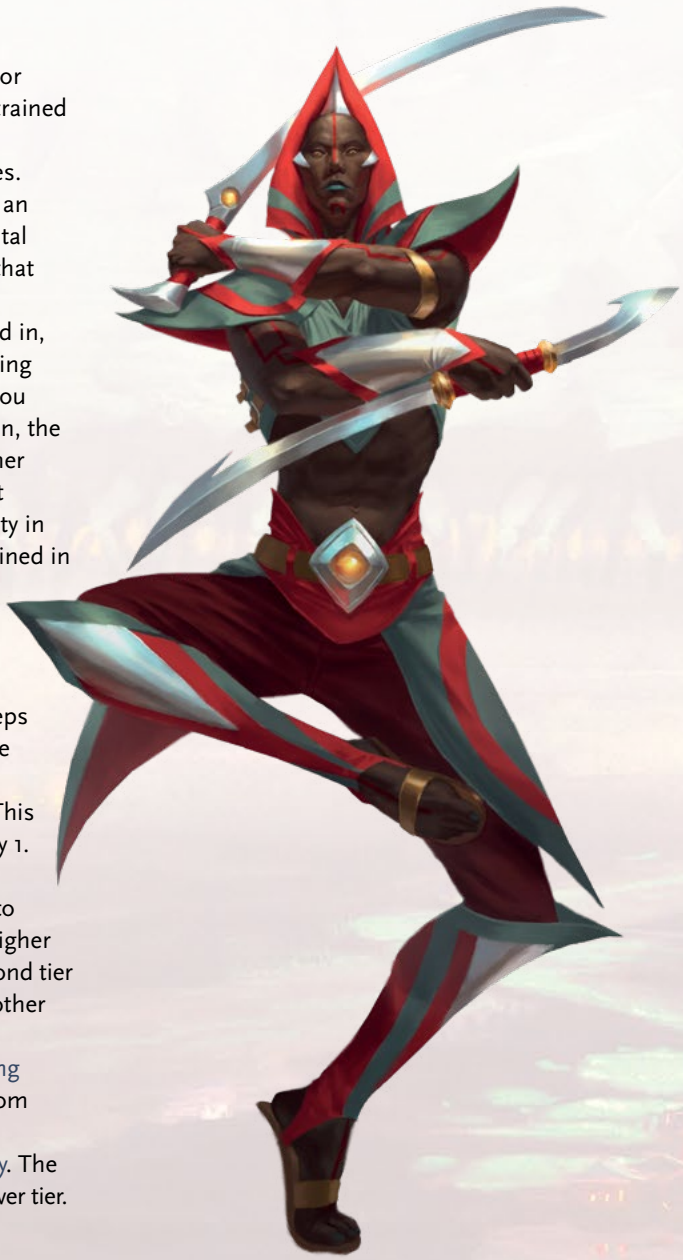
Esoteries, page 40

LOOKING FOR

Cosmetic mutation, page 402

EQUAL ADVANCEMENT

It's worthwhile if all characters advance through the six tiers at about the same rate—an important issue for some players. A good GM can achieve this result by carefully handing out XP rewards, some during play (which will tend to get used immediately) and some after play concludes, especially after completing a major story arc or quest so the GM can hand out 4 XP in one go (which will tend to get used for advancement). Many groups will discover while playing that equal advancement isn't an important issue in Numenera, but people should get to play the game the way they want to play it.



PART 4:
THE SETTING



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CHAPTER 9

LIVING IN THE NINTH WORLD



Planetary engineering is changing the climate and topography of a planet, and perhaps even its position in space.

Stellar lifting is moving a star, or changing the chemical composition or otherwise modifying the energy output of a star.

The Ninth World is Earth. But it is an Earth that has undergone multiple dramatic changes, for it is Earth approximately a billion years in the future. Over that nigh-incomprehensible span of time, nothing remains constant. Add in the rise and fall of civilizations so great that to us they would seem, again, nigh incomprehensible, and anything is possible.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF CHANGE

When attempting to grasp the Ninth World, there are two complementary shaping forces to keep in mind. First is the vast amount of time. Even if Earth were left completely alone, the drastic changes of celestial mechanics, continental drift, erosion, mass extinction, and evolution would render our home unrecognizable.

The second force is that of intelligence. Over the billion-year span, the earth has been home to at least eight civilizations that have arisen (or arrived) here, flourished and advanced to incredible power, and then either declined or left, never to return. Although we know little about these civilizations, we do know the following:

- At least one was the center of a galactic (or perhaps intergalactic) space-faring empire.
- At least one wielded the power of planetary engineering and stellar lifting.
- At least one had knowledge of the fundamental forces of reality and could alter those forces as they wished. The very laws of physics were theirs to play with, like toys.
- At least one filled the world with invisible, molecule-sized machines called nanites (or nanomachines) that could deconstruct and reconstruct matter and manipulate energy.
- At least one explored the multiverse of other dimensions, parallel universes, and alternate levels of reality.
- At least some of these civilizations were not human.

THE WORLD AS IT REMAINS

Most of the land mass has once again joined to form a gigantic supercontinent, leaving the rest of the globe to the mercy of a single ocean dotted with islands. The moon is smaller than we are accustomed to because its orbit is wider. Due to the effect this has on the planet's rotation, days are now 28 hours long. The year's length has not changed, however, so a Ninth World year has only 313 days. Words like "week" and "month" retain their meanings, and for the sake of understanding, this book also uses terms like "second," "minute," and "hour," although the inhabitants of the world probably use different terms, perhaps with slightly different meanings.

The people of the Ninth World don't realize it, but at its current age, the sun's luminosity should have increased to a point where life on Earth (as we know it) is impossible. And yet it continues. *Something* happened millions of years in the past to prevent life from disappearing. Most planets in the solar system remain, although their orbits have altered somewhat, but the planet we call Mercury is long gone. (Ninth Worlders don't know it ever existed, so they don't wonder why it's absent.)

THE PEOPLE OF THE NINTH WORLD

In the youth of an age, the people use the resources they have on hand, coupled with whatever understanding of their world they can master, to carve out a life for themselves. In the Ninth World, the resources available are the numenera—the detritus of the prior eras—and the people's understanding of these resources is crude and incomplete. The Aeon Priests possess just enough discernment and knowledge to suggest possible uses for things, but so much remains to be discovered. Even the creatures and plants of the Ninth World are strange by-products of the prior ages; the past left behind flora, fauna, and machines, some designed by lore or nature, others transplanted from distant stars or dimensions.



The Ninth Worlders clothe themselves in newly spun fabrics but weave the relics of the past into each garment. They forge armor, weapons, and tools from materials recovered from ancient structures and devices. Some of these materials are metals, but others are (or appear to be) glass, stone, bone, flesh, or substances that defy categorization and understanding.

Those who risk the mysterious dangers to recover the relics of the past provide a valuable service. Typically these brave souls bring their findings to the Aeon Priests, who use the artifacts to fashion tools, weapons, and other boons for the growing civilization. As time passes, more individuals learn to use the numenera, but it remains a mystery to most people.

But who or what are the people of the Ninth World? Most are humans, although not all that call themselves human truly are. Is an engineered 8-foot (2.5 m) tall person with mechanical limbs and biocrafted brain implants still human? In the Ninth World, the answer is very likely yes, but some people will eagerly debate the point.

Perhaps an even better question is: After a billion years, why does Earth still have humans at all, in shapes and forms that we—the people of the 21st century—can recognize? This might seem particularly curious once you consider the fact that many of the prior worlds were distinctly nonhuman.

Ninth Worlders don't have that specific perspective, but they do wonder where they came from. They have a sense that Earth was once theirs, and then it wasn't, and now it is again. How can this be? Perhaps one day they'll find the answer.

Beyond the humans are the abhumans: mutants, crossbreeds, genetically engineered, and their offspring. How is it that some engineered or mutated beings remain "human" while others become "abhuman"? It has more to do with mindset than physical form. Abhumans are once-human creatures that rejected humanity to become bestial, murderous, and degenerate. In other words, they (or their forebears) *chose* to be abhuman.

Abhuman, page 13

And then there are the visitants, who are not native to the earth but who now call the Ninth World home. They have no more understanding of the past (even their own) than anyone else.

Aeon Priest, page 264

Visitant, page 394

LIFE IN THE NINTH WORLD

The life of a Ninth World human isn't all that different from the life of a human around the year 1000 AD. Farmers till fields, herders tend flocks, hunters and trappers provide meat and skins, weavers create clothing, woodworkers build furniture, authors write books, and so on. Meals are cooked over fires. Entertainment

comes from a lute player, a group of singers, or perhaps comedic thespians.

Throughout the Ninth World, couples of all orientations join together in commitment ceremonies. However, because traditions, religions, and cultural norms vary widely, the ceremonies and resulting relationships take vastly different forms from place to place.

Parents typically raise children, although in some places extended families are common. Many children attend some kind of school until the age of about twelve, when they learn a craft. Some students, usually those in larger cities, go on to higher learning.

Most people live in small, agrarian villages, but some settle in larger towns or cities. The largest city in the Steadfast, Qi, has a population of 500,000.

Life expectancy varies wildly, but those who survive to the age of thirty can expect to live to at least sixty. It's rare but not unheard of for someone to live to be ninety or even one hundred. Those fortunate enough to be rich or to live in a locale where the Aeon Priests have discovered secrets of longevity might live twice that long—or longer.

The dead are buried or cremated.

Qi, page 144

Order of Truth, page 215

Ceremonies may be public or private and can take the form of handfasting, feasting, the exchange of gifts, and proof-of-love conquests (see The Fields of Frozen Flowers, page 204).



CLASS

Generally speaking, humans in the Ninth World are aristocrats, peasants, or slaves. In some places, a "middle" or "merchant" class arises from the ranks of the peasants, populated by those who have wealth but not nobility. True feudalism exists only in certain locations, and as might be expected in cases of land ownership, the nobles usually own the land and the peasants usually work it. A peasant likely earns a few shins per day, whereas a merchant could earn a hundred times that. Aristocrats rarely bother using coins at all except when dealing with the peasantry.

Only the nobles own slaves, which are usually taken from conquered enemies or their descendants and are considered property. (The children of slaves are born into slavery.) Sometimes criminals are consigned to slavery as well. Slaves toil as manual laborers, house servants, and guards. A few nobles prefer to use abhuman rather than human slaves, and some own both kinds.

RELIGION

The religions of the Ninth World are varied and many. With the exception of the Order of Truth's quasi-religious veneration of the past and the understanding its inhabitants had of the forces of the universe, no religion is widespread—they're local affairs. An explorer coming to a new town or village will find that the inhabitants have their own specific gods and religions. Some of these are based in local myths and stories, while others are more grounded in reality—creatures or other weird aspects of the world are often explained using the trappings of religion. For example, a village might worship a machine intelligence left over from the prior worlds as a mysterious deity.

In some places, religion is vital and fervent. In others, it's casual. And in some locations, the people have no concept of religion at all.

One thing to keep in mind is that the Ninth World is not shaped by Judeo-Christianity, Islam, or other current religions. The taboos, virtues, and other behavior-modifying beliefs prevalent in the 21st century are not necessarily true for the Ninth World.

LANGUAGE

Language is a complex topic for a 21st-century reader trying to understand a civilization a billion years in the future. In a fantasy or pseudo-medieval fictional setting, it's typical for everyone to talk in a vaguely Shakespearean British manner. This style of speaking probably isn't appropriate for Numenera. The

Ninth World is filled with words that—while not strictly modern—aren't medieval or Shakespearean either.

And, of course, no one in the Ninth World actually speaks English. Words like "pope" and "synth" and other real-world terms are just English approximations of words used by Ninth Worlders. "Pope" means "father" but implies more, and the word has an association with Medieval Europe. "Synth" isn't a word used by Medieval Europeans, but its meaning—and, just as important, its sound—suggests something wholly artificial yet simple, common, and acceptable to our 21st-century ears. Those terms and hundreds like them were chosen because they convey the right ideas.

So what languages do Ninth Worlders speak?

The Truth: The Aeon Priests teach a language based on rationality and intellect. Because of its name, it means something different in the Ninth World to say, "She speaks the Truth," but that subtle double meaning is intentional on the part of the priesthood.

The language's rules are simple and straightforward, easy to teach and easy to learn. The Truth is the predominant language in the Steadfast, where it's spoken by about 80 percent of the people; in cities, that number is closer to 100 percent. In the Beyond, about 60 percent of the people speak the Truth as their primary language, but many isolated villages have their own specific tongue.

Shin-Talk: This is a crude and simple language used only for trade and related tasks—counting, assessing quality, and so on. Shin-Talk is older than the Truth but not as widely used.

Other Languages: At least 500 (and perhaps far more) completely distinct languages are spoken across the Ninth World. It's not unusual for a traveler to discover an isolated village—particularly in the Beyond—and be unable to speak to its few hundred residents because they have their own language. Fortunately, this is a common problem, so people are used to struggling through interactions without relying on words.

LITERACY

Many people in the Ninth World cannot read. The Steadfast has an average literacy rate of about 50 percent. Although almost everyone can recognize a few written words of the Truth, genuine literacy—the ability to read a contract or a book—is uncommon. Reading is more common in cities, where up to 70 percent of the population might be literate. In small towns and villages, the number is closer to 40 percent, and in very rural, isolated villages, it falls to 10 percent or less.

In the Beyond, literacy rates are about 50 percent in cities and 0 to 20 percent in the aldeia.

In communities that have a predominant language other than the Truth, literacy varies wildly.

ANIMALS AND CREATURES

A billion years in the future, all the animals we know in the 21st century are long gone. However, animal types—mammals, reptiles, insects, birds, and so forth—remain. Again, it's a language problem. The text (or the GM) might talk about rats, deer, flies, or ravens, but the beasts being described are at least slightly different than the creatures we think of today. However, the words are still valid because they convey the proper general meaning. Wholly different creatures, such as aneen or snow lopers, are described because they have no 21st-century analog.

Of course, the Ninth World also has creatures that are nothing like animals. Mutant beasts, engineered creatures (or their descendants), automatons, biomechanical blends of organism and machine, extraterrestrial and ultraterrestrial beings, creatures of energy, and stranger entities roam the planet. In one way or another, all of these things are results of the influence of the numenera.

NINTH WORLD HISTORY

To the people of the Ninth World, recorded history began about 900 years ago, with the work of learned scholars who organized themselves into what would later become the Aeon Priests. Before that time, humans lived in barbaric tribes and isolated farming villages.

No one knows how much time passed between the fall of the previous civilization and the rise of the Ninth World. Likewise, no one can agree on where Ninth Worlders came from. It's clear that many residents of the prior worlds were not human, but perhaps some were.

The first Amber Pope organized the Aeon Priests into the Order of Truth about 400 years ago. At this time, the kingdoms of the Steadfast began to take the form that they have today, although wars, upheavals, and changes have come and gone since then (and more changes are likely in the future).

In the end, to scholars and broad thinkers, the petty squabbles and changes that took place during the last few centuries seem as nothing compared to the vast, unknowable past of Earth. This is likely part of the reason why people of the Ninth World don't care much about history.

Aldeia, page 134



"I've seen machines that melt flesh into new shapes, beasts that skip in and out of time, and places that break the rules of how I thought the world worked. Our world is full of wonders I'll never fully understand, and I seek them out like I have a hunger for them."
~Chiemeka Neyth

For more details on the types of creatures that crawl, fly, and otherwise move through the Ninth World, see Chapter 14: Creatures, page 222.

Aeon Priest, page 264



Order of Truth, page 215

GAZETTEER OF THE NINTH WORLD

The Ninth World is the backdrop of a young civilization that has grown up amid the ruins of very old, very advanced forebears. A billion years from now, we'll be long gone, as will the civilizations that evolve and rise (and fall or leave or transcend) after us. A billion years is a long, long time—far lengthier than the span between the 21st century and the dinosaurs.

In the time of the Ninth World, the landmasses have rejoined to form a vast supercontinent surrounded by seemingly endless seas with perilous storms. But did the earth come to be in this configuration because of natural forces through the march of time, or did a prior civilization design it to be so? Certainly the ancient inhabitants of the previous worlds had the ability to shape their planet, and likely other planets, as they saw fit. Proof of this is everywhere; "impossible" landscapes are a normal part of the topography. Islands of crystal float in the sky. Inverted mountains rise above plains of broken glass. Abandoned structures the size of kingdoms stretch across great distances, so enormous that they affect the weather. Massive machines, some still active, churn and hum. But for what purpose?

Chapter 11: The Beyond, page 169

Along the western coast lies the Steadfast, a collection of kingdoms and principalities with little in common except for a unifying religion. This religion, called by its adherents the Order of Truth (and by all others the Amber Papacy), reveres the past and the knowledge of the ancients as understood by the enigmatic Aeon Priests. By decree of the Amber Pope, the Steadfast and the Order of Truth wage war with the lands to the north, believed by many to be enthralled by a secretive and mysterious cult called the Gaians. Nobles in the Steadfast are called to the Crusades, making war against the infidels with ever-stranger weapons discovered or devised by the priesthood.

An aldeia is a village in the Beyond centered around a clave of Aeon Priests.

Outside the bounds of the Steadfast lies the Beyond, a vast wilderness punctuated by very occasional, very isolated communities. The Beyond also has Aeon Priests, but they're not linked by an organized network, and they don't answer to the Amber Pope. Instead, these priests dwell in sequestered claves. Around these claves, small villages and communities known as aldeia have arisen. Each clave has discovered and mastered various numenera items, giving every aldeia a distinct identity. In one, the inhabitants might raise unique bioengineered beasts for food. In another, people may pilot gravity-defying gliders and race along the rooftops of ancient ruins. In still another aldeia, the priests of the clave may have developed the means to stop the aging process almost entirely, making the residents nearly immortal, and some are no doubt willing to sell the secret—for a staggering price. Because the aldeia are remote and separated by dangerous distances, trade of these discoveries is occasional and haphazard.

Chapter 10: The Steadfast, page 136

LOOKING FOR
Weather, page 135

But not every village or tribe in the Beyond has a clave to help guide them amid the dangers of the past. Some of these communities have tried to use the numenera to their peril, unleashing horrors, plagues, or mysteries beyond comprehension. Travelers might find a village where the residents have been transformed into flesh-eating monstrosities, or one whose populace works as slaves for a machine intelligence left over from an earlier era.

Outside the aldeia and other settlements, the dangers multiply. Amid the ruins of the past lurk tribes of vicious abhumans that are as likely to kill and eat an explorer as talk to her. Clouds of tiny, invisible machines called the iron wind scour the wilderness, altering everything they touch. Monstrous predators, ancient death machines, and stranded extraterrestrial or transdimensional beings (also called ultradimensional beings or ultraterrestrials) also threaten the uncharted

I stood in Yrkallak Tower and watched as the cloud of orange and red passed across the landscape in the distance. Through my spyglass, I saw the formation of a hillock that had not existed before. Atop that rise grew polyp-like blue trees that then wavered and died. The field of grain that had grown nearby became a cacophonous mixture of glass, green vapor, and writhing serpents. An aneen tried to run as the iron wind approached, but its legs became tiny fluttering wings, and it collapsed. Its back sprouted a thousand insect legs, but its head had turned to a coppery metal, and it was dead.

Further horrors I witnessed, I shall not describe, for I wish that I had not seen them. They shall haunt my dreams forevermore. Truly this was a storm born in Hell, carried on the backs of invisible demons of madness and misery.

—The journal of Lady Charalann

reaches of the Beyond. But so too can a careful, capable explorer find awe-inspiring numenera that can accomplish anything they might imagine.

In the Ninth World, the numenera is both the risk and the reward.

WEATHER

The numenera has changed the environment of the planet many times over. The inhabitants of the prior worlds reshaped not only land and sea but sky as well. Even the weather of the Ninth World is influenced by the numenera.

In the Steadfast and the Beyond, it grows colder as you travel south. The southernmost lands of the Steadfast, for example, have cool summers and harsh winters. The central and northern portions have warmer summers, but even the southern edge of the Cloudcrystal Skyfields sees snow and frost in the winter. The mountains of the Black Riage have long, oppressive winters, with the southernmost passes open for only a few months.

Overall, the climate is dry, and with a few exceptions (along the coast, for example), rain is uncommon and accompanies terrible storms. Rumors say that particularly harsh or strange storms are either the result of a harmful numenera effect or the slow degradation of a beneficial one. Either way, storms with dangerous winds, hail, and lightning grow more frequent each year. Other storms—still thankfully very rare—bring oily black rains that kill crops rather than nourish them, or weird magnetic fluctuations that bend matter and disrupt minds. But even these pale in comparison to the most terrifying weather effect in the Ninth World: the iron wind.

THE IRON WIND: The iron wind is the Ninth-World term for clouds of dangerous nano spirits (also called nanotech by the more learned). Malfunctioning machines—insane, really—that are far too tiny to see travel across the landscape in terrible clouds borne by strong winds. These machines warp everything they touch, transmuting all matter. An iron wind storm twists the ground, turns rock into clouds of vapor, and creates new features out of thin air. And woe to any living thing caught in its passing. Trees become rocks, pools of water, or unrecognizable lumps of pulsing, living substance. The iron wind tears apart creatures only to rebuild them in bizarre, seemingly random shapes. Flesh is transmuted to nonliving substances, ropy tendrils, or even more alien configurations or textures. Nine times out of ten, this transformation results in the death of the creature—sometimes a long, painful death as it tries to cope with its new form.

"My oath is to preserve and protect our civilization from beasts of the prior worlds, abhumans who have forsaken their humanity, and the northern cults who oppose the will of the Amber Pope. I search for the gifts of prior worlds so the Aeon Priests may unlock their secrets and build a better future for us."
~Klendii the Evangelist

Cloudcrystal Skyfields, page 169

Black Riage, page 172



CHAPTER 10

THE STEADFAST

The Steadfast comprises nine different countries. Collectively, the rulers are often called the Nine Rival Kings, or just the Nine. These kings, queens, princes, and councils share no love for one another and truthfully have no relationship except that each rules over a land whose people owe faith and favor to the Amber Papacy.

Amber Papacy, page 215

Generally speaking, the Steadfast is more settled and civilized than the Beyond, but it can be just as dangerous. Communities are isolated. Travel on the roads is risky and nearly unthinkable at night—but at least the roads exist.

The Beyond, page 169

The Steadfast includes all the land from the sea to the Black Riage, south of the Tithe River and north of the Sadara. The nine kingdoms of the Steadfast are Navarene, Ghan, Draolis, Thaemor, Malevich, Iscobal, the Pytharon Empire, Milave, and Ancuan.

Black Riage, page 172

Each of the nine kingdoms has at least one symbol that represents it. Some symbols are ancient, others newly minted by the current leadership. While some kingdoms (such as Ghan) wield their symbol proudly and fiercely, others use them only in times of war or not at all.



NAVARENE

Navarene is one of the largest and most prosperous kingdoms in the Steadfast. Disliked by all the other lands, the people of Navarene are thought of as aloof, difficult, and even arrogant. "Wealthy as a Navarene merchant" is a saying in the Steadfast that almost always has implied negative connotations.

The southern part of the kingdom is known for its rich farmland. Simple farmers and herders work for wealthy landowners who in turn pay fealty to a small number of aristocratic families, each of whom answers to the queen, who rules from her capital of Charmonde. Her palace is known as the Empiternal House, and at its center is a set of sealed chambers that Queen Armalu never leaves. To come and go, her court must pass through a series of airlocks and undergo a misting spray that removes any potential contaminants. This odd but careful behavior, coupled with a variety of strange treatments and procedures, has allowed Armalu to live for 253 years—so far.

Queen Armalu is known for being both shrewd and ruthless, and her kingdom prospers as a result, for she uses these traits to best her enemies and the foes of her people. As long as her subjects are obedient and efficient, they are treated well and with a fair hand.

Navarene forms the boundary between the north and the rest of the Steadfast. Thus, the northern portion of the kingdom, south of the Tithe River, holds many forts and war-castles that help defend this border from the dangers of the Beyond. Now that the Amber Pope has declared war on the mysterious lands to the north of the Cloudcrystal Skyfields, these fortresses are even more important. Queen Armalu has petitioned the papacy to require the other eight kingdoms to pay to help maintain the bastions. The other rulers balk at funding Navarene's military, feeling that Armalu is as likely to use it to invade them as she is to defend them from the Gaian invaders—should those infidels ever come.



THE WESTWOOD

Vast, lush, and green, the Westwood is a verdant forest dominating Navarene's coastline. It's known for the ancient redwoods that stretch taller than any trees in the Steadfast. One particular tree—simply known as the Emperor of Green—rises high above the rest. Twice as tall as any tree around it, the Emperor stands at almost 700 feet (213 m). It's clearly of a slightly different species than the other trees. Its trunk is more than 60 feet (18 m) in diameter at the base, and at seemingly random times in the year, a door appears on the north-facing side. It disappears again after an hour. Few, however, have reached the tree to look for it. Far fewer have seen it, and if they have, they haven't returned to report what lies on the other side.

For long years, people feared the Westwood, calling it impenetrable and dangerous. Rumors commonly spoke of ghosts and ravenous beasts dwelling within. The Westwood and its hungry spirits were part of the folklore all along the coast. But today the people of Navarene have claimed the forest for their own, determined to carve out safe roads to the coast and land for farms and towns. For their efforts, they have stirred an enemy—not the ghosts or tree-spirits of legend, but the culovas. These creatures claim the majority of the Westwood for themselves and attempt to defend it against encroachment.

In the eastern edge of the Westwood you can find many mills that supply lumber to Navarene and the surrounding lands. Lumber is a major export for the country and is part of the kingdom's wealth. The wood—particularly the redwood—is highly prized.

A noble family, the Emols, owns and operates a huge, mobile machine that cuts down and processes trees at the same rate as a hundred loggers. Called the Dark Smoker for the greasy muck it belches into the air while it works, the machine is a jury-rigged mess, requiring a staff of mechanics to continually service and repair it to keep it operational. Repeated attacks by the culovas damage the rickety device frequently, but technicians and Nanos always manage to fix it. The current head of the family, Charina Emol, has placed a 10-shin bounty on the head of any culova brought to her.

NAVARENE
Ruler: Queen Armalu
Population: 1,500,000
Capital: Charmonde

Queen Armalu:
level 3, all types of interactions as level 6

Culova, page 231

Amber Pope, page 133

Cloudcrystal Skyfields, page 169

Gaian invaders, page 134. *It's possible that the Gaian invaders aren't invaders at all.*

For those seeking entrance to the University of Doors (page 209), a door to the college appears at random intervals in the trunk of the Emperor of Green.

"The Order of so-called Truth is the real power of the Steadfast."
~Narada Trome, anti-papist



Seskii can be formidable foes, but they also make fiercely loyal companions.

Seskii, page 252

Convergence, page 216

A mirror image of a ruin in Navarene can be seen in the sky. The image is always shown in winter and the inhabitants aren't quite human.

Near the Westwood, you can also find a number of paper mills, particularly around the city of Harmuth.

THE GOLDEN SANCTUM

Hidden deep within the Westwood, this secret citadel belongs to the organization calling itself the Convergence. It's a beautiful and relatively new castle, well guarded and well maintained. There are no paths to the Golden Sanctum. Members of the group reach the citadel by other means that are as mysterious as the activities they conduct once they arrive.

CHARMONDE

Long colonnades. Marble statuary. Monuments to great deeds and important myths and legends. Painted domes. Soaring, arched bridges. Charmonde is a city of architectural beauty and art. The second largest city in Navarene, Charmonde is located on both sides of the Jerribost River, with six bridges connecting the north and south sides of the city.

Charmonde is not walled, but four fortresses surround it to deter invaders, for the city is the capital of the kingdom and home of Queen Armalu. Each fortress has one of four ancient sonic devices that can create a standing field between them. Anyone who tries to cross the barrier suffers great pain, convulsions, and even death. The Aeon Priests have determined that the unique devices are running low on power, however, and despite all efforts, no one has figured out a way to recharge them. Thus, the four devices are used sparingly. In fact, they've never been activated in the memory of most of the city's current residents.

Charmonde is home to 95,000 people. The queen's palace, Empiternal House, stands atop the highest hill in the city. It's also known as the House of a Thousand Slaves, for rumors say that is exactly the number of slaves the queen uses in the palace alone. Nearby is the Asaranti University, one of the greatest schools in all the Steadfast. Thanks to the university, the city is known for its scholars, philosophers, and artists as much as it is for its marble and slaves.

BODROV

Another of Navarene's cities, Bodrov, is uniquely defensible. It lies atop an impossible sort of plateau—in fact, the word *plateau* almost seems inappropriate. Designed and sculpted by the ancients, the rock formation is more than 500 feet (150 m) high and 800 feet (240 m) across at the top, but only 100 feet (30 m) across at the base. It resembles a round table with one central leg and is sometimes called Table Rock (although, most often, simply Bodrov). A winding path curls up around the base and enters the rock just below the wide top portion. The path into the city leads through a series of artificial caverns and tunnels, which can be sealed at many points.

In fact, the entire base is honeycombed with caves and tunnels, many of which have never been completely explored. Many of these interior spaces, as well as the top of the perfectly flat rock formation, hold the remnants of machines and construction from the distant past. It is speculated that the interior foundation of the entirety of Bodrov might be metal, with the stone appearance having been added later, intentionally or otherwise (depending on the true age of the original structure).

Sometimes the defense of Bodrov works against it. Just as it's difficult to imagine an invading army or other danger gaining entrance, so too is it difficult to bring supplies into the city. Food, water, and other goods must be transported up the long path around and through the base and into the city, making Bodrov an impractical place to live. Thus, the population is only about 1,000 people, even though the city could easily house ten times that many, and once did. Buildings—some ancient, some merely old—stand empty, left over from the prior epochs of the world or simply from a time, perhaps a hundred years ago, when people believed that Bodrov would be a city of great importance.

The Vacant Palace is the home away from home of Queen Armalu, although, as its name suggests, she has never been there. It was built for her more than a hundred years ago by an ignorant but well-intentioned suitor who argued that in times of war or other calamity, the queen should come to Bodrov. Wise of him, and yet foolish, for he didn't realize how truly committed she was to never leaving her chambers in Empiternal House. The suitor is now long gone, but his estate still manages the palace for the queen, as per the wishes in his last will and testament.

SHALLAMAS, CITY OF ECHOES

Known by many people as the City of Echoes, Shallamas is a sprawling trade city of 80,000 people, as infamous for its thieves as for the wealthy merchants they prey upon. It is home to the Provani family, another of Navarene's aristocratic houses. The Provani garner great wealth from the caravans that enter the city with goods from the south and leave with goods from Navarene and the Beyond. Even exotic goods from the mysterious lands to the north, such as liquid silk and synthwood, flow through Shallamas.

The City of Echoes is surrounded by an impressive stone wall with many towers. Three main gates provide access, each with its own associated market, and a fourth market lies in the center of Shallamas.

The city gets its nickname from a strange phenomenon that has no explanation. Without warning, residents from time to time see and hear "echoes" of recent past events. Although these echoes seem real, they're more like illusions or holograms; you cannot interact with them. The events can be as recent as a few minutes ago or as distant as a year in the past. In the Shallamas court system, an echo of an eyewitness observing a crime or confirming an alibi is every bit as valid as seeing it actually happen. Echoes have never been observed with inaccuracies.

Argust Provani, the ruler of the city, employs a capable and sizable guard to maintain order, but he also controls an elite group of secretive operatives called the Shadowlings, who infiltrate criminal organizations and destroy them from within. The Shadowlings are thought to be as ruthless and violent as the criminals they combat, but they do help to keep the city's merchants and traders safe from thievery.

"Bodrov could have been the jewel of the Steadfast. From here, a monarch could rule the world, safe from all enemies for all time—as long as he never got thirsty."
~Zacher the architect

Argust Provani: *level 4, seeing through lies or trickery as level 6*

Shadowling: *level 5, performing any action of guile or subterfuge as level 7*

LOOKING FOR
Bodrov, page 138



Thuman, page 256



THE AMBER MONOLITH

Calaval climbed the hill, his pet thuman at his side. Crumbling bits of ancient brick turned to gravel with each step. At the top, he saw the amber obelisk the old woman had told him about. It stretched impossibly into the sky. The reddish-yellow light of the old, tired sun caught in its angles high above the plain of ruin. Even after all these aeons, the machine at the heart of the obelisk still thrummed with power. Rings orbited the device, spinning with unearthly precision.

—Sacred Chronicle of High Father Calaval, Amber Pope and Founder of the Citadel of the Conduit and the Order of Truth

According to Calaval, the original Amber Pope (an office that gains its name from the floating obelisk), somewhere inside the Amber Monolith lies a teleportation device that gives access to a numenera edifice floating high above the earth. However, despite Calaval's descriptions and explanations, no one has ever found it or even discovered the secret to accessing the monolith's interior since he supposedly went inside and used the device 400 years ago.

Today, a fortress guards this sacred site and prohibits anyone from attempting to follow in High Father Calaval's footsteps. The fortress is maintained by soldiers in the employ of the Order of Truth who owe no allegiance to Navarene. The queen tolerates their presence as a concession to the papacy.

The Amber Monolith floats 500 feet (150 m) above the ground and stands approximately 2,000 feet (600 m) tall. It floats above a region called the Plain of Brick, a wide expanse of worked stone many miles across.

THE OBELISK OF THE WATER GOD

Clearly related in some way to the Amber Monolith, this obelisk floats above a region called the Garrathol in the foothills of the Black Riage. Garrathol means "delta" in the now-dead Shume language, even though the area is hundreds of miles inland. The meaning is appropriate because the obelisk draws water into itself from the nearby Tithe River, creating its own sort of delta basin.

NAVARENE HEARSAY

Dark Whispers: Word from the Garrathol is that the Obelisk of the Water God has begun to glow at night with a faint yellow-green luminosity. No one knows the cause, but the glow isn't constant; some believe it's tied to the phase of the moon. Regardless, strange people have been seen holding rituals in the glowing obelisk's light.

Missing Caravan: A merchant in Shallamas is looking for mercenaries or investigators to find a long-overdue caravan that was supposed to arrive from the north. Among its valuable goods, the caravan carried a trio of near-priceless silver statues said to be sacred to a primitive tribe living below the Cloudcrystal Skyfields.

Ghosts of the Westwood: Even the culovas seem terrified of a new, strange presence in the Westwood that drives them from a locale near the southern edge. Lumberjacks say that the "green ghosts of the wood" have finally begun exacting their revenge on everything they come upon.

THE WEIRD OF NAVARENE

Harbinger: An odd woman walks the edge of the Westwood, telling anyone who listens that within the next ten years, something will rise out of the forest and devour whole cities. Before she can get much of her story out, she disappears.

Blessed Event: A child born just weeks ago in a small village called Mirbel heals the wounds of any who touch her.

Black Skies: A flock of a thousand or more black vessa birds keeps returning to an ancient tower at the land's western edge, no matter what is done to drive them off.

Biosynth Grove: Fifteen miles (24 km) west of Bodrov grows a small grove of transparent trees made of living synth.



Some people believe that the obelisk then sends the water into the air, affecting the weather in the Garrathol. Others claim that the water is sent to a source beyond the scope of the world, which, if true, could be quite bad in the long run. However, given that the obelisk is perhaps a million years old or more and the world isn't drained of water, something different seems to be going on.

The Obelisk of the Water God hovers 500 feet (150 m) above the surface and is almost 2,000 feet (600 m) tall. The lush, fertile region has many small villages but no larger settlements because the area has a reputation for danger. The Garrathol is home to more than its share of deadly predators and monstrosities, and the locals experience a large number of tragic births and mutations.



THE SEA KINGDOM OF GHAN

Look long, my friends.
Look hard.
Greener hills, bluer waters
you'll never find
than those of my heart, in the kingdom by the sea.
Look long, my friends.
Look hard.
Finer men, prettier smiles
you'll never find
than those of my heart, in the kingdom by the sea.
—The Song of Ghan

Known for its coastal trading ships, the so-called Sea Kingdom of Ghan is a relatively peaceful land. King Laird has no wish to challenge or even appear to challenge Queen Armalu of Navarene or the ruling council in Draolis, yet he doesn't want to appear weak and ripe for the taking, either. Thus, he protects his borders and maintains a careful vigil without making aggressive moves. Most important, however, he ensures that his merchant fleet plays such an important role in the Steadfast that no one would want to suffer his kingdom's sudden collapse—or, just as bad, his sudden refusal to maintain the coastal trade routes vital to most of the nine kingdoms.

The rolling green hills of Ghan are known for herds of gallen and aneen. Gallen are long-bodied, herbivorous animals valued for their meat and hides. Aneen stand two to three times as tall as a human, with hunched, hairless bipedal bodies, small forearms, and broad heads. These pack animals can attain great speeds and walk tirelessly for long distances. Many trade caravans in the northern part of the Steadfast use aneen to transport goods or pull massive wagons.

King Laird lives in the Coral Palace off Ghan's coast, a part of the City of Bridges. Ghan has little in the way of an aristocracy. Most of the people are free citizens owing fealty only to their king. Few people own slaves. Governors and mayors rule over districts and towns, but the organization is varied and unofficial. Seafarers and herding folk, Ghanites do not abide a strong government, and King Laird is happy to oblige them.

THE CITY OF BRIDGES

The City of Bridges is the capital of Ghan, although strictly speaking, it's not actually *in* Ghan. Extending out from the coast, a number of ancient bridges stretch more than a mile to a series of massive metal platforms joined by an intricate web of more bridges. Composed of materials of the prior worlds, these wide bridges and platforms hold homes, shops, warehouses, and other buildings.

Today the City of Bridges has a population of 20,000 people. Each of the thirty-two platforms has multiple levels, and all of them are in use. What's more, each platform holds structures that can be used as docks for ships and boats. The settlement could have been called the City of Piers, for the entire network of platforms and bridges is almost one big pier (which is entirely appropriate for the capital of the Sea Kingdom). At any given time, a hundred or more vessels are moored at or near the city.

Despite common belief, the city doesn't float. The platforms are affixed to the sea floor, and many people speculate that the large, inactive machines on each platform are drills that extend deep into the submerged earth.

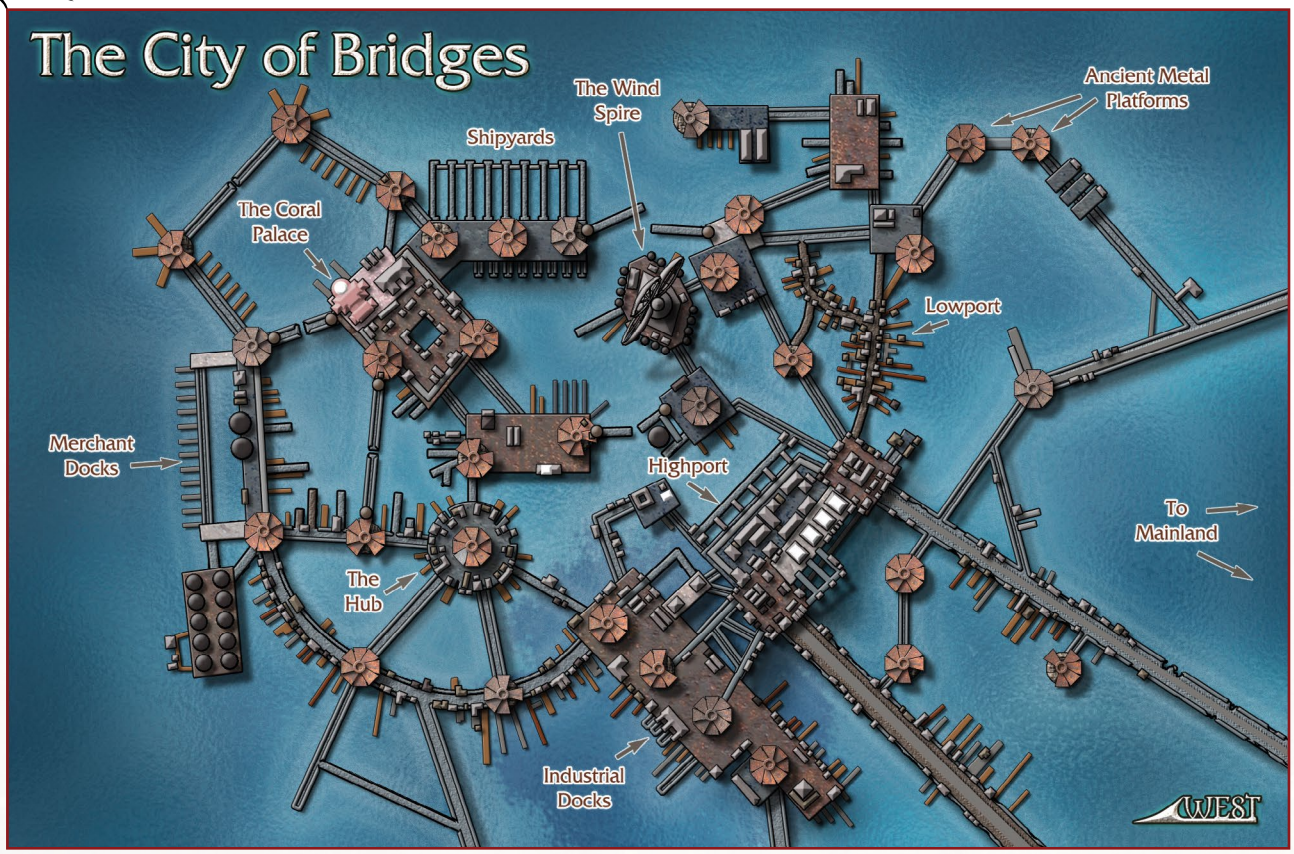
The Coral Palace is not actually made of coral, although large portions of the building are covered with so much coral that a visitor might believe it to be true. The palace takes up most of

GHAN
Ruler: King Laird
Population: 1,000,000
Capital: The City of Bridges

King Laird: *level 5, all sailing-related tasks and seeing through deception as level 6*

Gallen: *level 2*

Aneen, page 225



Mayor Farond: *level 6; health 24; Armor 6; inflicts 10 points of damage at long range*

one platform where the king's personal ships dock. From here, King Laird rules over Ghan and his merchant fleet. Rumors say that he is preparing a secret expedition of large craft to sail from the city into the western open sea. With some of the best sea maps in the world at his disposal, Laird knows that no major landmass lies in that direction, but he has placed his faith in talk of a sizable island chain that exists leagues to the west, farther than any recorded voyage has traveled. Supposedly, these islands are inhabited and have exotic goods, interesting lore, numenera, and other commodities that would be valuable to the Steadfast—assuming that a shipping route can be established.

OMAR

Omar is a large mining town. Its people burrowed into the earth and found a wealth of metal in the form of a vast, buried installation or numenera vehicle. (No one has yet determined exactly what they discovered below the ground.) Through processes kept secret, the miners cut away large sections of otherwise unknown metal from the ancient structure and bring it to the surface, where it can be melted down—with great effort—and reforged into anything a talented smith desires. This metal, known as omaroa or azure steel, is highly sought for its durability and strength.

As with many mining towns, Omar is a rough and violent place. Its citizens live short, angry lives. The ruler, Mayor Farond, is as tough as the people in her town. According to many, she maintains much of the order herself, thanks to her suit of nigh-impenetrable armor and its arsenal of built-in devastating numenera weapons.



There is a mysterious, continuous deafening noise near Keford. Inexplicably, truly blind people cannot hear it. A band of blind woodsmen works in the area.

THE SCARRED MONOLITHS

Floating high above the gallen herds of Ghan, massive humanoid statues drift slowly across the sky. Once, these gigantic objects were enormous war machines. Now they're just curiosities—except, perhaps, to brave explorers who might be able to reach them and find a way inside. Never in memory have the machines done anything but float about the hills, never drifting far from their starting points.

KEFORD

Keford is a lumber town. Ships sail Ryness Bay to reach it and leave laden with some of the Steadfast's finest wood. The lumberjacks of Keford frequently cross the border into Navarene, and while that kingdom has no efficient way to watch that stretch of its boundary—the woods are too dense—Navarene soldiers in the area find that those coming from Ghan are likely to attack them on sight just on principle.

Keford has a wooden palisade. About 4,000 people call the place home, although at any given time there are another 500 or so sailors in town.

JASTON

The 8,000 residents of the walled town of Jaston devote themselves mainly to agriculture in some fashion; granaries, slaughterhouses, farm implements, animal training, and a variety of similar jobs keep them busy. The people are a no-nonsense, practical folk who are more distrustful of Nanos and the numenera than are others in most similar-sized communities.

About 12 miles (19 km) north of Jaston lies Deverlaush, a large village primarily inhabited by varjellen, one of the types of visitants. The varjellen of Deverlaush and the humans of Jaston coexist in relative peace without fully accepting each other into their communities. Still, it's not uncommon to see a small group of varjellen walking through Jaston and getting the occasional scowl or sidelong glance.

LEDON

Ledon, the city of sea merchants, is likely home to Ghan's wealthiest citizens. It has a population of 20,000 people, most of whom earn their living in a sea-related trade. The shipyards of Ledon are considered the best in the Steadfast, and the city is known for its finely made silken sails, accurate compasses and looking glasses, and virtually any other shipbuilding or sailing need.

The city's harbor is protected by a numenera device that transmits destructive signals through the water. An operator can use it to punch a hole in the hull of a single ship at the waterline, sinking the vessel. The device must recharge for one hour before it can be used again, but this is a well-guarded secret.

A man named Garibacus rules Ledon. He is old and not particularly wise, but he comes from a wealthy merchant family and has ties to many other influential clans and the merchant fleet itself.

Garibacus: *level 3*

The Sanctuary of the Eye: The Angulan Knights keep their headquarters in Ledon. Called the Sanctuary of the Eye, this cathedral-like building is where new members are beknighted in elaborate ceremonies. Tall watchtowers and intricate images in stained glass make the building quite distinctive.

Angulan Knights, page 217

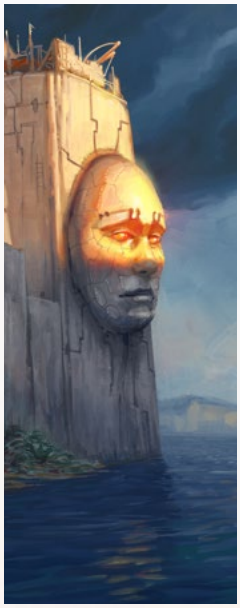
The knights spend most of their time alone on long missions and arduous quests, returning to the citadel on rare occasions. Since most knights only find other knights to be suitable companions, the citadel is home to more than just official ceremonies—friendly reunions and romantic liaisons abound upon a knight's return.

A handful of aged knights, all with the title Grand Knight, live and work full time in the Sanctuary. Most knights don't live to be too old, however, so their numbers are few.

THE MERCHANT FLEET

Ghan's merchant fleet is controlled directly by the king, who at heart is more a mariner than a ruler. The fleet has more than 200 vessels that travel up and down the Steadfast coast, trading goods and collecting money. The ships range in size from small coasters and cogs to multimasted caravels and carracks. Two 700-ton

Varjellen, page 394





GHAN HEARSAY

The Sacred Gallen: In a hillfolk village called Iera, the people believe that to lay the foundation for their new temple, they must plow the ground with a sacred white bull gallen. But the creature they were set to use has disappeared from their care, and they've offered a reward of 100 shins for its return.

Liquid Ghosts: The southern coast of Ghan is said to be haunted by ghosts, but the entities are actually the intellects and memories of people from the distant past that were loaded into storage that uses smart fluid housing. Some of the stored consciousnesses now wander the shoreline, often acting with a surprisingly destructive hostility. The only way to stop them permanently is to find the ancient facility where they're stored.

Festival: Omar has a yearly festival celebrating its founding. During this year's drunken revels, a group of thieves intends to use the celebration as a distraction so they can tunnel into the shin-house that stores the miners' wealth—boldly using the miners' own tools to do the job. The criminals are slyly looking for help. If they succeed, Mayor Farond will certainly put a price on their heads.

THE WEIRD OF GHAN

Man of Glass: A man made of glass wanders the rolling hills of Ghan, looking for something.

The Face of Ghan: In a ruin along the coast, a crumbling stone wall bears a large, vaguely human synth face in relief. If a creature with telepathy attempts to communicate with the face, it sometimes replies.

The Court of the Sphere: At seemingly random intervals, six old men and women gather in a run-down stone tower looking out over the sea. When they sit at a round, red table together, a mechanized sphere appears above the tower and transmits secrets into their minds.

hulks called the *Latecomer* and the *Iron Glove* are the flagships of the fleet.

Ghan ships suffer heavily from piracy, and many are plated in synth or light metals to ward off attacks. Some carry weaponry as well, and both flagships bear massive numenera armaments that keep them quite safe.

The sailors of the fleet are often called Sternmen, but despite the name, most of them are female. It's a fleet tradition to never leave dock with more men than women aboard. To do so is considered bad luck.

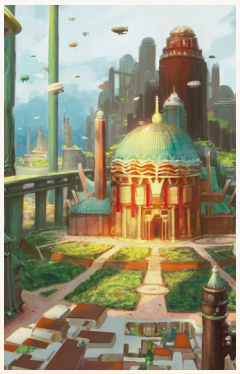
Typical Sternman: *level 3, sailing-related tasks as level 4*

DRAOLIS

DRAOLIS
Ruler: Council of Spheres
Population: 2,500,000
Capital: Qi

Draolis is the most populated land in the Steadfast and also one of the wealthiest. Its banner depicts six interwoven spheres, but most people refer to it as the Tiger Banner. Centuries ago, Draolis was home to a powerful queen who ruled the land with a firm hand. Her symbol was a roaring tiger, and her armies crushed all those around her. When her line died out, power in Draolis was seized by a council of wealthy plutocrats who didn't want another hereditary monarchy to take control. The Council of Spheres abolished the tiger symbology, but many people remember the tales from that time and long for that former glory.

Although the council lacks the flair of the tiger rulers of the past, Draolis has not abandoned its ways. The nation remains a military power, with might comparable to that of its chief rival, Navarene. In fact, the Order of Truth is the only thing that keeps these two countries from warring openly.



A storyteller in Qi says he keeps a pet dimension curled up in his cloak, which he warns will swallow anyone that threatens him.

QI

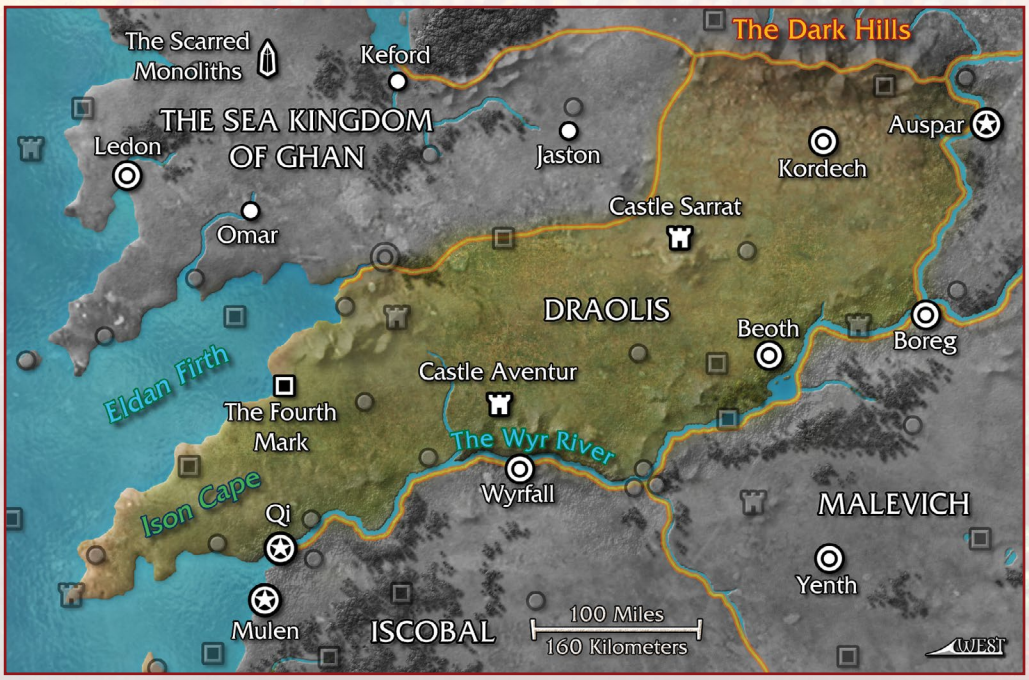
Qi is the largest city in the Steadfast. It is also the site of the Durkhal, home of the Order of Truth and the Amber Pope himself.

More than half a million people live in Qi, a city of spires and fantastically huge helium or hot air balloons and dirigibles. The common saying "Half of Qi is in the sky" is an exaggeration, but it feels accurate when you're there.

The Durkhal complex at the heart of Qi is almost a city unto itself—a vast sprawl of libraries, laboratories, warehouses, living quarters, and administrative buildings. At the center of the complex is the holy palace, serving as residence and office of the Amber Pope. More than a thousand people work and live within the Durkhal.

The people of Qi often travel by fashioned balloons and dirigibles, so there are multiple mooring platforms and high metal masts throughout the city. These aerial vehicles take passengers from place to place around Qi, to various outlying areas, and sometimes to ships moored well out into the harbor. They're rarely used for long-distance travel because—with a few exceptions that employ higher levels of ancient technology—the vehicles aren't capable of long journeys. Besides, most places outside of Qi don't offer the ability to moor or replenish what the airships need.

Qi has many large markets, in particular along the docks. The multilevel central market—well away from the water—is thought to offer one of the most expensive and elite shopping opportunities in the Steadfast. Here, all manner of goods can be bought and sold, with no luxury too exotic or fantastic for one of its shops.



LOOKING FOR

Amber Monolith, page 140
Obelisk of the Water God, page 140



Many of Qi's centralmost sections lie on multiple levels, with decorative bridges and raised walkways connecting the higher levels, and bright glowglobes illuminating the lower so that each level is equally lit and beautiful. Trees and flowering plants grow in well-tended plots and pots even in the most crowded areas of the city, including the sections that are dozens of feet above the ground. Larger parks and walled gardens are common as well. Neighborhoods, particularly in the central city, are often surrounded by walls to enclose the homes and their communal gardens. This practice can create urban rivalries and is quite unwelcoming to outsiders.

The people of Qi believe themselves to be at the center of the Steadfast, and they consider the Steadfast to be the center of the world. This arrogance is so prevalent that it's practically an assumption, and it stirs hatred for Qi in the hearts of nonresidents.

Although the city is elitist, not everyone in Qi is wealthy. On the contrary, those dwelling in the outer sections are often quite poor. They must contend with the difficult living conditions and the high crime rates.

Zhev: The elite peacekeeping force called the Zhev is composed of flying cylindrical automatons created by the Amber Pope more than a hundred years ago. The Zhev keep mostly to the central districts because they don't have the numbers to patrol Qi in its entirety. The city has grown in the past hundred years, and while the rulers have the ability to repair the existing Zhev, they lack the materials and skill to create new ones.

The Marish Clan: Dietha Marish is the head of a large, family-based criminal organization that runs much of the illegal activity in Qi. These transgressions consist mainly of robbery, smuggling, and buying and selling stolen goods, but murder by contract also falls within their purview. Dietha's family, called the Marish Clan by most people, is filled with some of the city's most dangerous individuals.

The Mayor: Marvyr Rann is the mayor of Qi, appointed by the Council of Spheres. He lives in a dirigible and never trods on the earth, believing that if he does, he will sicken and die. Rann is a frail and likely insane old man surrounded at all times by a cadre of nearly naked young men and women who attend to his every capricious whim. Fortunately for Qi, the city virtually runs itself, and the Amber Pope has the money, manpower, and influence to accomplish whatever needs to be done.

Dietha Marish: *level 4, all tasks related to seeing through guile and trickery as level 7*

Marvyr Rann: *level 2*

Zhev, page 262

Amber Pope, page 133

LOOKING FOR

City of Bridges, page 141
Gallen, page 141
Ghan, page 141

CASTLE SARRAT

Castle Sarrat has claimed the life of at least one member of the Horges family by growing in an inopportune time and place. Visitors would be wise to watch their step.

Seventy years ago, the wealthy, powerful Horges family claimed an ancient structure as their own and made it their home. The Horges found most of the building empty, but it had devices that could create edible food for hundreds of people at a time, enough to support not just the family but their entire estate and large retinue of servants. Stranger still, once they moved into their new "castle," it began to grow. Increasing mainly in height, Castle Sarrat is now almost 600 feet (180 m) high and still growing. Walls, floors, support structures, and more develop at a rapid pace—the castle does not grow slowly but in fits and starts. In mere moments, a new chamber, hallway, or entire level appears.

Speculation is that the new portions of the castle are built through a process that converts the very air around the structure into metal, synth, and glass. However, no one knows how or why it's happening.

Naranial Horges: *level 5, attack and defense using his blade as level 7*

Naranial Horges, the head of the family, is a renowned swordsman. He is a quiet, imperious man with greying mutton chops and a bejeweled eye patch.

THE FOURTH MARK

Overlooking the crashing waves of Eldan Firth, the Fourth Mark resembles a gigantic upright axe or hammer. The narrow, towerlike base rises up 500 feet (150 m) or more, and the crescent-shaped top is 100 feet (30 m) across.

Entering the Fourth Mark is a simple matter. An open doorway at ground level provides access to a winding stair that leads up through the shaft to the top. However, there your progress ends, for no one has ever opened the smooth synth hatch that would provide entrance to the "head" of the tall structure. Dejected explorers have trudged back down and out after trying explosives, destructive rays, and all manner of cutting tools. None has so much as left a mark.

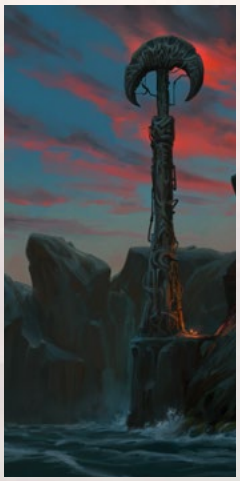
Guaral, a fisher in a nearby village, had this to say:

"That old eyesore gets its name from a legend my grandpappa told me. Folks from that time says there was, back then, more of 'em—four to be all exact. All of 'em standing watch over the firth there. Called 'em the four marks, like they's marked some special spot or some such. They also says that some folks a-came from across the sea and entered each of 'em, one at a time, and when they's done, each of them towers sunk into the sea. But when they got to the last one, somethin' scared 'em outta there. They left it, and there it stands still today."

Malegran: *level 7*

Sister Tevera: *level 3, attempting to influence others through speech as level 5*

Baraxis: *level 5; health 30; Armor 4*



BEOTH

Beoth was a holy city of self-proclaimed soothsayers and miracle workers, but their supposed prescience was not enough to warn them of the plague that struck a bit more than a year ago. In that short time, a third of the city's 14,000 people died or became ill enough to take to their beds.

Aeon Priests struggle to come up with a cure for the plague, so far to no avail. The people of Beoth have named it the "toothless bile" because one of the first symptoms is that the victim's teeth begin to fall out. By that point, however, it's far too late, and the victim is likely to die within a week.

Arch of Illness: Although they have no cure, the Aeon Priests in the city have fashioned a device they call the Arch of Illness, a cobbled, free-standing arch about 10 feet (3 m) across. It glows whenever someone with toothless bile passes through it. Newcomers routinely pass through the arch on their way in and out of the city, but some worried residents also use the arch to check their health every day.

PEOPLE OF INTEREST

Malegran, the ranking Aeon Priest in Beoth, focuses night and day on ending the plague. He is tall and relatively young, with an angular face. Aeon Priests were not common in Beoth before the coming of the illness, so he and his compatriots have taken up residence in what used to be the city's great gathering hall. For a year now, the hall has been used as a hospital.

Sister Tevera is a priestess of the so-called "Old Ways," also known as the cult of Nauz, the Stargod. The Stargod is a deity revered by the people here for hundreds of years, ever since a falling star crashed in Beoth and people claimed they saw a gigantic, human-looking spirit rise from the crater. Now the temple of the Old Ways stands at the site of the holy crater.

When the mayor of the city died three months ago with no apparent successor, many looked to Sister Tevera to lead them. Although she is an excellent speaker, Tevera doesn't have the experience to run Beoth. She also opposes the Aeon Priests at every turn, making their work more difficult.

Sister Tevera's bodyguard and henchman Baraxis is an interesting sight. A metallic sheen covers his skin, with dull matte webs interlacing at the extremities. Faint cross-hatching can be seen even across his irises and pupils. The metal flesh has been a part of Baraxis since birth—it's an organic feature of mysterious origin.

DRAOLIS HEARSAY

Deadly Sisters: A pair of beautiful sisters named Gaera and Funae work as master thieves, one posing as a noblewoman and the other as her servant. They use this ruse to gain entrance to virtually any location. Not merely interested in wealth or the numenera, they murder their victims and remove the spinal columns. Why do they take the spines, and how can the sisters be stopped?

Insect Plague: A great many dark green insects have appeared in Kordech, and no one has seen their like before. These strange insects feed on metal, causing a lot of damage. The Aeon Priests believe they have a solution, but it requires a wide variety of rare parts for an elaborate machine whose radiation will drive off the pests.

Implanted Memories: Retton Balen was an explorer who fell into a vat of strange material in an ages-lost laboratory. His entire right arm is now a biomechanical construct, and wormlike tendrils thread through his body, always growing and spreading. Retton also claims to have gained memories that are not his own, and he seeks help in understanding them—or perhaps help in finding a remedy for his unique affliction in the laboratory where he first fell victim.

THE WEIRD OF DRAOLIS

Mind Slaves: A wealthy merchant rides across the land in a massive wagon pulled by margr slaves, kept in line by a powerful mind-influencing device.

Brain Devourer: West of Beoth lies a huge, towerlike machine. If anyone comes close, it sprouts bladed tentacles that lop off heads and siphon out brains.

Strange Steed: A mighty Glaive, her scarred face covered in a half-mask of gold, rides across the land on a strange creature. She calls it a "horse" and claims to have unfrozen the beast from an ancient tomb.

KORDECH

The stench of cattle flesh and cattle dung greets you long before you enter the tall stone wall that surrounds Kordech. As a traveler, you'd probably prefer to pass the city by, but the 7,000-person town is the last refuge for leagues on a road through a dangerous wilderness called the Dark Hills.

Kordech is filled with sales pens, breeding pens, and slaughterhouses for shiul—massive creatures with four wide horns and valuable meat. The cattle see their beginning and end in Kordech, but in between they spend their lives grazing in tended herds in the surrounding lands (where they are preyed upon by broken hounds and other predators, as well as bandits). Within a 10-mile (16 km) radius around the city, no fewer than twenty-six defensible wooden palisades have been erected near or around small villages to protect the shiul herds at night.

These dangers also explain why the city possesses such a high, well-constructed wall that girds mostly crude wooden buildings, animal pens and corrals, and structures cobbled of found sheets of metal or synth, all connected by muddy, dung-filled streets.

The Tower of the Aulifex: At the center of this dirty, ramshackle cattle town rises a curious structure. A soaring metal walkway curves up toward the glowing entrance to what appears to be a metal tower hundreds of feet high. Strange winglike crests are positioned asymmetrically along the exterior. This is the Tower of the Aulifex.

The Aulifex is the ruler of Kordech. He claims no other name and refers to himself as a sorcerer. In truth, the tower is an artifact of the prior worlds, and the Aulifex has mastered enough of its secrets that he commands a great many powers, including healing grievous wounds, lashing out at enemies with fire, and observing faraway locales.

CASTLE AVENTUR

In the central part of the kingdom lies the unassuming castle of Anatrea, a noblewoman who has traceries of light running just beneath her skin in elaborate patterns. Despite her skill as a warrior, Anatrea has a fascination with the numenera and dreams of one day fusing herself entirely with a machine, ascending to a type of godhood, as she believes the people of past aeons once did. To this end, she hosts scholars and Nanos performing experiments to delve into numenera secrets. Her castle, Aventur, hides a network of secret underground laboratories and workshops for a variety of projects.

The Windriders: The two most successful scholar/technicians are Thereni and Poulla. They have mastered the process of creating self-propelled gliders called windriders—extremely fast, one-person flying vehicles that are challenging to ride and control.

The Draolis military already uses windriders as scouts, but General Demiric hopes to employ them in great numbers one day, attacking foes from above in waves. Thereni

Retton Balen: *level 6*

Margr, page 240

Broken hound, page 226

The Aulifex: *level 6; has a wide variety of powers while in the tower; calls on devices within the tower walls to inflict 12 points of damage with fiery blasts at long range*



Anatrea: *level 5; Armor 4*

Thereni and Poulla: *level 3, all understanding numenera as level 6*

General Demiric: *level 5, level 6 when working in conjunction with at least two other military members*

LOOKING FOR

Ledon, page 143



A group of explorers recently discovered and activated a device that created a permanent passage called the Great Reach. It allows instantaneous travel from Thaemor to the faraway land of Corao, along the northeastern seaboard.



and Poulla don't have the means to produce windriders in such quantities; some of the parts and materials required are rare.

A windrider can be purchased for 8,000 shins, but demand is high, and the waiting list is long. Anatrea and her personal guard ensure that no one attempts to take advantage of the inventors under her protection.

THAEMOR

One of the smaller and least prosperous kingdoms in the Steadfast, Thaemor is often overshadowed by its neighbors. In fact, the other kingdoms consider it something of a joke.

That wasn't always so. Bordered by two rivers and a mountain, Thaemor was once an unnamed but very much desired piece of land, part of a three-way war between Navarene, Draolis, and Malevich. Each power wished to lay claim to the fertile triangle.

In the midst of the struggle, one man took it upon himself to claim the place he later named Thaemor. Goldguard Landon was a fearsome warrior who knew everything about how to defend a region from the onslaught of multiple kingdoms but absolutely nothing about running a kingdom himself. Under Landon's rule, Thaemor's borders were always well protected and cared for, even from the mightiest foes, but the same could not be said for the people and places within.

After Landon's passing, his son Kaldon took hold of Thaemor and ran it (if you could call it such) much as his father had. He sired a number of children, but none of his heirs survived, and when he died, a man named Holiva the First took office in the Precipice, although no one can quite remember where Holiva came from or what skills qualified him to rule.

Today, the way in which other kingdoms look down on Thaemor is a source of pain and embarrassment for Holiva, for he believes that his kingdom could be a land of great power and opportunity if only others could see what he sees.

Unfortunately, what he sees is very little that is real or true. Although Thaemor is a region of deeply buried riches, clear waters, and fertile lands that have not yet come to fruition, Holiva sees none of that. He doesn't see the intelligent, hardworking people or their potential to be great leaders, teachers, warriors, and scholars.

Instead, everything Holiva sees is viewed through the shadowy lens of his vizier, the Hand of Melch, and the Hand urges him toward only one thing: the restoration of the shadow herd.

"The shadow herd," the Hand tells him, "is a group of dark, formless creatures, born of a wicked mind older than the kingdom itself. Free them, and it is they, *they*, who will help Thaemor become what it once was. They who will help the whole of the Steadfast—nay, the whole of the *world* kneel before Thaemor's feet and crown your head with glory."

Holiva believes what the Hand tells him. There's only one problem: the hand that Holiva listens to is his own. The man spends his waking hours talking with his own body part in the form of a shadow puppet. He mostly stays awake through the night, when glowglobes provide the most clearly defined shadow puppet and thus when he believes he can hear the advice of his vizier most truly.

THAEMOR

Ruler: Holiva the First

Population: 900,000

Capital: Auspar

The "glimmers" that people in the Ninth World sometimes experience—strange, random glimpses of images or information that may come from the all-pervasive datasphere—seem to be somewhat more common in northern Thaemor.

LOOKING FOR

Draolis, page 144
Durkhal, page 144
Qi, page 144

While Holiva pools all of his country's resources toward the single purpose of reviving the shadow herd, the people of the land work deftly and silently beneath his clouded gaze. After having successive rulers with little to no skill in leadership, the people of Thaemor have learned to become self-sufficient.

Of course, no one whispers that Holiva the First might have lost his sanity long ago—that would be treason. And no one whispers of the ancient time when the shadow herd thundered across all the lands tucked in the shade of the Black Riage—that would be superstition.

AUSPAR

Auspar, located on the Wyr River, is the capital of Thaemor. What the city lacks in population—only 20,000 of the kingdom's inhabitants live within its borders—it makes up for in height. Some call Auspar the City of Needles, for everywhere its skies are marked with tall, thin structures: buildings, columns, banner poles, public works of art, and more. Residents stretch long, slender cables from their roofs to the highest edges of the Dark Hills, hoping to join the fray.

They're not after any form of god, nor the sky and whatever might lie beyond it. It's just that the residents of Auspar feel a deep kin with their kingdom and believe that as everyone looks down on them, so too should they return the favor. On any given day, you'll find residents climbing the needlelike structures, using ladders or antigravity belts or pneumatic devices, and finding or building perches from which they can literally look down on the kingdoms around them.

The Precipice is the tallest and thinnest building in Auspar. It begins as a rectangle large enough to encompass the leader's personal home and ruling offices, and it narrows as it rises, becoming more and more useless as the structure grow thinner and thinner. Every year, Holiva pays someone to add another length to the top of the Precipice. These days, it's dangerous work, and most who take the job know that it's a suicide mission. Holiva doesn't climb the Precipice (or any of the other needles of Auspar) himself and hasn't for years.

JYREK

Designed and commissioned by Kaldon to keep his wife, eleven sons, and four daughters safe from any future wars so that his legacy might live on, Jyrek is as much a fortress as it is a city. Today, it houses around 30,000 people, but it was originally built to hold just sixteen. With its triple walls (one of redstone, one of limnelwood, and one of electrified synth), interconnected walkways between buildings, and guard towers at every corner of the city, Jyrek might be one of the best-protected places in the Steadfast.

And that doesn't take into consideration the city's most unusual defense mechanism: a floating, self-contained structure tethered in the center of Jyrek. This egg-shaped structure, called the Eyren, was also commissioned by Kaldon. He brought in as many numenera experts as he could find and had them design a structure that would support up to twenty people for two months, providing food, shelter, recycled air, and, once the tethers were cut, an escape route from whatever war might be raging on the ground. It took the experts more than ten years to build such a machine, and by the time it was finished, Kaldon's children were teenagers disgruntled at being stuck inside a single city because of their father's paranoia. But in the end, he had his egg.

Jyrek turned out to be an expensive waste of time and money. Kaldon's heirs used the city as their personal playground, but it didn't protect them from anything. Although no wars were waged during their time there, another danger presented itself—the Eyren caught a virus from Kaldon's youngest daughter, Ampel. Believing this new thing to be an inherent part of a human's physiology, the Eyren duplicated the virus and spread it to the other children. Within six weeks, all of Kaldon's children were dead and his wife incapacitated. The Eyren was sealed off, and a law was made prohibiting anyone from entering the structure. The city gates were left open out of respect for the dead. Although Kaldon ruled for nearly twenty more years before his death, he never returned to Jyrek.

Today, the city has all but forgotten its original roles as protector and murderer of Kaldon's dreams of the future. Although the Eyren still sits tethered above the center of Jyrek, the residents barely notice it. It has become just another part of the history with which they live.

A Nano named Gaera in Jyrek could build a wide variety of detonations (page 277), but she died in an explosion in her lab. Her daughter sells the hundreds of detonations she left behind in a well-guarded shop.



Around the age of two, all children in the city of Stirc begin to have the same imaginary friend. Her name is Olpenda.

LOOKING FOR
Zhev, page 145



MALEVICH

Ruler: King Yorvic (Regent Ellabon)

Population: 1,200,000

Capital: Thriest

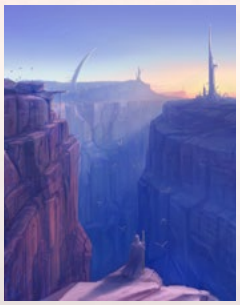
Regent Ellabon: *level 4, seeing through deception and all types of interactions as level 5*



The Sarracenians are a group of scholars who study and worship unique plants (see page 220).

Abhuman, page 13

Polele the Bandit King: *level 7, attack and defense (and damage) as level 9; Armor 3*



LOOKING FOR

Beoth, page 146
Castle Sarrat, page 146
Malegran, page 146
Sister Tevera, page 146

THAEMOR HEARSAY

Sanctimonious Saviors: A group of people calling themselves the Saviors have started preaching in the streets of Jyrek. Dressed in deep purple and standing in a circle beneath the Eyren, they tell tales of deadly creatures growing inside the structure, creatures that will soon tear apart the egg and spill across the land. They promise that those who join the Saviors will be redeemed, but they won't reveal how until you become a member of their order.

Pitcher Plants: Dotted along the eastern bank of the River Septim, a new species of plant has taken root. These pitcher plants grow leafy traps that are big enough to catch large birds, rodents, and fish. Chi Brogs, a known member of the Sarracenians, has been studying the new plants and believes them to be part of a plot to infiltrate Thaemor, but he can't discover any additional information on his own.

Wild Beasts: At night, residents of the small village of Aagar hear what sounds like a pack of wild animals or machines running and clanking through the streets. Those who dare to venture outside see nothing abnormal, but in the morning, there are usually signs of carnage. Two townspeople have been killed so far, their bodies looking as though they were attacked by mechanical claws. The village has implemented a curfew, but the frightened residents are at a loss.

THE WEIRD OF THAEMOR

Up and Away: Every morning, shortly after dawn, a round blue orb can be seen rising from where the Wyr River comes down off the mountain. The orb doesn't seem to come out of the water, and no one has been able to capture it—or even verify that it's the same orb every day.

The Black Head: At the edge of the Black Riage, east of Jyrek, an object that resembles a head is carved out of the ebony mountain. It's nearly as tall as a man and features odd protrusions of different glasslike materials that light up in various patterns.

Man of the Mountain: In a crook of the Black Riage nearly 100 feet (30 m) up lives a man who has built a nest-like shelter. He never seems to come down from the mountain. Birds and other kinds of flying creatures bring him food and various objects. They especially like eyeballs and will not hesitate to attempt to take one from someone who's still using it.

MALEVICH

Known for bleak landscapes and people tested by hardship, Malevich's tale is one of war and would-be conquest. Yet after crushing defeats in decades past, its warlords are now quiet. Yorvic, the current king of Malevich, is no bloodthirsty despot, as was true in previous generations. He is, in fact, a three-year-old boy. His cousin Ellabon serves as regent and likely will continue in that role until young Yorvic passes through the ritual of second birth at age thirteen.

Numerous villages dot the landscape of Malevich. These farm communities are usually small and poor, little more than thatch-roofed huts gathered in defensive circles around a communal pen for the shaggy goats they tend. Mud-stained boots walk down rough roads infrequently—the folk of this dark land remain in their isolated villages if possible. They bar the doors at night and pray to vindictive yet seemingly indifferent gods.

Their fear is not misplaced. Malevich is threatened at all times by bands of abhumans and clans of bandits. The former roam in small unorganized groups, while the latter, under the command of the Bandit King, Polele, are frighteningly unified and organized. Many of Polele's warriors are veterans of Malevich's past wars, aged men with few skills that don't involve blades and blood. Rumor has it that the bandit clans have offered to do mercenary work for foreign kings in other lands. Whether this is good or bad for Malevich—if it's true at all—is yet to be determined.

Malevich nobles ride in tall, armored chariots pulled by abhuman and human slaves. They own what little wealth the kingdom has, while the peasantry lives on the edge of starvation.

A fantastically huge rift known as the Voil Chasm serves as the country's southern border. This rent in the earth is 25 miles (40 km) wide in places, but it narrows as it descends. Throughout most of its western reaches, the chasm is about 1 mile (1.5 km) deep. However, it has never been fully explored, and although the deepest point yet reached is more than 10 miles (16 km) below the surface, the chasm is known to cut far deeper in places.

Some call the Voil Chasm by its older name, the Earthwound. Legends say that it was created when the inhabitants of the prior aeon waged war with invaders from another world. The invaders used a weapon of untold power, destroying multiple cities of significant size and influence in an instant. A few people speculate that these foes tried to destroy the entire planet by drilling deep into the world's core, like an

assassin attempting to stab his victim in the heart. If true, the attempt obviously failed, but it suggests that the Voil Chasm might be deeper than most thought possible.

The chasm divides Malevich and the Pytharon Empire. Even though both lands have dreamed of conquest, the gulf between them has prevented them from coming into direct conflict.

STIRTHAL

The city of Stirthal was built atop the northern edge of the Voil Chasm. About 100,000 people live here, making it one of the largest cities in the Steadfast. Although much of it stretches across the flat expanse at the top of the cliff, some of the city extends down the side. Ancient structures protrude out of the chasm wall. Some are inhabited by the residents of Stirthal, and others are wide metal pipes and platforms that support dwellings and businesses of more recent construction. The most dramatic feature is a street that stretches out from the chasm wall about a thousand paces and then comes to a rather abrupt end. Other cliffside streets run parallel with the wall, connecting the far-jutting perpendicular extensions. The cliff-dwellings are the most prized structures in Stirthal, and thus they are the homes and businesses of the wealthy and elite, of which the city has more than its share.

The ruler of Stirthal is a woman who takes the title of Governor. Her name is Marrizek and she claims to rule over not just Stirthal, but the entirety of the Voil Chasm, in the name of King Yorvic. Quick to action (and to anger), Marrizek is an older woman, bold, brash, and charismatic. Her loyal city guards are called the Thyrn. In their gold and black armor, each member of the well-trained force wields two swords, one inscribed with the word "JUSTICE" and the other with "MERCY." The Thyrn are harsh, violent, and oppressive, and a common joke in Stirthal is that they use the first blade incorrectly and the second rarely, if ever.

The current regent of Malevich, Ellabon, lives in Stirthal, despite the fact that the traditional capital is Thriest. The boy-king dwells there with her.

A creature named Quanon dwells in the lower portions of Stirthal. Roughly humanoid, he has undergone so many machine enhancements and biomechanical replacements that it's hard to imagine what he looked like originally—or if he even started out human. Quanon might be one of the Ninth World's foremost experts on energy sources and power generation. His workshop holds a battery or power pack for any device, and his experiments on transmitting power wirelessly (more accurately, tapping into a field of "free power" he discovered that seems to permeate the Ninth World) mean that he can almost certainly recharge any depowered or expended device brought to him. His prices, however, are steep. Even the simplest cell for the least significant device is likely 100 shins or more. Batteries that are rare or more potent might be more in the range of 10,000 shins, a sum many princes and kings could not easily afford. Quanon accepts barter from those who can't pay, as he loves to collect intriguing devices for his experiments.



NEVERLOST

Neverlost is a large castle and surrounding town that stands above the Jabbunaran Fields at the heart of the kingdom. The town has fewer than a thousand farmers and herders, and the castle is the hereditary home of Duke Theomal and his clan. In times of great need, thousands of people have taken shelter behind the castle walls for weeks or months, and true to its name, the castle has never fallen. The duke's family keeps the offer of sanctuary open, although it always carries an unspoken price. Each time Neverlost is used as a refuge, the family grows more powerful and wealthy.

THRIEST

Thriest lies on the River Septim. It's the official capital of Malevich, but the royal palace here sits empty because the regent, Ellabon, rules from Stirthal, the child-king at her side. Crumbling buildings of grey stone line the streets of Thriest, and, like the palace, many are abandoned. However, the river market quarter still thrives, and barges laden with trade goods fill the River Septim. A total of 25,000 people dwell in Thriest, about half the number of the former population.

Ellabon directly rules the city as well as the kingdom at large, but her advisor, Counselor Rashik, tends to matters that involve only Thriest.



Marrizek: *level 3, all types of interactions as level 6; force-field armband provides Armor 3*

Duke Theomal: *level 4; Armor 2*

Typical Thyrn: *level 4; Armor 3; makes two sword attacks in one action*

Quanon: *level 6, understanding numenera and crafting as level 7; Armor 3*

Counselor Rashik: *level 3, all types of knowledge and interaction as level 4*

The bodies of a dead philethis and an equally deceased ravage bear, fused together, were discovered east of Neverlost not long ago.

Philethis, page 247

Ravage bear, page 249

A good-natured fellow, Rashik merely smiles his grandfatherly smile when someone says that he is the regent of the regent. A well-educated man, he would like to see Thriest become a center of learning—something the people of Malevich have never really had. For the moment, however, this goal is but a dream as his city struggles to keep from collapsing and the folk of the regions around Thriest fight just to survive.

BOREG

Boreg sits on the southern banks of the mighty Wyr. Fishers and merchants who use the river make up a significant portion of the city's 12,000 people.

Overlooking both the city and the river, high atop the Red Bluffs, is Castle Dval, home of Lady Vount. This noble is frequently known as the Queen of the River Pirates, or sometimes the Robber Baroness. She wields her scepter, an infamous numenera artifact known as the Despoiler, which she uses to fuse the bodies of men with dangerous river fish to craft and command an army that blocks travel down the Wyr for those who don't pay her exorbitant tolls. The council in Draolis threatens to take action against Lady Vount if the regent of Malevich does not stop her depredations, but so far no one on either side of the Wyr has moved against her.

Lady Vount: *level 5, defense as level 7; Armor 4; wields the Despoiler (a level 8 artifact that permanently transforms anyone within short range of the river into an amphibious creature that willingly serves her)*

South of Boreg stands an ancient edifice called the Wall of Erenyn. This curved metal wall is 3 feet (1 m) thick, reaches a height of 15 feet (5 m), and stretches more than 100 feet (30 m) in length. It shimmers with a cascade of colors and shapes. Occasionally, the wall shows comprehensible imagery, and many believe that it foretells the future, prophesies, or conveys vital secrets to those who need to know. Spending too long in the vicinity of the wall can make people ill, sometimes to the point of death, so visits are usually short.

Shiul, page 147

LOOKING FOR

Thaemor, page 148
Windrider, page 148

YENTH

Yenth has a population of 14,000, and it's a trade city because it sits on a unique border. Yenth is built around a numenera complex from aeons past that houses a large extradimensional portal. Explorers and scholars reactivated the portal thirteen years ago and discovered a parallel universe on the other side—a world very different from the Ninth World, yet similar in certain ways. Weird landscapes and odd flora and fauna fill the land on the other side of the gate, but humans can survive there. In fact, it's home to small cloisters of humans—or creatures so akin to humans that they're mostly indistinguishable. However, their motivations and outlook are alien; even when the difficult language barriers are overcome, it's hard for Ninth Worlders to truly understand them. Still, the people of Yenth have established trade with the ultraterrestrials and call their world "New Yenth." The ultraterrestrials desire odd things—plants, animals, and substances fairly common in the Ninth World. In trade, they offer unique devices. Most of these items seem to hold little value other than as oddities.

The portal to New Yenth is difficult and complicated to use, and as far as anyone understands, it can be opened only from this side. But some people still fear that

MALEVICH HEARSAY

Disgruntled Warrior: An aging warlord named Gargarth seeks to instigate a new conflict that will restore his land to its former glory by spreading tales of Navarene invasion. He has gained a small but growing following of warmongers who are little more than a rowdy rabble that causes trouble.

Glowing Pyramid: At night, atop a remote outcropping of rock, you can see a glowing pyramid that's five times the height of a man but only a third as wide. During the day, the pyramid cannot be found. Rumor says it's a powerful energy source that will grant great strength and vitality to anyone who touches it.

Stolen Grain: A village called Brusch had a good harvest this year, but all the grain disappeared from the granary. A young eyewitness said that a hole opened in the air, drew all the grain into it, and then disappeared again. The people of Brusch probably won't survive the winter without that grain.

THE WEIRD OF MALEVICH

The Cloud Machine: A cart pulled by a pair of shiul, driven by two very short, very old men, holds a cumbersome device. The machine chugs and spews forth steam and smoke that appears to affect the weather.

Frozen in Crystal: Nestled in the mountains to the east is a massive shard of crystal, 30 feet (9 m) high and 12 feet (4 m) across. A woman in a strange dress is embedded in its center.

The Fungal Pool: An isolated pond near the center of the land is the home of a huge fungal organism. It creates pseudopods that grab prey and draw them in to be devoured.

Known for bleak landscapes and people tested by hardship, Malevich's tale is one of war and would-be conquest.

ultraterrestrials have infiltrated Yenth, posing as Ninth World humans for a mysterious purpose. Others believe that the ultraterrestrials are the descendants of long-lost travelers and explorers from Earth who now just want to come home.

Whether or not the rumors of large-scale infiltration are true, at least one person from the other side hides amid the humans of Yenth. The ultraterrestrial Nariiv secretly dwells in the city, posing as the owner of a leatherworking shop. He is a refugee from the parallel universe, hunted by his own kind for crimes committed (or, as he claims, allegedly committed) in his own world. Nariiv is a skilled warrior and a master of various weapons and combat styles, many never before seen in the Ninth World.



Nariiv: *level 6, all combat actions as level 7; health 25*

ISCOBAL

Calm and serene, you will find no place more lovely than the land of Iscobal, jewel of the Steadfast, I can assure you of that. The goodly king of Iscobal dwells in Mulen, a great coastal city whose glass towers glimmer equally in the light of both sun and moon. Beyond its walls, gentle farmers tend crops of golden wheat. The rivers teem with fish and the woods with game. Noble knights watch over the people of fair Iscobal, whose roads are safe and every village and town happy and content. Blessed by all the gods unseen, Iscobal is a paradise on Earth.

—The Journals of Sir Fabithan of Mulen (when this passage was written, seventy-five years ago, it may have been somewhat true)

Iscobal is a land tearing itself apart from within. Internal politics keep the nation focused on itself rather than on the dangers of the expansionist kingdoms at its borders. The palace intrigues involve the royal family, led by King Noren tiKalloban. Noren's father, Rabbar tiKalloban, seized the throne about forty years ago from Queen Whenith Sarromere, whom most believed unfit to rule. The deposed queen died in exile in the land of Ancuan. Now, her sons Bren and Kor Sarromere want the land back in the name of their house. To this end, they work against the king, both openly and in secret.

Just a year ago, an attempt on King Noren's life left him with one eye and one arm. Only the healing power of the kingdom's numenera stockpile saved his life. No proof could link the assassination attempt to the Sarromere brothers, but few in the kingdom have any doubts on the matter. Queen Thera has taken it upon herself to organize the kingdom's secretive Masked Legion to combat the Sarromere family in the shadows even as her husband opposes them in court.

During her strange reign, Queen Whenith Sarromere had become convinced that by using a variety of numenera secrets, she could harness the power of dreams to control the minds of all who might oppose her, inside and outside her borders. Eventually, she gave up on this scheme, but only because she began to believe that within dreams lay an entirely different realm that she could rule instead of the corporeal land of Iscobal. With each capricious and bizarre idea she had about sleep or dreams, she issued rewards to explorers who scoured the Ninth World for devices and knowledge related to those topics. She commanded her scholars and Nanos to experiment with the sciences they understood to make her dreams—literally—into reality.

The people of Iscobal are farmers and fishers. The former raise wheat, beans, and cotton, as well as tend orchards of orange billam fruit. The latter use small round boats called skitters to travel up and down the coast and down the mighty Wyr River.

Iscobal is also known for its abundant game. Hunters provide a great deal of fowl and venison to feed the population.

ISCOBAL
Ruler: King Noren tiKalloban
Population: 1,000,000
Capital: Mulen

King Noren tiKalloban: *level 7, all combat actions as level 4*

LOOKING FOR
Auspar, page 149



MULEN

Mulen serves as the capital of Iscobal. It has a population of slightly less than 100,000, and its towers of glass looking out over the western sea are the subject of song and poem. The greatest structure amid all the remarkable buildings is the royal palace, Vitri House. Around it stretches a fantastic park the size of a small city, tended by more than a hundred gardeners.

Mulen's Grand Theater stands as a testament to the city's commitment to art and culture in a world that often ignores both in the name of struggle and survival. Today, however, courtly intrigues make theater attendance a risky proposition for many nobles allied with one faction or another, as the theater has become a favored place for covert meetings, duplicitous dealings, and assassinations.

Perhaps appropriately, Mulen's beautiful streets and towers conceal a vast undercity. Catacombs, secret passages, tombs, and sewers form a network of tunnels and subterranean chambers. This underground world is the home of thieves, beggars, escaped slaves, and inhuman creatures.

The Cold Grasp: Both above and below the ground, Mulen hides more than a few dark secrets. The Cold Grasp, perhaps the most infamous guild of assassins and thieves in the Steadfast, uses the city as its headquarters. The leader of the Cold Grasp, a woman named Hedra, is known for a strange affinity for, and mastery of, serpents. Her enemies or targets might find themselves sleeping in a bed of deadly crux vipers or discover a tiny but extraordinarily lethal red asp hidden in their soup.

The secret police force known as the Masked Legion operates in the shadows, opposing the Sarromere family's covert attempts to undermine the royal family's control of Iscobal. In this capacity, they also run afoul of the Cold Grasp and other sinister elements of the city.

Harcorth Munn: *level 3*

Narla Deshu: *level 5, numenera devices involving sleep or dreaming as level 7*

Typical Cold Grasp member: *level 4, all sneaking or subterfuge actions as level 5*

Hedra: *level 6, using serpents or poison as level 8*

Yellow swarm, page 260

Typical Masked Legion member: *level 3, all combat actions as level 4*

Jallacor: *level 5; telepathy and telekinesis within long range; observe and overhear at any location within a mile; find a specific individual within 10 miles (16 km)*

LOOKING FOR
Malevich, page 150



DYNAFEL

Dynafel is known for its unique spun cotton cloth (named after the city) as well as other textiles, fabrics, and couture. Nearly 60,000 people live in the walled city, which has relatively simple wooden structures and narrow streets.

The mayor, Harcorth Munn, is a rotund man who never goes anywhere without his entourage and his mechanical warder pet. Well liked and well known, the mayor is no stranger to Dynafel's bars, gambling dens, and brothels.

The Dreaming Reliquary: The city of Dynafel is home to the Dreaming Reliquary, where Aeon Priests keep—and continue to research—the remnants of the prior queen's obsession with dreams. Devices that implant dreams, transmit dreams, and spy upon dreams are on hand along with even stranger things, even if Queen Whenith's scholars were never able to fulfill her desires of using dreams to control reality or tap into other realities altogether.

Chief among the experts at the Dreaming Reliquary is an Aeon Priest named Narla Deshu. She tells anyone who cares to ask that while the queen's goals were childish, her support of numenera research and experimentation is greatly missed. Narla's own work has become political in nature, and many claim that its continued existence is a show of support for House Sarromere. Narla, however, has no allegiances other than her devotion to the Order of Truth; she simply wants the government of Iscobal to continue funding her research.

Of late, the city of Dynafel has suffered attacks by clouds of the yellow swarm. The city's stone wall cannot protect against the swarms, and the city guard has little appropriate weaponry to combat the menace.

WYRFALL

Wyrfall lies along the Wyr River. This multitiered city is built amid a series of waterfalls where the Wyr cascades through Aeres Canyon. The people of Iscobal associate the river with the divine water spirits, and Wyrfall is the central focus of this religion. It's a holy locale where pilgrims gather to have pains healed and futures foretold, for the Wyr spirits flow backward in time, bringing knowledge and life-giving energies.

The Order of Truth has a particular disdain for Wyrfall and the superstition-based beliefs of its people. There are no Aeon Priests in the city, and the residents are content with that.

The Temple of the Unseen rises amid the waterfalls and rocky outcroppings of the city. Presided over by Jallacor, a priestess and seer, the temple provides a home for many self-

proclaimed oracles and prophets. Jallacor is an extremely tall, beautiful woman who may or may not be able to see the future and speak with river spirits, but she certainly commands a number of preternatural powers.

RACHAR

The city of Rachar grows in a ruin from a prior age, full of buildings of stone, steel, and glass that still stand. Some of the structures have proven too difficult to use, however. Some have no easy means of entry or egress. Others are unstable and threaten to collapse. A few house mysterious and sometimes dangerous machines that are best avoided. If necessary, the unused buildings are barricaded to keep people out.

Living amid machines and structures of the past, the city is no stranger to the weird. Talking statues, moving walls and streets, sudden energy fields that block doorways—Rachar is always filled with the unexpected.

A floating structure of metal and synth hovers high above the city. It may have been a vehicle once, but no one has discovered how to make it move. The city watch uses the structure as an observation platform to monitor Rachar and the surrounding lands for trouble. Reaching the platform usually involves the employ of a gravity-manipulating mutant named Baurn.

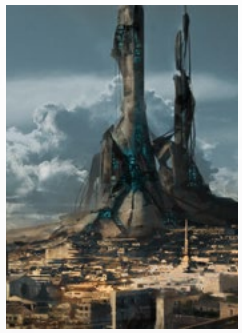
One of King Noren's most trusted friends rules Rachar. Terrhvyss is a man with a clawlike metal hand and an artificial eye, and he often hides these features as if embarrassed of them. A wise and capable leader, Terrhvyss covertly hoards the numenera in a vault in his own estate. The few people who know his secret believe that he stockpiles the devices because he loathes the artifacts of the past and wants to protect the world from the dangers they represent. However, the truth is that he gathers the objects to further rebuild his own body.

GTHARREN

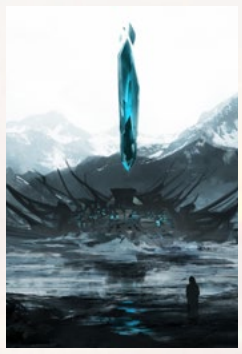
An old man named Phiraster dwells in the valley of Gtharren. He watches over a massive crystal that stands 50 feet (15 m) tall and 20 feet (6 m) across and gives the valley its name. The Gtharren Crystal is an artificial construct with intriguing properties. People come to the valley to break off shards and use the power within, but Phiraster turns away far more visitors than he welcomes.

Some call Phiraster a wizard or a demon, but he is a learned Nano with a great deal of power. A few think him insane, and that might be true. If those entering the hidden valley cannot answer his questions to his satisfaction, he uses his esoteries and artifacts to drive them off. Sometimes the questions are personal inquiries about the visitor's intentions. Sometimes they are riddles or koans. Occasionally, the old man doesn't ask questions but instead bids seekers to perform tasks for him.

The point of their efforts is to attain a shard of the Gtharren Crystal. In aeons long past, millions of intelligent beings placed their memories and personalities in the crystal for long-term storage. Today, a single shard of the crystal holds hundreds of these beings. Although the memories cannot be directly accessed by any known means, the power within the crystal lattice can be used to interface with and control other devices, even those that seem to be depowered or whose purposes are unknown.



Terrhvyss: *Level 6; health 25; Armor 3, perception as level 8; arm inflicts 7 points of damage.*



Phiraster: *level 9; esoteries inflict 10 points of damage to all within short range if he so wishes*

Gtharren Crystal shard: *level 8 artifact; user can understand and use any one other artifact of equal or lower level*

ISCOBAL HEARSAY

Submerged Fugitive: An aeons-old automaton has arisen from a deep seaside pool. Metal limbs carry it along the sandy coastline while its glass head constantly looks around. The machine acts this way because it's being pursued. When it arose, so too did a number of flying spheres, each 15 inches (38 cm) across, bearing holographic faces and trailing tendrils. Both hunter and hunted would welcome assistance, but which to help, and why?

Family Feud: House Sarromere's attempts to undermine the royal family are growing more brazen. Word in Mulen is that they offer payment in cyphers and oddities to anyone who works for them on missions of spying and sabotage.

Hunters and Prey: A creature haunts the wooded lands between Rachar and Wyrfall, preying on hunters and trappers. Only those carrying freshly killed animals are attacked. No other information is known, but local leaders offer a reward for ending the beast's reign of terror.

THE WEIRD OF ISCOBAL

The Gelatinous Pavilion: In Rachar, a large plaza is covered by a low canopy of ever-shifting colored gel.

Metal Corpses: At one point along the Wyr River, what appear to be the dead bodies of eight imposing metal humanoids lie on the bank.

Ghostly Tune: Along the road into Dynafel from the south, strange, melodious music can be heard, even though no source is apparent.

LOOKING FOR

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Voil Chasm, page 150

THE PYTHARON EMPIRE

Ruler: Challadien III
Population: 2,000,000
Capital: Rarmon



THE PYTHARON EMPIRE

Possibly the oldest of the Steadfast kingdoms, the Pytharon Empire once commanded most of the southern region, including Milave, Iscobal, and Ancuan. Although the empire collapsed almost a hundred years ago, it regained its footing and began to prosper under the previous empress, Challadien II. She consolidated old holdings into Imperial rule again under the auspices of protection.

Now the new, relatively young empress, Challadien III, hopes to extend her aunt's successful reign. Most believe she has her eyes on lands that once were part of the empire, in particular Milave and Iscobal, and perhaps seeks to spread her influence over lands to the south.

The Pytharons are well aware that the regions of Matheunis to the south are far more settled than they once were. These free realms, including the powerful city-state of Nihliesh, feel the gaze of the empire upon them. Pytharon nobles already send their troops down there to raid for slaves.

Pytharon is known for gently rolling fields of wheat, beans, and corn. Its fertile lands were once a great part of its success and could be again, for its ample so-called "breadbasket" has fueled great armies.

Recently, the leaders of the Twins issued a statement saying they are looking for mercenaries willing to help clean out the Umbil. Pay can come in the form of shins, oddities, or even property in one of the cities.



My dear and loyal subjects,

Your beloved Empress, Challadien II, Lady of the Southern Reach, and Queen of the Riage, wishes you to know that the days of foul banditry and lawlessness that have plagued these lands have come to an end. The peace-loving forces of the invincible grand Imperial armies, under my direct command, shall restore this realm once again to a land of prosperity and peace. You and your families shall be safe under their banner. Your children are like unto my own, and my own desire is for their happiness and good health. The integrity of your lands, your homes, and all of your belongings shall be secured under our banner. Those who stand in the way of this generous and beneficent gift of safety, however, are naught but robbers and undesirables, and shall meet our swift judgment.

RARMON

The empire's capital is the great city of Rarmon, home to about 80,000 people. This old settlement of marble, stone, and glass once fell into a state of decay but now is being restored to its former grandeur. Everywhere, scaffolds and workers cover important buildings, restoring crumbling facades.

The Sunken Palace: At the heart of Rarmon is the Sunken Palace, the ancient home of the Empress. This structure is unique because the entire thing is a numenera device. Spherical in shape, it is half immersed in the ground so that it appears to be a dome of metal and synth. The palace can rotate in any direction, however, and has its own gravity. Thus, the sphere can be rotated so that the entrance is concealed below the surface and the floors within are perpendicular to the ground outside, with no discomfort to anyone within.

The Grand Orrery: Within Rarmon is a large metal orrery that shows the configuration of the sun, the Earth, and the other six planets. It turns in accordance with the actual movement of these spheres.

The man in charge of maintaining the orrery is a diminutive fellow named Garrot who stands less than 3 feet (1 m) tall. Garrot is an engineer and mechanic of great skill. By activating the complex mechanisms within the base, he can raise the orrery high above the level of the city so it commands attention in the immediate area.

The central sphere of the orrery, the "sun," is an electromagnet of immense power. Garrot uses this device as a defensive weapon on behalf of Rarmon, directing invisible beams at anyone or anything he desires. The beams inflict 12 points of damage to a creature or object and 6 points of damage to anything in the immediate area around the target.

JARGOLAMIS AND LUIGOLAMIS

The so-called Twinned Cities of Jargolamis and Luigolamis were once so interconnected that they were considered a single entity. With a combined population of 60,000 people, the Twins have long been seen as a safe place to live, with easy access to goods and services.

The Twins are punctuated by matching mirrored towers, each of which reflects the other city. Walk into Jargolamis, make your way to the Jargo Tower, and you'll discover that in every pane of glass, the bustling city of Luigolamis is reflected back at you. Stand before the Luigo Tower in the other city, and watch the intricacies of Jargolamis happening before your eyes. At the top of each tower is a creature sculpted in an off-white material that casts an eerie glow in the night. The Jargo Tower has a terror bird, while the Luigo Tower is topped with a slicer beetle.

The two cities are connected by a large, elevated skyway tube almost 2 miles (3 km) long called the Umbil. Created from a combination of stronglass, ivy tangles, and various metals, the Umbil runs between the two towers. Once, it provided safe passage between the cities, with a motorized walkway and jarlers—abhuman slaves that pulled long carts full of people and supplies. Small markets and eateries sprang up along the way,

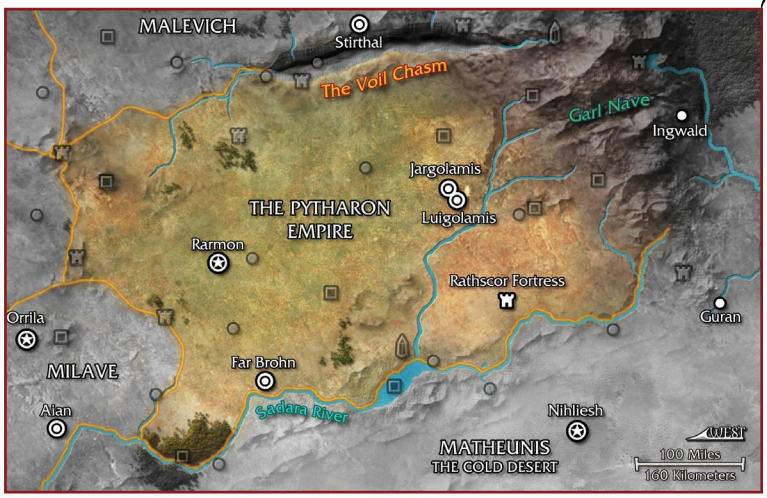
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Neverlost, page 151

and the Umbil became one of the most well-traveled routes in the Steadfast.

When the motorized walkway stopped working one day, the rulers of Jargolamis and Luigolamis—siblings Margo the Wember and Paras Gulosi, respectively—announced that they would have it up and running again in a matter of days. But the siblings fought over the best way to solve the problem, as they often did, and the walkway remained broken. Temporary fixes were put into place by those who had the power and knowledge, but nothing lasted. As the years stretched on and the walkway was not fixed, the Umbil fell into disrepair and disuse.

Now the tube has become a place for dark dwellers, thieves, and worse. Although the Umbil remains the shortest passage between the Twins, it's also the route most likely to get you killed. The abhuman slaves have regained their freedom, the markets sell far darker wares than the foodstuffs of old, and dangerous creatures skulk around every bend. Trade and travel between the two cities have become sparse and strained, as has the relationship between the sibling rulers.

Still, new light dawns—a constructor named Limech recently moved into Jargolamis. He, along with a small passel of mechanized creatures, is building a second connection between the Twins, an open-air skyway that runs below the Umbil. Only about a quarter of it has been completed so far.



FAR BROHN

The trading city of Far Brohn lies near the northern edge of the cold desert of Matheunis. Tall stone walls help to protect it from the frigid winds of the south, but their real purpose is to keep out the bandits, abhuman raiders, and other terrible threats that emerge from the desert. Chief among these dangers are the mind-screaming hordes of sathosh, which frequently attack trading caravans on the way to and from Nihliesh. The merchant lords of Far Brohn are always looking for help against these raids.

The city itself is secure. Its walls are laced with numenera devices (level 6) that affect the minds of those who try to assault them, using sonic vibrations to cause pain and confusion.

A tree in Rarmon records what happens near it and intermittently replays holograms of recent events, with some details changed.

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Yenth, page 152

PYTHARON EMPIRE HEARSAY

Far Afield: A rusted-out hulk of an ancient device has sat in the middle of Reynald Denny's fields without incident since long before he tilled the soil. Recently, the device has started shooting rubbery orbs of gel into the fields at odd intervals. The orbs are covered with tiny spines that break off in the skin when touched. Reynald fell sick after attempting to move one of the orbs, and many of his livestock died after touching the devices. His wife seeks help with removing the orbs from the field and incapacitating the machine.

The Glowing Roads: There have been a number of attacks along the open roads leading to Rarmon. Each account is nearly identical: travelers swear they were attacked by giant four-legged creatures with glowing purple eyes and pinchers for mouths. One survivor has a wound along the inside of his leg to show for his trouble. The scar glows with a magenta hue.

THE WEIRD OF THE PYTHARON EMPIRE

Sky Writing: On particularly cloudy days, those who stand in Rarmon and look up at just the right time can see the Truth words "We Will Help You" written across the clouds, along with a series of unknown symbols. The writing is neon orange and very uniform. It lasts anywhere from a few seconds to a minute.

The Voices of the World: Outside of Jargolamis is a stone that stands nearly 10 feet (3 m) high and is shaped like an inverted triangle. The stone is riddled with holes, and if you put your ear to any of them, you can hear what sounds like conversation—the larger the hole, the louder the voices. Each hole has a different discussion, and each time you listen at the same hole, you hear different people talking. Most of the time, the language is not one that you know.

The Dog in the Machine: Half buried in the rubble of a ruined city is a box. From some angles, the box seems to contain a large canine, suspended in midair. From others, the box looks empty—you can see right through it to the other side—but you can hear the sounds of snarling and howling. If you were to look down on the box from above, you'd see a top panel fitted with a series of sliders and buttons.

Lord Myallatur: *level 7; health 30; Armor 5 from a magnetic field generator; +2 points of damage with scimitar*

Typical Mahal Shard: *level 4, Speed defense as level 5; health 15; Armor 1; +1 point of damage with bows and scimitars*

Brehm: *level 3; Armor 1; long movement*



MILAVE

Ruler: The Milave Council

Population: 900,000

Capital: Orrila

Stratharian war moths seem particularly attracted to ganch fields. Sometimes entire plots must be abandoned when swarms move in. One field currently has a cocoon so large that farmers speculate it will produce a war moth as big as a house.

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LOOKING FOR

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King Noren, page 153
Queen Whenith Sarromere, page 153

RATHSCOR FORTRESS

Guarding the southern border of the Pytharon Empire is the great fortress of Rathscor. Lord Myallatur commands the fort and its defenses. His soldiers, the Mahal Shards, are infamous for their prowess and might—particularly their speed. The Shards include cavalry, riders of reptilian coursers called brehm.

MILAVE

From Nomilla Eron, Milavian noble:

Once Milave was a region of the Pytharon Empire, when its red banners flew from every tower in the South. Now that name is given to a loose confederation of small noble states and even a few so-called republics. The latter, of course, are nothing more than backwater counties too wretched for any proper noble family to desire position, and where the merchant classes give the peasantry fool-headed ideas of ruling themselves.

The only thing that truly binds Milave together is fear of invasion by the empire. Milavians have few similarities, but a memory of the hard-won independence from Pytharon is one. Ostensibly, Milave is ruled by a council of representatives of disparate governments, clans, and factions who meet in the city of Orrila.

The nation will not last as a cohesive whole for long. The ruling council does little but bicker over petty matters while the nearby empire once again grows in military might. If war does come, Milave's loose union is likely to collapse, each state fighting for itself and no other—and thus we are all doomed.

One possible savior, however, is a noble warlord named Tarvesh. This charismatic young leader has the support of many Milavians, and his personal fighting force includes three terrifying numenera war machines, the likes of which have not been seen before in the region. I suspect that Tarvesh has clandestine support from the Amber Papacy, which hopes that he can unite Milave and keep the peace in the southern end of the Steadfast. Indeed, many hopes rest with that one man. We shall see if his broad shoulders can bear the burden.



Most people of Milave are farmers who produce a variety of foodstuffs as well as an herb called ghianche, or sometimes just ganch. It fills many pipes throughout the region, and it's sometimes rolled into cigars as well. The herb is a mild relaxant, but when treated with certain chemicals, it can also be a powerful hallucinogen.

Ganch fields are difficult to maintain and require a large workforce. A few communities have repurposed a variety of numenera machines and devices to help in the labor, so it's not uncommon to see a massive construct or automaton harvesting fields of ganch leaves.

ORRILA

Orrila serves as the capital of a land that truly has none. A sort of microcosm of Milave itself, it is a cosmopolitan mishmash of cultures and people. A stone wall girds what is now the central portion of the city, but the city spread out from those walls long ago with buildings of many different styles and materials. In very recent times, a large tent-city has grown around the southern gate of that wall, covering what is now known as the Field of Voices.

Much trading takes place in Orrila, thanks in no small part to a device located on a high campanile in the center of the old town. Known as the All-Speech, the device automatically translates any word spoken within the city (and a fair distance beyond) into a language understandable to each listener's mind. The All-Speech has some interesting side effects, however. Some children reared in Orrila learn to speak far more quickly than expected, understanding the words of their parents even as infants, while others never learn because they are still understood even when speaking gibberish. A Milavian saying holds that lies are harder to tell in Orrila and secrets harder to keep, but this claim has yet to be proven.

Thirty miles (48 km) east of Orrila, workers toil in the floatstone quarries. You can spot the quarries from far away because of the vast tarps that catch the stone as it's dug from the earth. The workers pull it from what looks like former monuments of some kind, buried in a long-forgotten age. Of course, the ground repels the floatstone, so much of what is excavated flies into the air.



AIAN

Known by some as the City of Merchants and by others as the City of Beggars, Aian is only tenuously part of Milave, maintaining as much independence as it can. The city-state has a population of perhaps 30,000. Ruled by an elected senate, Aian is one of the prominent republics in the Steadfast. As its monikers suggest, it is a city of commerce and trade, a gateway between the Steadfast and the lands to the south. Its markets are filled with exotic goods, and wealthy merchant clans maintain burgeoning warehouses here.

The Aian saying "Those not rich are poor" is used to justify avarice and ruthless business practices. In other words, if you don't fight to get all you can, you'll have nothing. The saying is also a fair assessment of the city's class structure. Those who are not wealthy merchants, clerks, accountants, salesmen, or caravan drivers are extremely poor, working for scraps as laborers, bearers, or porters—or worse, without employment at all, living as beggars and thieves.

Rumor has it that the Amber Papacy does not believe in democracy, and that agents of the Order of Truth work against Aian in the shadows of the city. If this gossip is true, the agents likely work with the Beggar Queen and her network of spies. She hates the oligarch council and the merchants who elect them. No one knows much about the Beggar Queen herself, but she has three lieutenants that are biomechanical hybrids with the ability to become invisible and kill with a touch, ensuring that her power remains unchallenged.

OSSAM'S TRAVELING MENAGERIE AND SOARING CIRCUS

Come one, come all!

Boys and girls! Men and women! Humans, visitants, and mutants!

All are welcome at the greatest display of remarkability and extraordinosity the Ninth World or any world has ever seen, heard, sniffed, felt, or tasted!

All are welcome at Ossam's Traveling Menagerie and Soaring Circus!

Think you've seen mystery? Wait until you wonder at the three-headed moranx!

Think you've seen majesty? Wait until you experience the death-defying Kaprof Brothers and their aerial acrobatics!

Think you've seen menace? Wait until you cower at the roaring harraspawn and its fire-spewing eyes!

Think you've seen magic? Wait until you gasp at the sorcery of the Great Theon and his trained cragworms!

You'll thrill! You'll chill! You'll come away changed forever!

Just 2 shins per person! Children under ten and children over eighty half price!

Traveling throughout the villages and towns of Milave (and sometimes Ancuan), Ossam's Traveling Menagerie and Soaring Circus is a caravan of wooden wagons that house the creatures and the performers, and a floating numenera platform that serves as transport for equipment and a hovering stage during performances. As they travel, the members of the circus put on shows, filling people's minds with wonder and their own pockets with coin.

Ossam himself may be the greatest wonder of his show. He's not human, but an extremely human-appearing construct. Older than the Ninth World, his true motivations are clouded in mystery. Few people know his secret, and Ossam would literally kill to preserve it.

Ossam: *level 6; Armor 5; built-in ray emitter that inflicts 10 points of damage at long range*



The Beggar Queen: *level 3, all tasks involving deception, seeing through deception, and intimidation as level 6*

Lieutenant: *level 5; become invisible; infect with a cellular disrupting virus (once touched, 5 points of damage each round until victim makes a Might defense roll)*

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Mulen, page 154

MILAVE HEARSAY

Recruitment: Clandestine agents of the warlord Tarvesh seek recruits to work as spies and infiltrators or as soldiers. Either way, the recruiters are said to wear numenera artifacts on their foreheads that allow them to see into the minds of others, both to ensure that those they speak with tell the truth and to ascertain the talents of others, which aids in recruitment. Rumors say that these devices even allow them to implant a failsafe in the recruit's mind. Should they go on to betray their new warlord, the psychic imprint will destroy the mind from within. For truthful commitment, however, the recruiters are offering excellent pay, numenera support, and of course, a free, safe, and stable Milave.

The Roving Road: Rumors speak of a well-lit path that appears only on very rare nights or dark, mist-shrouded days. This road is paved in blocks of an unknown substance, and it is said to lead to a secret location that cannot be accessed in any way other than by the road. The road always appears in different locations throughout the land, and only for an hour or so at a time. Once you take the road, however, you go where it goes until you reach the end.

The Ice Pit: A perfectly round, metal-edged pit of unknown depths can be found about 40 miles (64 km) south of Aian. On even the warmest days, cold mist rises from it. Those who have attempted to reach the bottom claim that it simply gets colder and colder as one goes down. No one has ever reached the bottom and returned to tell the tale.

THE WEIRD OF MILAVE

Dry Coral: A field of coral-like growth extends throughout an expanse in the western portion of Milave. At night, patches of the coral glow with an unearthly light. As with beds of actual coral, unique and sometimes dangerous creatures dwell in and amid the formations.

Weeping Wanderer: An ancient automaton wanders the roads of Milave, damaged and asking for help. However, the fluids it leaks are debilitating and hallucinogenic to humans.

The Minds of the Dead: A pair of men living in a village in the eastern border of the land claim to have a device that reads the thoughts of the recently dead. They say that if the deceased are hooked to the device quickly enough, their consciousness is stored inside it, granting them "eternal life."

Great Theon: *level 4; telekinesis; generate illusory images within short range; become invisible; hover*

Typical Blue Legionnaire: *level 3, archery as level 5; bow inflicts +1 point of damage*

Cragworm, page 230

Seskii, page 252

Arron is a grain used to make sweet-tasting bread.

Yol are short, long-haired creatures known for yellow wool, tender meat, and the cheese made from their milk.

Angulan Knights, page 217

Xi-drake, page 259

Raster, page 248

Sathosh, page 251

Chirog, page 229

King Asour-Mantir: *level 5, all types of combat as level 4*

While much of the menagerie and circus is real, the truth is also stretched to heighten the experience. The use of disguises and conventional trickery as well as holograms and various numenera devices enhance every performance. For example, the Great Theon's "sorcery" is produced mainly by hidden devices, although the man commands an array of psychic powers to boot. His trained cragworms are hologram illusions projected over trained seskii. The Kaprof Brothers are talented acrobats, but the harraspawn is little more than an illusion. The moranx is a deformed aneen never shown in clear light.

ANCUAN

A broad, fertile, and peaceful land, Ancuan is blessed on many fronts. Its rolling hills teem with bountiful herds of animals, its fields flow with produce and grains, and its long shorelines offer fish and other valuable commodities. Of course, Ancuan is not without its troubles. Pirates ply the shorelines, preying on coastal trading vessels. Bandit raiders threaten villages. Sathosh and chirog roam the countryside.

King Asour-Mantir rules from a castle of stronglass 20 miles (32 km) outside the city of Glavis. Tradition dictates that no one other than his immediate household and guard live within a radius of 10 miles (16 km), so the Transparent Palace, as it is called, stands alone in a sprawling, rocky field. The king's extended family is large, the product of two noble houses joined in permanent alliance to ensure the stability of the land. Members of the Blue Legion, his royal guard, are renowned for their skill as archers.

The people of Ancuan are independent and self-sufficient, relying on their king for little. They make their way as sailors, fishers, arron farmers, yol herders, and salt miners.

Similar to how Angulan Knights throughout the Steadfast have tamed xi-drakes to use as flying mounts, the people of Ancuan sometimes ride rasters—large, biomechanical, bat-like creatures native to the region. Often the raster-riders, or "rastriders," are loners who live along the coast. Some, however, join raider or pirate groups, training their fellows to be rastriders. A sky filled with brigands mounted on giant hover-bats can be a terrifying sight indeed. (On the other hand, an aerial battle between a rastrider raider and an Angulan Knight is a memory no witness would soon forget.)

ISHLAV

Ishlav is a city built on a city. The original Ishlav was destroyed about twenty years ago when a group of explorers returned to the city with a strange device they had discovered

in an ancient ruin. When the Aeon Priests in Ishlav fiddled with the object in an attempt to understand it, the device released a powerful burst of energy that destroyed most of what lay within a radius of 2 miles (3 km). However, none of the people, animals, or plants were harmed. Only nonliving matter was affected. The blast split this line with a fine blade—it left freshly cut wooden logs unharmed, but it obliterated older wood in rafters, wagon wheels, and shovel handles. Strangely, the ground—soil, rocks and the like—appears to have been unaffected.

After the event, new strangements were discovered. For example, those caught in the blast found that some, but not all, of their diseases had been cured, their wounds healed, and their general health improved. Even today, Ishlav's new generations enjoy robust health, good looks, and impressive physical qualities.

The city's buildings, obviously, are relatively new. After the blast, workers rebuilt some of the original layout, but an influx of people wanting to share in the renowned health-boosting qualities has caused Ishlav to double in size. Now home to 20,000 souls, it's a burgeoning city with a large idle population that waits for its mysteries to heal, boost, or aid them in some way. Unfortunately, many people have no means of supporting themselves except through begging, thievery, or worse, so Ishlav is gaining a new reputation, one of darkness and danger.

That danger comes from many sources, but one in particular is on the rise: the Monks of Mitos, a well-structured organization led by a man named Kollos. Renowned for his otherworldly hand-to-hand combat skills, Kollos claims to have found a way to harness the cosmic power of the universe within his cells, channeling this energy into a lethal fighting style that he calls "fistprayers." He and his followers preach about creating a more harmonious, safer world, and they teach free classes in self-defense and nonlethal combat. But behind the caring, soft words lies something more sinister, and those with the necessary money or influence can avail themselves of the monks' deadlier skills.

KAPARIN

A coastal city on the southern shore of the Steadfast, Kaparin boasts roughly 15,000 people but actually consists of less than half that at any given time. It's the unofficial home of the Redfleets, a crew of vagabonds, thieves, scientists, and other miscreants who sail the high and low seas in search of natural treasure. For the most part, they show public disdain for any numenera they find, but they aren't above selling it to the highest bidder.

By all accounts, Kaparin is a typical coastal town, filled with wood and stone structures, cobbled streets, and a series of connected docks for seafaring vessels. However, the city features one unique building along its wharf: a large stone complex called the RFM, which is a maritime museum, hall of fame, and library all rolled into one. Here, the Redfleets catalogue their accomplishments and store their findings. A visitor can view the preserved skull of a rare flutterfish or listen to an audio recording from the depths of the ocean. And you'll likely find at least half a dozen Redfleets, past and present, just waiting to be asked about their contribution. If you read the signs posted liberally inside and outside the RFM, you'll discover that the objects on display are famed the world over and coveted by many. (Just don't be surprised if neither you nor anyone you've ever known has heard of them.)

Due to such a large percentage of its inhabitants belonging to the Redfleets and taking extended ocean voyages, Kaparin's homes stand empty for long stretches of time. Merchants and craftspeople specialize in water and seagoing wares, including ship and submergine repair and upkeep, breathing apparatus, food stores, and long-distance trade routes to sell the treasure that comes in from the Redfleets' explorations.

PEOPLE OF INTEREST

The ruler of Kaparin is Sallian Orsay the Red, one of the original Redfleet founders. A tall, willowy woman with dark red hair, she appears to be about twenty years old—and has appeared to be that age for as long as anyone can remember. The rumor is that she

ANCUAN
Ruler: King Asour-Mantir
Population: 1,500,000
Capital: Glavis



Submergine, page 219

Sallian Orsay: *level 6; health 28; sword inflicts +2 points of damage*

Kollos: *level 7, hand-to-hand combat as level 9*

LOOKING FOR
Pytharon Empire, page 156



found something buried beneath the ocean floor on one of her final submergine missions that has allowed her to live forever, or at least to stop the aging process. Although some of her colleagues are angry that she didn't share her discovery with the rest of the fleet, most feel that she is a good ruler, if a little cold and reclusive at times. Sallian has a seemingly unlimited supply of goons that will die to protect her. If called on to fight, she wields a long sword made of honed whale bone.

Typical goon: *level 2*

Captain Connell: *level 4; health 16*

Retired Redfleet Captain Jamson "The Liar" Connell is often seen about town these days since he no longer commands a submergine crew and doesn't go asea. He says he retired years back, but others in Kaparin murmur that being dishonorably discharged from an already dishonorable fleet is hardly retiring. Town gossip says that during one particularly dangerous mission to the Fengali Forest, Connell killed and ate his entire crew. He goes berserk when physically or verbally threatened, attempting to strangle and eat his opponent (often at the same time).

Typical street rat: *level 2*

Kaparin's street rats are the teenagers and young children born on ships at sea and then left behind. They live in small groups beneath the docks and often create graffiti on the sides of docked submergines, searching for (or cursing out) their parents. Most of them are willing to help with information, tasks, or directions for the right price or even a bit of kindness. The Ramsi sisters, Jordica and Zanca, lead and protect this ragtag group. Both deny the rumor that they're Sallian Orsay's bastard daughters. If you're approached by the two girls, they might seem well informed and suspiciously willing to help, but they'll probably do their best to ensure that you get what you want—at the price of a favor, of course.

Anders the Jack: *level 6, biological and virological knowledge as level 8*

The ceremonies of Relia and Bianes involve songs, elaborate costumes, and significant rituals with hand gestures, key words, and repetitive phrases. Worshippers re-enact myths of the brother and sister overcoming adversity, healing the sick, and even giving life to various kinds of plants and animals as boons to humanity.

LOOKING FOR

Rarmon, page 156
Sunken Palace, page 156

GLAVIS

Approximately 20,000 people call Glavis home. The sprawling city almost seems like a grouping of three towns located in close proximity by chance, with a sparse collection of buildings and roads among them. One of the three sections, primarily a port, is on the minor River Frohm. The second is atop a high hill called Nurel's Hill. The third is a farming community filled with markets for produce and livestock.

The people of Glavis worship a pair of gods called Relia and Bianes. These sibling deities are believed to watch over those who place offerings on their secluded altars. Enough people have seen the offerings disappear right before their eyes that even nonbelievers suspect that Relia and Bianes—or something posing as them—are real in some sense. Whenson Breeve, the chief constable of the city guard, has a theory:

I think Relia and Bianes are real. No, not the brother and sister you see in the marble statues in their temples, but some kind of invisible beings. Maybe they're the source of the religion. Maybe they just came along and took advantage of it. But there's something really there. Under the temples. Within the walls, I think, or at least that's what my gut says. With my own eyes I've seen food placed upon their altars disappear. No, not disappear. I've watched it be . . . consumed *is the word I would use. When it happened there was a sort of burning smell in the air and I heard a kind of crackling sound, like a distant fire. I won't lie to you. It scared me. There's things left over from the far-off past, you know? Things I don't understand. And some of them are smart. And hungry. And maybe vengeful.*

Within the city of Glavis, a scholar known as Anders the Jack keeps a laboratory where he studies viruses and bacteria, presumably for the good of humanity. Beneath this public lab lies a secret underground facility, however, where he conducts experiments on creatures that seem to be strange monkey-rat things. Anders has a rare condition that requires constant blood transfusions. His monkey-rat-thing slaves provide the blood and serve as subjects on which he constantly tests potential cures for his condition.

In the hills just north of Glavis, great vents in the ground expel strange gases into the air. Amid these geologic exhalations dwell intelligent gaseous creatures called the Sruu. Very little is known about these beings, which apparently have a civilization deep below the surface. Those that come up through the vents do so unwillingly and seek to return.

PIKE'S HEAD

A small fishing town along the coast, Pike's Head has one aspect that makes it quite remarkable. About 300 feet (90 m) off the shore, a massive *thing* juts up out of the water. People call it "the Beast." Although in some ways it resembles a structure, it's clearly made of organic material,

Cold and dangerous, the Sea of Secrets is beset by ship-devouring serpents, horrific storms, and a wide variety of pirates, the worst of which hail from Ancuan (and the worst of them from Aras Island).

with chitinous plates and leathery flesh. But it never moves and shows no sign of life. It also never decays, so it gives no indication of being the corpse of an enormous creature. Someone long ago thought it looked like a river pike's head, but the Beast has no identifiable bodily characteristics. No head, no eyes, no limbs—just a hulking, twisted mass 50 feet (15 m) across that rises more than 80 feet (24 m) above the water. Most people give it a wide berth, as it has an unpleasant odor, but some brave residents believe that the fishing is better near it.

SCORPION'S REACH

This sprawling peninsula is filled with the ruins of the prior worlds. Known for its weirdness and mysteries, it is frequented by explorers, discoverers, and numenera scholars. Scorpion's Reach is also dangerous, offering regular encounters with Oorgolian soldiers, mastigophores, disassemblers, and other remnants of the past.

RARROW

If Ishlav is a city built on a city, Rarrow is a city hidden within a city. The founders built it on both sides of a spatial rift. The city on this side of the rift is called Rarrow, but its counterpart on the other side is called Hidden Rarrow. About 5,000 people live in Rarrow, and another 2,000 live in Hidden Rarrow.

No one knows precisely where Hidden Rarrow lies in relation to Rarrow. Is it in a parallel universe, on another planet, or just elsewhere in this world? Many people have their own theories. Hidden Rarrow seems to have the same or a similar sun, but the moon never appears in the night sky, and the stars are similar but not identical. This latter fact lends credence to the belief that the rift is not spatial in nature but temporal, and that Hidden Rarrow lies further in the future.

The rift is 200 feet (60 m) wide and runs through the middle of each half of the city, but it's invisible. Passing through the rift results in a smooth transfer from one side to the other with no sensation of transition. The folk of Rarrow know exactly where the rift lies and have built a plaza around it (a matching plaza exists in Hidden Rarrow), but they don't mark it in any way, so newcomers sometimes stumble into it by accident. The rift is unmarked because the city's inhabitants want Hidden Rarrow to remain—well, hidden. They want it to be a sanctuary to which they can flee if invaders ever come to Rarrow. On the other side, defenses are in place—a stone wall and towers to defend against invaders who use the breach with hostile intent. The street in the plaza on the Hidden Rarrow side can be rigged to collapse, and beneath it is a wide pit that the defenders can fill with oil to create a burning "moat."

In the Ninth World, words like "pike" or "scorpion" equate to somewhat different creatures than we in the 21st century understand, but these words are used because they are the closest equivalents available.

Oorgolian soldier, page 246

Mastigophore, page 241

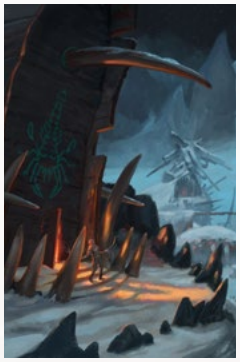
Disassembler, page 233

LOOKING FOR

Brehm, page 158
Milave, page 158



Hidden Rarrow is home to a significant marketplace of taboo, forbidden, or dangerous goods. This black market is not an illegal enterprise in the city, but the authorities of other locales hate it, for it is a place where weapons, artifacts, and worst of all secrets can be bought and sold, and used far beyond Rarrow.



Jagged Dream, page 218

Some villagers in Ancuan recently awoke with a crystal orb embedded in their chests. The orbs are transmitting something and heat up if damaged.

Redfleets, page 161

Ghan's merchant fleet, page 143

The people of Rarrow are sea traders and fishers. The harbor is a calm but deep port, and a tall lighthouse at the edge of town guides ships in on the frequent cold and foggy nights. The mayor lives in and works out of a large house in the center of town made from the hull of an ancient flying craft of metal.

Hidden Rarrow is a sanctuary sought by refugees, those on the run, or those looking to disappear. Rumor has it that if you pay the city a hefty fee, you can get a place to stay for as long as you wish—with no questions asked regarding who or what you're trying to hide from.

ARAS ISLAND

Belonging to no kingdom and bearing the characteristics of no single region, Aras Island stands strong as a bastion of independence, murder, and mayhem. While technically located in Ancuan, the island and the kingdom want nothing to do with each other. Resting just beneath the heel of Scorpion's Reach, the mountainous island is covered with snow and ice nearly year-round and has an incredibly harsh climate, thanks to offshore quakes, biting winds, and storms that batter the coastline with giant waves.

The people of Aras are equally harsh. Calling themselves Jaekels—after the giant sea scorpion they worship for its aggressive nature, armored skin, and saw-toothed claws and tails—they revere a bloodthirsty, animalist nature above all things.

Jaekels emulate this belief in their actions and their physical form. Animalistic surgery (including grafting, genetic manipulation, and implantation) is common, especially among those who ride in the island's fierce and aggressive water army. It's not unlikely to find Jaekels in various stages of transformation. Bandages and odd healing accouterments are frequent sights, and claws, teeth, horns, and wings are prized body enhancements. Only those with the highest honors in killing and pillaging, known as Araskas and identified by an intricate pattern of blood tattoos, are deemed worthy of having wings of any sort.

Despite their use of body-enhancing technology, Jaekels favor simple, traditional weapons, which they typically steal from their captives. It's long been considered a sign of weakness to use a technological weapon, although that perception is changing, and today you're more likely to see a mix of weapons among Jaekels. With or without weapons, they are fierce warriors, fighting literally tooth and nail, having turned their bodies into highly specialized killing machines.

Jaekels kidnap scholars, tinkerers, and other numenera workers and bring them back to Aras, where they force their prisoners to create stronger, fiercer animalistic elements. For their experiments, they also capture a wide variety of creatures, including humans and abhumans. Rasters are a special favorite, both for their biomechanical wings and for the sport of capturing them and their riders.

Jaekels build their living, working, and merchant structures from scavenged bits of whatever materials break on the shore of their island. Their boats, however, are another matter, lovingly constructed by an Araska and her crew from the parts of captured and stolen ships. It's considered a great achievement to capture a vessel from an organized group like the Redfleets or Ghan's merchant fleet and dismantle it entirely before turning it into a new Jaekship (or using the parts on a ship already in progress).

ANCUAN HEARSAY

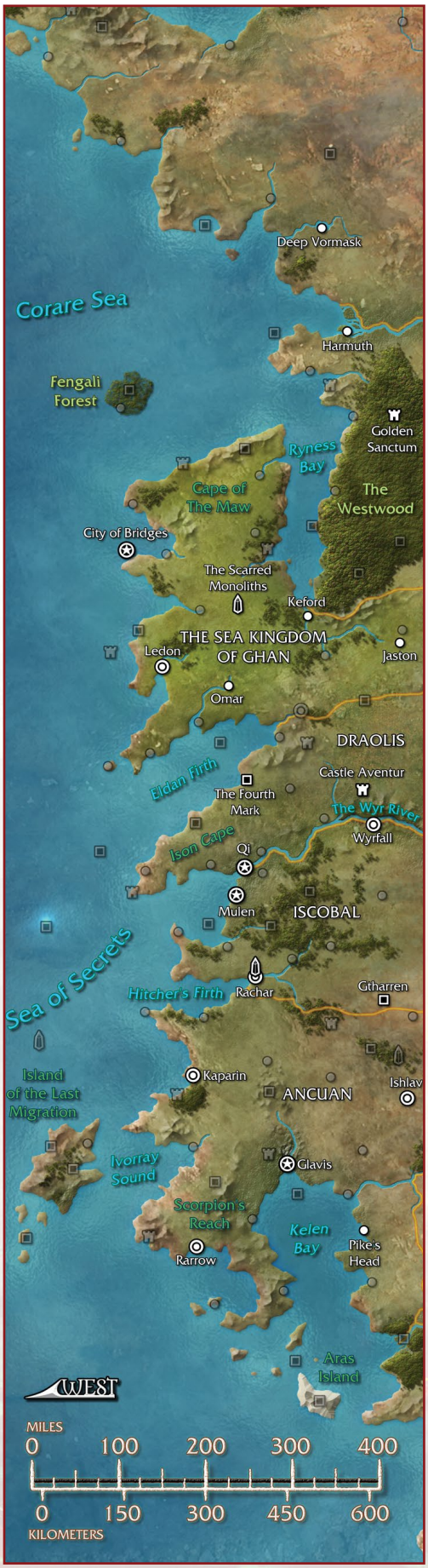
Oracle in a Pool: Dwelling in shallow pools along the western coast is a creature that calls itself Jruve. It looks like a grey and violet slug 12 feet (4 m) long. If you manage to find Jruve, it can reveal three of your possible futures. In return, it asks for a particular kind of numenera device—which it swallows whole.

Rising Dissent: Members of a Jagged Dream cell in Glavis have been extremely successful of late fomenting dissent against the royal family. With their support, a warlord named Serec the Grudge is gathering an army of rebels to rise up against the king (and likely set up a new, warlike regime). For now, however, this rowdy army simply makes trouble.

THE WEIRD OF ANCUAN

House of Holes: Near the middle of Scorpion's Reach stands a four-sided structure about 50 feet (15 m) tall and 15 feet (5 m) across. The walls are filled with round holes that range from a few inches to a few feet in diameter. Light shines from within the holes, night or day. However, the holes don't lead inside the building, but rather somewhere else.

Teardrop Trees: Odd, teardrop-shaped trees grow in a grove near the eastern border. No one has a name for or an understanding of them, but it is known that if any living thing comes near the trees, that thing dies in short order.



THE WESTERN SEAS

Few people in the Ninth World realize that the Western Seas extend all the way around the globe, forming the vast, single ocean that surrounds the megacontinent. Ninth Worlders primarily use the seas to travel and trade up and down the long coast. The king of Ghan and his merchant fleet captains believe that a significant island chain lies far beyond the western horizon, however, and they hope to mount an expedition soon.

The Western Seas are filled with danger and mystery. Those who sail the waters are no stranger to pirates, predators, and horrific storms.

CORARE SEA

The Corare Sea is relatively gentle and, as one heads north, quite warm. Although the sea is home to fish of all kinds, stories tell of intelligent predators—part synth, part cetacean—that live in the deeps and come up to hunt.

FENGALI FOREST

Located about 100 miles (160 km) off the Steadfast coast, the Fengali Forest consists of around 4,000 acres of submerged trees. The tops of the trees—mostly drowned evergreens, water tupelos, and longbow willows—rise above the water, some by as much as 20 feet (6 m). Beneath the surface, the trees are connected by their tangled, ever-expanding root system.

Above the water, the branches are threaded with trunked lilies, giant vines lined with poisonous barbs that slither along the treetops like snakes. Once a year, the lilies produce nests of strongly scented orange flowers. These poisonous flowers quickly kill any creatures that eat them; once the host is dead, the flowers cocoon inside the body until they're ready to sprout. Trunked lilies have been known to swim as far as 100 miles (160 km) to return to the forest of their nesting place.

A tight clan of humans, known simply as grovers, lives above the water among the branches and trunks in a series of floating platforms and shacks built of scavenged synth and metal from the ocean. They are not aggressive unless they believe that their clan or forest is in danger. Grovers have become immune to the trunked lilies' poison and use the vines as whips or lassos against their enemies.

Far below, almost half a mile beneath the water's surface, the lower trunks and root systems create a series of reefs, similar to coral reefs, which are home to ocean rifts, sunken numenera, and deep-sea creatures. Among the beasts, root sharks are the most aggressive—fast swimmers and solitary hunters, they lie in wait, camouflaged against trunks or the ocean

Slying is a common term used to convey a combination of sly and lying. While mostly derogatory, it also carries a hint of respect for someone's skills at deception.

LOOKING FOR

Ossam's Traveling Menagerie and Soaring Circus, page 159

Ghost crabs, page 236



floor, until their next meal appears. Ghost crabs, some as large as 5 feet (1.5 m) across, weave intricate silica webs between the tangled roots to trap prey. These alabaster crabs, which seem to appear and disappear in the depths, are blind, relying on their finely honed sense of touch to find and devour prey caught in their webs. They're such talented hunters that even the root sharks give them a wide berth.

Three long ocean rifts run through the forest, parallel gouges 1 mile (1.5 km) long and at least 3 miles (5 km) deep. Those who brave these black depths face daunting foes but might find great rewards of numenera discoveries.

ELDAN FIRTH

Many believe that the octopi bear little affection for humans. Hundreds of years ago, when the first human encountered them and was able to establish some kind of communication (thanks to a numenera device), the only response he got from the octopus was an enigmatic, "Oh. You're back."

Within the coastline of the Steadfast is a deep inlet with an inhospitable shore of jagged rocks and steep inclines. Called Eldan Firth, this place is home to a species that, unknown to almost anyone, is perhaps the oldest unchanged species on the planet. More than a billion years old, the octopi have inhabited the earth's seas for longer than any one species has dwelled on dry land. These cephalopods are far more intelligent than anyone has ever guessed, and Ninth World octopi have fashioned their own sophisticated undersea society, cities, and machines. They likely possess great lore, although they have always studiously ignored the activities of creatures that dwell on the surface.

The Octopoidal Queen travels extensively, including to the Coral Cathedral, a massive deep-sea coral structure crafted by the queen's subjects.

The Octopoidal Queen reigns from a palace deep in Eldan Firth, ruling her subjects no matter how far they spread out across the seas. The few people on land who know of her existence understand that it's wise to speak with her before heading into uncharted waters.

SEA OF SECRETS

Cold and dangerous, the Sea of Secrets is beset by ship-devouring serpents, horrific storms, and a wide variety of pirates, the worst of which hail from Ancuan (and the worst of *them* from Aras Island). As you travel south in the sea, small, hard-to-spot icebergs become a real threat to sailing. It's said that somewhere to the far south is a city frozen in solid ice, reachable only by a stout ship and a brave and experienced captain.

LOOKING FOR

Ancuan, page 160
Rastrider, page 160

THE ISLAND OF THE LAST MIGRATION

Once, shortly after our world was born, when she still was young and barely a babe upon her mama's knee, her mean grandmama wanted to steal her away and keep her for her own. And who could blame the old woman? When our world was but a babe, she was twice, three times as beautiful as she is now. A sight to behold, so stunning that even the strongest man fell to his knees at the sight of her.

Mama was loath to let her go, and the two women fought and fought over the babe, pulling her and pushing her, tugging her between them. Then grandmama did the unthinkable. She slapped the babe, who cried out in pain and fear. The two women, seeing what they had done, they got on their knees and begged for forgiveness and promised to cherish our world forever.

But our world was already growing up fast. She knew that it would only be a matter of time before her mama and grandmama were at odds again, and she wanted no part of it. She knew the women needed to be separated in order to protect all the creatures of land and sea and sky that lived within.

"Look what you have done," she told them both, and pointed to her shoulder, where the mark of her grandmama's hand still blazed upon her skin.

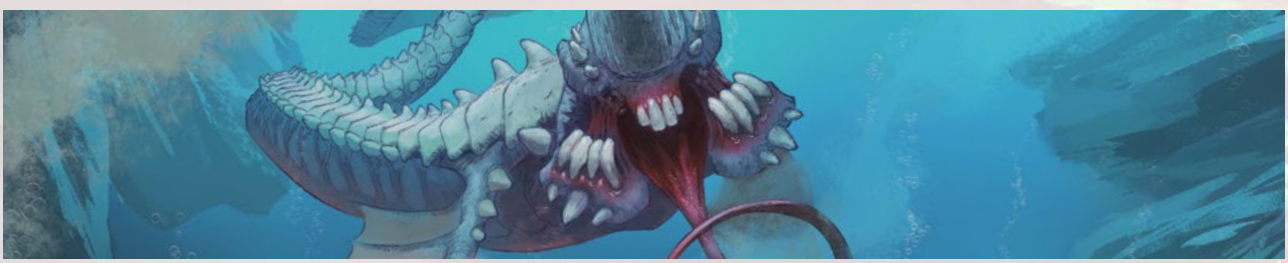
The women bowed their heads, shamed by the power of their love.

"I banish you to the skies," she told her mama, "where you can look down and see me and grandmama every morning."

"I banish you to the seas," she told her grandmama, "where you can look up and see me and mama every night."

Then our world touched the mark that she bore, her first mark among all the marks that would come, and she said, "Here shall be the most beautiful place on the whole of my body, a sanctuary for all those who are in danger and need saving. When I am old and begin to die, for die I shall"—

At this, her mama and grandmama began to weep, for they did not want to think of her growing old and dying. But our world continued as if she had not heard.



—"I shall bid everyone come to this place, this mark, for their final journey, and they shall live there for all of eternity."

Hearing that, her mama went to the sky and her grandmama went to the sea, for they saw that already the babe had grown up and was doing wondrous things, and they wanted to see every single one of them.

And that, my child, is how you came to be born in paradise, on the Island of the Last Migration.

And that's how come you have the mark on your shoulder, too—right, grammum?

Right, child. And soon, you will be old enough to have your own mark. And, as is our tradition, I shall be the one who puts it there.

The Island of the Last Migration is a starfish-shaped bit of land just off the Steadfast's western shore. It's a place of myths, legends, and extraordinary dangers. Once, the island was a paradise, inhabited only by members of the Gutos clan, and its splendor was unparalleled—extinct volcanoes along the skyline, fantastical creatures and foliage of all sizes and colors, tumbling waterfalls to refresh the spirit and the soul.

Believing themselves to be the descendants of the world-child, members of the Gutos clan tattooed their young children with the mark of their ancestors, forever etching the outline of a handprint on one shoulder.

Then the island paradise changed. Some Gutos began to retell their version of the world-child myth, believing that the point of the story was not that they were destined to live forever in a place of paradise, but that they were chosen to share this sanctuary with the world. Calling themselves the Gutonons, they parted ways with their clan and touted the promise of paradise to anyone who would listen. They sold bits of the island to anyone with the shins in hand, offering a utopia where disease and danger feared to tread and where the inhabitants were destined to have eternal life.

Word spread quickly. Soon the island was covered with homes, businesses, and growing cities. Deforestation raged to make room for new buyers. Many species that had originally enticed people to the island's shores were dead or dying. The water ran black with residue and stink. Among the chaos, a civil war broke out between the Gutos and the Gutonons, and it wasn't long before the war extended into a full-out battle against the newcomers.

Their island paradise now a battlefield of dirt and blood, the people began to leave their big homes and businesses. The Gutonons, with the Gutos forever at their throats, left the island or became assimilated back into the larger clan.

All that stands today are the remnants of a collapsed society. Buildings crumble and fall to the strangling ruin of creeping vines and crawling critters. Cities lie empty but for the roar of wild things raising their young in the dark alleys and black byways. Machines rust into loam and bits of metal that winged creatures use to line their nests.

Every day, bit by bit, paradise returns to the Island of the Last Migration. And deep in the island's hidden heart, the Guton clan waits and watches, passing down myths and legends to the babes on their knees, decorating their skin with the mark of their ancestors. For a long time, they thought the world was dying, but now they realize that she has merely been sleeping. And when she awakes, and the island with her, clan members will be ready to fulfill their destiny as her chosen ones.

One of the most common types of boats used along the coast and on the islands are called drumrunners. These shallow-hulled craft have an aft section shaped a little like a drum, used for stowage.

PEOPLE OF INTEREST

Nneka is the esteemed child of the pairing of the old and the new. One of the potential future leaders of the clan, she is nearing adulthood, long past the age when she should have received the island's mark from her grandmama. Born in the generation that came after the civil war, Nneka doesn't believe in the old ways and has refused the mark of her people.

A tomboyish young woman with short hair dyed bright orange from the crushed wings of calterflies, she dresses in the rags of the dead she finds among the ruins of the cities. Nneka often shirks her duties to spend her days exploring the run-down buildings and factories, and she knows a great deal more about the world beyond the island than she does of her own home.

Chelvin is a remainder from the great war. This humanoid creature is almost entirely mechanical and was designed with a single purpose: to kill. Equipped with a camouflage-seeking topcoat and four long arms, each of which wields a different type of weapon, Chelvin roams the island without purpose or place to call home. His external construction of smooth manufactured material appears indestructible, but his mind is another matter. Sometimes he attacks animals and humans without provocation, attempting to fulfill his original duties. Other times, he offers whatever assistance he can.

Nneka seems to be the only person who can guide Chelvin's hand and mind into doing good. However, there is talk that she is being

"The Amber Pope himself is some kind of biological construct that represents a darker, secret pope that dwells only in shadow."
~Narada Trome, anti-papist

LOOKING FOR

Kaparin, page 161
Redfleets, page 161
RFM, page 161

corrupted by Chelvin's dangerous side, and that the two of them are beginning to scheme for the island's destruction.

Mabon Macabee came to the island to work in one of the early factories in what was then called Guttentown. Unlike the others, most of whom were killed during the war or left when things began to go badly, Mabon settled on the island and refused to leave. Part of the reason is that the weather here seems to ease the longtime aches she'd had in her joints. But part of it is her discovery of the island's large and intelligent bee population, which was nearly wiped out by industrialization.

Mabon has become an avid student of the hives and an advocate for their survival, building a home from scavenged materials and honeycombs in the midst of the area's largest bee population. It's not unusual to see her surrounded by a giant swarm of bees. Sometimes they cover her body like living, buzzing armor; other times, they form the shapes of island creatures for the amusement of local children.

Mabon is on good terms with the Guton clan members, despite their fear of the bees, and often helps them restore parts of the island to its natural state. Despite the fact that she's lived on the island for a long time, the children and many adults continue to call her From Far (melding the words of the name together so it sounds like "fromfar") because she wasn't born there. She doesn't seem to mind and even introduces herself as "Fromfar Mabon."

My work with the bees continues apace. Ever since I broke the code of their language dance, the queens seem willing to let me into their lives and work, and the others seem to respond well to the training regime I put them under.

We continue to work toward the future safety of the island, but the work is slow going sometimes. While the suit of armor has proved more difficult than expected—the bees accidentally sting me more often than I'd like—we have seen breakthroughs on training the drones to mimic my shape, creating a decoy. I am not sure of its use yet. Although the children delight in seeing two of me, I hope it to have greater implications for the protection of both myself and the island.

The Guton inquire as to why I feel the need to protect myself, but I do not have the language to tell them that I sense something wicked and wanting in my dreams. It taints even the taste of honey upon the tongue, and turns my thoughts of sweetness to those of stinging fear.



"I knew the Amber Papacy was close to its goal of complete control when I toasted a slice of bread and saw the Order of Truth's symbol appear in its center."
~Narada Trome, anti-papist

WESTERN SEAS HEARSAY

The Song of Calling: At times, a strange and alluring song can be heard just off the coast. Reports of sailors and fishers say that if you follow the song, at some point you sail into an entirely different sea, as if your ship passed through some kind of doorway. These reports also speak of rose-colored seas, living islands, and intelligent, four-winged birds. The tales intrigue many bold explorers, who seek the enthralling song so they can discover where it might lead.

THE WEIRD OF THE WESTERN SEAS

Fire of the Seas: Throughout the seas, sailors speak of a rare occurrence where green fire arises from the calm waters. Those few who have sailed into the fire (intentionally or otherwise) have found that its flames do not burn, but its warmth transforms matter. The alterations are not as dangerous or violent as those brought by the iron wind, but things bathed in the green fire of the seas change significantly nonetheless.

The Eloquent Fish: Along the coast of the Sea of Secrets, every once in a while, an impressively large fish breaks the surface near a small boat and attempts to engage the occupants in a conversation in perfect Truth.

LOOKING FOR

Glavis, page 162
Relia and Bianes, page 162
Sallian Orsay, page 161

CHAPTER 11

THE BEYOND

The Beyond is a very Steadfast-centric term, used essentially to describe any area of the world that isn't part of the nine kingdoms. As the scope of the world known and understood by even the most learned scholars in the Steadfast is limited, however, what the Beyond technically includes are the lands south of the Caecilian Jungle, west of the Clock of Kala, and north of the Southern Wall.

The people of the Beyond are even more disparate and isolated from one another than the folk of the Steadfast are. Although these lands are full of would-be rulers, most communities are truly independent. Many have little contact with the world outside their own limited bounds, and some have none at all. The scattered villages of the Beyond are called aldeia, and most are centered on a clave of Aeon Priests.

Due to the perils of the Ninth World, many aldeia don't welcome strangers. Some of these villages are dangerous in and of themselves, as the inhabitants have taken up cannibalism, human sacrifice, or similar practices.

THE CLOUDCRYSTAL SKYFIELDS

To the north of the Steadfast, beyond the Tithe River, float the Cloudcrystal Skyfields. These ever-growing crystalline shards slowly drift high above a plain of the shattered remnants of shards that fell. Some of the shards are as large as cities, and others are as small as a fist. Or a sliver.

Many consider this area a holy land of sorts. Some so-called sorcerers and priests contend that the crystals are the perfect foci for magical power, and they desire to conduct all of their rituals and ceremonies on, near, or beneath the shards. Oracles supposedly watch the future here. Gods speak to mortals more clearly and more often, thanks to the shards.

However, most people recognize this arid landscape to be—holy or not—an inhospitable wasteland, particularly in the eastern portion of the region. This area is little more than a desert, and in places a dune sea—pierced with crystal shards—dominates as far as the mountains. In the west, there is a bit more life, but the land remains unfit for farming or grazing.

Dangerous creatures roam the expanse beneath the Skyfields, including a variety of bandits, abhumans, jiraskars, and travonis ul.

Jiraskar, page 238

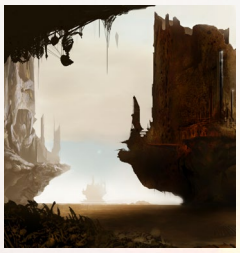
Travonis ul, page 257

The land beneath the Skyfields is sometimes simply called the Fallen Fields, when it needs differentiation. However, most of the time the entire region is referred to as the Cloudcrystal Skyfields.

THE CROWD CITY

Beneath the floating crystal fields, on an otherwise barren plain, a mass of millions of preserved corpses of humans, abhumans, animals, and strange beasts compose a city. Some mad genius fused these bodies together through unknown means and sculpted them into the shape of buildings, streets, and other structures. Stranger still, a mysterious force animates this mass of flesh. Buildings change shape and size, and the entire city moves across the landscape. It usually moves very slowly if at all, but occasionally the Crowd City will be miles from where it once stood in just a matter of weeks.

Rather than being attracted to the dead bodies, insects and animals generally avoid and even flee from the Crowd City as if repelled by an unseen force.



LOOKING FOR

Jaekel, page 164
Rarrow, page 163





"The Aeon Priests in the Beyond claim to have no allegiance to the Amber Papacy, but you have to admit, having a handful of agents spread throughout that vast region is a wise move for an organization that wants to control the world."
~Narada Trome, anti-papist

Convergence, page 216

Chirog raiders of the region seek to steal machines and even technological spare parts. Some believe this suggests that they are building or repairing something deep in the desert.

Yovok, page 261

No one lives in the Crowd City, but occasionally explorers delve the recesses of its macabre streets and alleyways looking for secrets. Some never return, suggesting that perhaps something does dwell here after all.

SCORPION SANCTUM

Standing high above the surrounding desert, the Scorpion Sanctum is one of the three main citadels of the organization that calls itself the Convergence. The area around the sanctum is plagued by chirog raiders, so the magisters within rarely see visitors. However, the abhumans pose little threat to the members of the Convergence themselves, who conduct their bizarre experiments in peace.

UNSEEN LAKE

Here, fish appear to swim through the air, and boats float along with nothing supporting them. The Unseen Lake is a very large body of water—6 miles (10 km) long and 2 miles (3 km) wide—that is utterly transparent. You can see the floating crystals in the distant skies from its shores.

The water isn't just clear, it's essentially invisible, making the lake look more like a depression filled with flying fish and wavering plant life. The water is normal in all other respects, and if taken from the lake, it takes on a standard appearance after three to four days (unless it's carefully preserved in a sealed container).

Stork-headed abhumans with backward-bent, hoofed legs dwell in a small village at the northernmost point of the Unseen Lake, subsisting on fish caught in nets from boats. These creatures keep to themselves and flee from other beings if possible.

DEEP VORMASK

Deep Vormask lies far below a small lake, to the far west of the proper Skyfields. Reaching this enormous limestone cavern involves trekking through miles of winding, difficult tunnels. The cavern itself is 3 miles (5 km) long, and water draining from the lake above creates a waterfall that drops down from the ceiling, forming an underground river. Over this river is a wisp of a stone bridge. On one side of the river lives a group of yovoki; on the other, a small tribe of humans. After long conflicts, these two groups have reached an unstable detente.

The humans have built shelters from masonry stone and fibrous fungal stalks that resemble wood. They number approximately 400 and have mastered not only the layout of the huge cave but also the miles and miles of tunnels and caves around it. The humans subsist on fungus, cave reptiles, and large subterranean insects, which surface-worlders find to be a more impressive bounty than it sounds.

Across the river, about 300 yovoki dwell in tiny caves and hollows within the larger cavern.

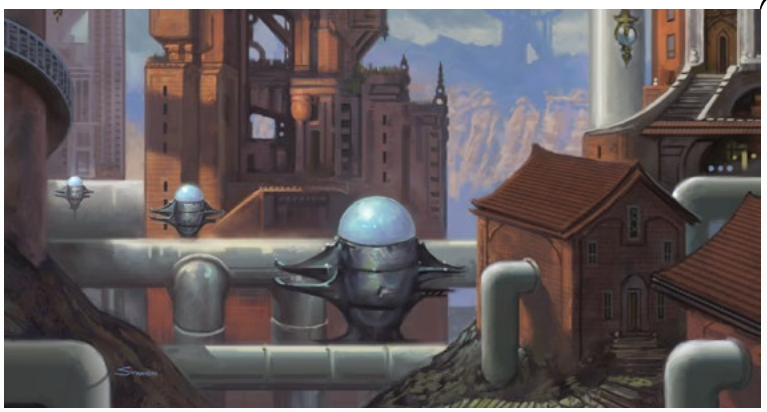
They gather around cookfires when they're not wandering about the subterranean labyrinths.

Both groups use an odd, ancient technology found only in Deep Vormask. Within the cave grow round, hollow stone spheres that reach 15 feet (5 m) in diameter before detaching from the stone around them. Although it seems impossible, these naturally growing stone bubbles have hatches in the bottom, windows on the sides, and interior controls that enable a practiced occupant to steer the sphere through the air in any direction. These spheres function only within Deep Vormask.

UXPHON

Along the western edge of the Black Riage mountain range lies Deathwater Canyon. A distinguishing characteristic of the canyon system is the network of huge ceramic pipes that run through it, exiting from the solid rock for a time and disappearing back into a canyon wall. The pipes are 10 to 15 feet (3 to 5 m) in diameter and sometimes split into two or three conduits at key junctures. No one has ever determined where the pipeline originates or terminates, but the pipes are said to be empty now, or mostly so.

The large city of Uxphon sits at the heart of Deathwater Canyon, amid a central core of the pipe system where something still flows. The 25,000 people that call Uxphon home use the pipes in two ways: the empty conduits have become thoroughfares, and the others radiate heat. The homes of the wealthy abut the warm pipes, which also provide hot and cold running water thanks to some recent ingenious engineering of small pipes.



Uxphon is a very old city. Seven families that have lived there the longest claim noble status and dwell in ancestral manors. Rumors say that some or all of the buildings have hidden chambers and subterranean levels where the nobles hide their debaucheries, treasures, and greatest secrets. Local thieves claim to have broken into the manors and seen some of these secret places, but most such boasts are probably lies. Of course, that doesn't mean the hidden chambers don't exist.

Uxphon has a large slave population, and the city's slave market is renowned. It's fueled by the gladiatorial arena, where well-trained slave combatants fight each other as well as captive beasts. Successful gladiators not only win their freedom but can also become wealthy in their own right.

The current champion of the arena is Llaritan (level 8), a woman infamous for her use of magnetism to wield multiple weapons at once.

A game favored by the crowds in the area is called the Reaping, wherein the combatants face off in an arena filled with explosive organic pods.

LOOKING FOR

Eldan Firth, page 166
Octopi of the Ninth World, page 166
Sea of Secrets, page 166

CLOUDCRYSTAL SKYFIELDS HEARSAY

Gaian Spies: By papal edict, the Order of Truth has proclaimed that any spies from the enemy Gaian forces found in the Cloudcrystal Skyfields will be put to death. Proof of executing such a spy earns special dispensations from the Aeon Priests.

Ritual Escort: A company of theurgists seeks to hire guards for a journey into the Cloudcrystal Skyfields, where they intend to perform a ritual beneath the crystals. Something that they carry to use in the ritual draws strange and hostile creatures that attack the group at every turn.

Crystal Prospector: An old woman named Filloria Dram wants to harvest portions of one of the floating crystals. She has a deflated hot air balloon in the back of her wagon, but she's looking for help in reaching the crystal and dealing with the challenges of harvesting it.

THE WEIRD OF THE CLOUDCRYSTAL SKYFIELDS

The Garden of Jirzeem: About 150 miles (240 km) north of the Navarene border, you can find a large garden of beautiful blooms, flowering bushes, and long-limbed trees. It appears well tended, but no gardener can ever be found.

The Wizard: A being who calls itself d'Ambersh traverses the lands beneath the Skyfields on what seems to be a floating rug. It wears flowing robes with a distinctly pointed hood. Tiny creatures, some winged, caper and cavort around d'Ambersh, who calls the creatures its homunculi.

The Ghost Mountain: Near the center of the region lies an enormous, mist-shrouded peak—maybe. Many who have gone looking for the mountain never find it. Others report finding it without any problem.

THE BLACK RIAGE

A great, dark mountain range that is the primary natural division between the Steadfast and the Beyond, the Black Riage is a place of both difficulty and danger. The inhabitants of villages scattered throughout its expanse are trappers or herders of rock goats or similar creatures. A wide variety of abhuman tribes also dwell in the mountains, including margr, chirog, and sathosh, as well as stranger, rarer breeds.

In the nearby town of Sun Passes By, it's possible to hire a mostly tame tetrahydra to fly you all the way to the lands of the east, to the town of Sagus Cliffs.

Tetrahydra, page 256

Convergence, page 216

Three main passes lead through the Black Riage, although other, secret passes exist as well. The main routes—Tremble Pass, Cerdyn's Pass, and Garl Nave—offer caravans and travelers the means to cross the mountains without undue difficulty, although the paths are steep and sometimes narrow. In the winter, all three become very dangerous, and the southern two are almost certainly blocked, leaving Tremble Pass as the only possibly clear passage through the region.

The atypically vicious lattimors of Mencala Peak are said by some to worship dark gods. Other people, however, believe their hate has been bred by generations of poor treatment at the hands of local human inhabitants, whose bones now litter the stony sides of the mountain.

MT. ZANLIS

The tallest of the mountains in the Black Riage at 23,000 feet (7,000 m), Mt. Zanlis is also known as the Dark Master. Most of those who dwell within 100 miles (160 km) of the peak believe it to be some kind of living being possessed of great power, though whether god or devil none can say. Aeon Priests investigating the area suggest that the mountain's core might be artificial, housing a machine intelligence with the ability to affect reality on a fundamental level. The potential motives, goals, or outlook of such an intelligence remain entirely conjecture. However, the locals talk of green rain, acidic hail, other weird weather, unexplained lights, changes in gravity or the flow of time, the sudden appearance of strange creatures on the mountain's slopes, and the disappearance of travelers, hunters, or others that got too close. And yet some explorers have traversed the region many times without incident.

Legend has it that one person was able to contact the intelligence in Mt. Zanlis. She did so by finding a secret chamber at the heart of the mountain. Finding it again proved impossible. Some speculate that the mountain can reshape itself as it needs to.

LEGRASH

Legrash is a mud-soaked, flea-infested, disgusting collection of hovels whose dirty, disease-ridden residents prey, one way or another, upon the travelers trying to use Tremble Pass, particularly pilgrims of the Wandering Walk. The locals say "lay-graus," but we call the place Leg-Rash, and there's good reason. I wouldn't stay in that place any longer than I had to unless I wanted to get some kind of rash, or far worse. Stay the night in one of their two inns? No thank you.

Wandering Walk, page 182

About 500 people live in Leg-Rash, and every one of them is a degenerate, from the storekeepers and merchants who triple any reasonable price for anything you might want, to the even less ambitious folk who will just slit your throat for the shins in your pocket, assuming they can get up off their drunk, lazy asses long enough to do it.

—Tellus Fertrek, merchant caravan guard

EMPTY SANCTUM

One of the three main citadels of the Convergence, the Empty Sanctum is not empty at all, despite its name. It's located in the foothills at the edge of the mountains, and the local people—who are few—stay away, considering the citadel to be a place of great evil.

MENCALA PEAK

The rumbling volcano called Mencala Peak is another tall mountain in the Black Riage. It's the home of not one but two tribes of savage lattimors that attack humans—and anyone else, including each other—on sight.

HIDDEN NARESH

Deep in the Black Riage, tucked away as if by accident, like a cheap ring fallen from a finger into the depths of a pocket, rests Hidden Naresh. With around 1,000 inhabitants, Hidden Naresh is a toadstool of a city, growing in the dark, sucking the nutrients from the world around it, poisoning the air and the minds of its inhabitants with every passing moment of its existence.

Here the light is low, and the morale more so. Yet in order to pass through the mountains on this route, you must also pass through the morass that is Hidden Naresh.

This is how Hidden Naresh eats you alive: enter from the west, the land of the Steadfast, where most is clean and kind and light, where there is rule and law that can be grasped by even the simplest of minds. Leave behind the light, the law, the living. Enter the world of the dark, the destroyed, the dead.

The gates of Hidden Naresh stand pale and phosphorescent in the darkness. Near them, and you'll see the faces of those who serve as gateposts. Nearer still and you will see the holes that line the luminescent bodies, row upon row of perfect dark wells in the flesh. Too near, and you'll see that the holes are not empty. Inside each one, a wormlike creature wiggles and pulses, thrusting its pale head into the world, blind eyes and open mouth searching the air from inside its black den. Do not look into the gaze of those who stand guard at the gate, for they are also filled with a black emptiness, with wriggling grubs for the whites of their eyes.



As you attempt to pass between the gateposts, the worm-things extend farther from their body caves, brushing against your hands, your wrists, your face. Do not harm them. Let them seek comfort in your touch. It's been so long since they've had skin to brush against.

You may pass if you can stomach the understanding that this is just the beginning. That your travels will get worse before they get better. That it's not your body that is in danger here, but your mind, your very sanity. This is the dark legacy—the deadly promise—that is Hidden Naresh.

Step farther, come inside. Here, you'll find the stench of growing and dying things so ripe that you wonder if a death from lack of air would be preferable to being alive and breathing this foul exhaust. Beneath your feet, mud sucks at your steps, as if seeking to drag you into the depths. The wooden walkways, of which there are few, sag with rot and mildew. Structures are built into the mountain crags, atop the rotting skeletons of other buildings, from hanging tendrils high above, and even on stilts that sink deep into the muck. The black liquid that runs down the stone and across the toes of your boots is thick and viscous. Mushrooms and fungi line every surface with ghostly pale bodies.

When your eyes adjust, you'll see that what first appeared to be a city empty of life quickly becomes a city of moving, breathing shadows. Tucked into every bit of blackness is a pair of eyes, a dirty mouth, groping hands. A few are human, although the dirt and darkness make it hard to tell. Others are clearly something else, a fact easily discovered by a rusted squeal of metal, a slither of tentacle, the clack of bone on bone. Some might offer wares, while others beg for an offering of food or drink. Sex is easily had for a sum, should you dare to risk it, as are creatures and trinkets. Most abundant are offerings of mycos—any number of mind-altering and mind-enhancing drugs made from the mushrooms, fungi, and algae that are both wild-growing and cultivated in the city. Perhaps the cheapest thing in Hidden Naresh is your own death, proffered up for little more than what you might have in your pockets.

If you see red and blue lights glowing in the darkness, they may call like sirens, urging you forward so that you might see something at last, but do not follow them. These are the algae farms, stagnant pools of liquid where the most potent of the mycos are grown. Along the surface of each pool, blue and green and purple strains of algae thrive beneath the red and blue lights. Sharing the pools with the algae are the worst of the mycos addicts, barely cognizant

The guardians of Hidden Naresh are humans genetically modified to be hosts of poisonous wormlike creatures. The guards are level 4, and the worms' poison forces a Might defense roll. Failure results in moving one step down the damage track.

Damage track, page 110

A nano made of cracked and stained synth wanders the Beyond, looking for something it calls "The Hungry City."





creatures who no longer notice or care that they've become little more than living fuel to power the lights embedded in their bodies.

Ask anyone on the street who rules Hidden Naresh, and they'll say, "No one," or perhaps, "Me." But in truth, the city is ruled by The Sorcan, a man so riddled with implementations and upgrades that it's almost impossible to tell whether he truly is—or ever was—human. He gives off a weird glow, sometimes yellow and sometimes orange, but it's hard to say whether it comes directly from his skin or from his biomechanical parts. He is often found traipsing the rotting wood walkways of the city, followed by his harem of Nibovian wives, who protect him in return for the safe space and fertile men he provides.

The Sorcan: *level 8, all defenses as level 10; health 34; Armor 5; hidden, built-in, mono-point dart thrower with long range inflicting 2 points of damage that ignore Armor (level 8 poison causes paralysis for ten minutes)*

Nibovian wife, page 245

The Sorcan is not ruthless, for to be ruthless one must care, at least a little. Instead, he seems entirely unconcerned with the rabble and filth at his feet. Rumor hints that he does not sleep with his Nibovian wives, nor with any other creature that inhabits the town, that he does not eat, and that he does little in the way of ruling. He seems utterly content to let the city grow as it will and exist as it will, as long as he can walk the darkness and retreat to his simple stone house in the city's south end. There are those who say that The Sorcan has fallen to the power of the mycos, and perhaps he has. But other whispers tell of darker attractions within the city that hold his attentions.

Perhaps, if you've made it this far with your mind and body intact, you are the person to ask him. Perhaps he'll even tell you.

TITANIC RIDGE

A place where stone meets sky to pose tantalizing dangers, the so-called Titanic Ridge is a very high, very sheer drop-off slicing its way through the Black Riage. The ridge rises 10,000 feet (3,000 m) above its base. A series of metal towers runs the length of the cliff top, about 15 miles (24 km). Because these towers are covered with red and blue lights, most still functional, they are best seen at night. It's said that those who manage to scale the cliffs (a series of ten climbing tasks, each level 7) find that the towers are associated with an interdimensional gate and nigh-incomprehensible beings composed of matter and energy at the same time.

LOOKING FOR

Cloudcrystal Skyfields, page 169
The Beyond, page 169

CURTARIS

It's hard to find, but if you go looking for it, you might find a long box canyon on the eastern edge of the Black Riage mountains. At the end of the canyon stands an enormous statue of a vaguely human figure. Holding his hands above his head, the seated man appears to be holding the sun aloft in the sky. In fact, a visual distortion field makes it seem that the sun always appears in his hands, regardless of the time of day or even the weather. At night, the figure appears to be holding the moon, which is always full.

About three hundred years ago, people came to the canyon and discovered the massive statue, which rises 400 feet (122 m) into the sky. They called it Curtar and built their community around its base. To the hardy and faithful folk of this city, Curtar is the creator of the universe and the bringer and sustainer of life. Most of the 3,000 people of the town, Curtaris, belong to this cult and spend their lives trying to enact the will of their god.

The people of Curtaris are forbidden to leave the canyon. The doctrines of Curtar state that any straying from the canyon will be cursed with a horrific plague, which means that any who do sneak away can never return. But few people ever try to leave. They remain in Curtaris their whole lives, growing their food and creating whatever they need.

Somei is the leader of the city and the cult. Extremely intelligent and capable, she is faithfully devoted to Curtar and the community.

Somei: *level 4; all interactions, seeing through deception, and understanding numenera as level 5*

In the main square of Curtaris stands a massive synth screen, measuring almost 15 feet (5 m) across. From a panel in her chambers, Somei controls the images that appear on the screen, broadcast for all to see. She uses this to convey information to the populace as well as to conduct religious rites with the entirety of the population at once, every morning at dawn and every evening at dusk.

THE SLANT MILIEU

There is a place where the rocks whistle lullabies to their pebbled children, where even the stoutest trees and the angriest mountains bow before the press of invisible hands, where a man would take his life before he fought to stand

straight against the wail of the welkerwind. There is a place where the sound of terror is silent and where the deadliest foe is an invisible twist of air.

That place is the Slant Milieu.

The welkerwind—the fierce, angry blow that storms down off the Black Riage almost constantly—is both the Slant's savior and its jailer. The wide strip of land in the Beyond is pummeled day in and day out, its trees bending sideways, its mountains turning their pointed tops toward the ground. The few creatures and fewer people who brave the elements to live here have become stooped and hunched. *Low and slow* is the common refrain among the people of the Slant.

The trees in the area bend at sharp angles, typically a foot or two above the ground. This creates unusual shapes that are coveted by ship-builders, carpenters, and others who work with wood. Those who can get in and out of the area with both a tree and their life intact easily find a buyer for the first (and are glad to have the second). Enterprising business owners have tried planting certain types of trees here, attempting to create nurseries, but the welkerwind scatters a huge percentage of those saplings long before they can take root.

There are few towns in the Slant, if they can even be called towns. Those who live in them call them burrows, and truly that is a better term. Each collection of humans lives in a handful of underground rooms and interconnected tunnels. The tunnels were built not by their current inhabitants but by someone or something long ago. They wind on in a seemingly endless tangle, far more extensive than needed to house the small number of people living there today.

The residents carefully seal off the tunnels past the point where they need the passages to survive, using a mix of mud and wind-rounded pebbles that are common to the area. The seals not only protect them from additional windways but also decrease the chance of attack. Well-protected, windless burrows are much in demand by other humans and by creatures who seek shelter.

There is much to fear in the Slant besides the welkerwind. Creatures of the area have adapted a variety of mechanisms, many of them dangerous, to defend themselves and their young against the high winds. For example, the sessils are low-crawling marsupials whose young spend their early lives in pouches being dragged along the ground, and the lofty boab gliders are flying carnivores that use the wind to their advantage when diving down toward prey.

The large carnivorous insects known as caffa have perhaps become the most dangerous of all. With their cloaked eyes and their wings of iridescent goldgleam, caffa have learned to navigate at ground level and below, flying through the tunneled mazes beneath the earth. A flap of their strong wings is enough to send a man flying. Two flaps, and a man will find the wind a far easier force to withstand.

Caffa, page 227

At certain times of the year, a single wing flutter also releases a spray of eggs, all of which dig into the ground to cocoon before becoming caffa larvae—ravenous creatures that appreciate the taste of corpses as well as that of living flesh. A caffa larva can eat ten times its weight in a single night.

In the aldeia of Evril, everyone near death is visited by a flock of green birds; it stays until death, even if this takes days.

Caffa are also one of the few reasons anyone would choose to brave such a place as the Slant. Their goldgleam wings are much coveted by those in more civilized places for decorative purposes, and the cocoons of their young are gathered and spun into silster, a nearly unbreakable golden thread. Because of their small size, many caffa wings and cocoons must be collected to produce even a meager trade amount, but the profit is so high that many are willing to take the risk. Those who trek the caffa trade route, carrying goldgleam and silster from the Slant to those who desire it, will also likely find themselves well rewarded, should they safely make the trip.

After the caffa, other humans are perhaps the most dangerous creatures to life and limb here. Abhumans sometimes seek shelter in the burrows, alone or in groups. The Slant has a criminal contingency as well. Long ago, Challadien II, the former empress of the Pytharon Empire and a woman with a special affinity for goldgleam and silster, sent a large group of criminals and guards to the area in the hopes of bringing back quantities large enough to satisfy her needs. Her plan was for the criminals to stay as harvesters while her guards traveled back and forth with the goods. But her guards never returned, and the criminals discovered that they'd been sent to the perfect place to hide from the world. They and their families stay on, thieving, killing, and selling their spoils to those who walk the goldgleam route.



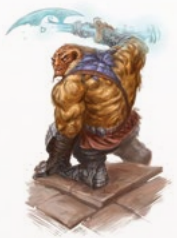
There are two standing structures in the Slant: the windmoldens and the Susurrus. The windmoldens are as black as night and hundreds of feet tall, with multiple long arms that catch the wind. Built from an unknown material that not only withstands the gale but captures and contains it, the windmoldens seem capable of producing enormous amounts of energy if only someone could discern how.

The Susurrus rises nearly 100 feet (30 m) and is built of a variety of metal and synth tubes in a wide range of sizes, all placed at seemingly haphazard angles. Broken whirligigs swirl wildly at the end of some of the tubes, while torn flags whip at others. Bits of glass and stone hang from silster threads, banging into each other. It seems impossible that such a slipshod structure could stand the test of time and wind.

Those with an ear for music, however, quickly find that the Susurrus is the opposite of slapdash. In fact, at any given angle and strength of wind, the structure provides not wind resistance but wind *passage*, creating haunting, ethereal music that can be heard throughout the Slant and beyond.

INGWALD

At the far end of Garl Nave, the southernmost pass through the Black Riage, crouches a modest-sized town called Ingwald. Once the home of hunters and trappers that traverse the mountains to the west and the forest to the east, Ingwald is now better known as a town of cutthroats and thieves. The de facto ruler of Ingwald is a lattimor named Gravish-Morel, who commands a band of river pirates that operate on the Welbyway. Before Gravish-Morel and his scoundrels came to town, the community was led by Tarae, a rugged human woman who had worked as a scout and guide before accepting the mantle of leadership. No one knows where Tarae is now. The pirates and thieves have run things in Ingwald for more than a year.



Lattimor, page 396

Gravish-Morel: *level 6; health 28; has an artifact that produces a fiery force field that (when active) gives him Armor 4 and inflicts 4 points of damage to all in immediate range*

"It is interesting that humans call this the Ninth World, but they have no idea how many prior 'worlds' actually preceded it."
~Visixtru, varjellen philosopher

BLACK RIAGE HEARSAY

Roots of the Mountain: Far below Mt. Jaspar in the southern part of the range is a small subterranean civilization of bestial, almost apelike abhumans. Unlike most of their kind, they don't raid human settlements—in fact, they never leave their own unlit realm—but they are quite hostile to intruders. Rumor has it that these abhumans possess a powerful numenera device that restores full health to those nearly dead and even gives life to those recently slain.

Rock Slide: An avalanche in the mountains has completely cut off a small village from the rest of the world. The people there need food and medicine, but no one knows how to reach them.

THE WEIRD OF THE BLACK RIAGE

Mystic Alignment: At a certain spot in the northern part of the Black Riage, the mountain peaks—when seen from above—resemble the positions of the stars in the northern sky overhead. A skilled astronomer will tell you that the positioning is not a precise match, but in twenty-three years, it will be.

CAECILIAN JUNGLE

Woods. Water. Wind. Rain. These attributes define the Caecilian Jungle. Other people use harsher words. *Death. Destruction. Monsters. Madness.*

Covering more than 500 square miles (1,300 sq. km), the Caecilian Jungle is dense with trees, underbrush, rivers, fog, and rain. Natural and mechanical creatures stalk its shores, lie in wait along the branches, and wing their way down upon prey in the dark of night.

Why go at all, then? Why enter its dark borders and risk life, limb, and sanity? The jungle has treasures to be found, ancient gods to be awoken, and wonders to be discovered. Despite the fact that there are no known reports of anyone returning from a visit to the Caecilian, believers continue to plan expeditions to its tangled innards.

Makeshift camps have sprung up at various points around the edges of the jungle. Typically created by people who canceled their trek at the last minute, these camps are places of shelter and information sharing. They sell jungle maps that point out the locations of various gods and features, but every map is different from camp to camp (and sometimes even within the same camp). Explorers can also purchase slightly used tools, as well as great quantities of tifo fruits, a bitter podfruit that is extolled for its ability to calm nerves.

There are believed to be at least five wonders within the confines of the jungle:

- **Le Temple de Frogue:** A giant stone temple of a humanoid frog rests in the middle of a swampy river. A fertility symbol, the frogoid invites explorers into her temple through the open doorway between her legs. Her lower levels are covered in the deep swamp that surrounds her. Frogs, newts, flying fish, and other amphibious creatures flock to her.
- **The Wild Garden:** A wall of electricity 10 feet (3 m) high surrounds a carefully tended garden of genetically enhanced carnivorous plants. Members of the Sarracenians, a group of scholars that studies and worships unique plants, often claim that the Wild Garden is their mecca.
- **Archeol:** In this miniature city, each building stands no taller than a human's knees.

Sarracenians, page 220

LOOKING FOR
Uxphon, page 171



The inhabitants are sometimes said to be supernatural beings, sometimes mechanical, and sometimes just very small humans. Clearly, someone still uses the city, but they're either invisible or adept at hiding.

- **The Malingering Valley:** This deep, dark cut through the earth is always in unnatural shadow. Cold springs that run underground erupt regularly in spouts of cold water, ice steam, and small creatures carried from the depths.
- **The Westwind:** This jungle element is ever moving within its area, a corkscrewed tornado that carries trees, animals, and all manner of debris in its circular grip. Changing in size depending on what it holds, the diameter of the Westwind can be as small as a human or as large as 30 feet (9 m) across. Its destructive path is easy to follow, as it's strong enough to rip trees from the ground and drag large objects for long distances.

If you could look at the Caecilian Jungle from the air, you'd see that the vast forest still holds much of its original shape: an oblong star with five points. Along the edges, where the forest meets the rest of the world, the trees are taller and darker, close enough and tight enough to create a living wall. At the widest section of each point, right before it joins the center of the star shape, sits one of the five wonders. Although the jungle is overgrown and tangled now, it seems to have been the careful creation of loving—and very large—hands.

LE TEMPLE DE FROGUE

Here, at last, lies the thing I have been searching for all of these years. Others scoffed, sure. Still others questioned my sanity. Because that is what one does when placed next to brilliance. In coming up short, they must regain their status by what they tell themselves about me. It all comes back to me, clearly, just as it came back to me to do what was asked of me.

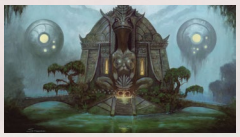
The gods never talked to me, not a one of them, not even when I was little and needed someone to tell me that I was acceptable, not a monster, not a hideous, horrendous thing that deserved to be stuffed deep into the mud and muck. No.

Here, among my own kind, resting at the feet of my own image, surrounded by my own self, I am at home. I deserve the mud and muck, surely, but only because the mud is reverence, the muck is godlike, because this is perfection and I wear its blessing.

—The Frog King

Located deep in the heart of the Caecilian Jungle, Le Temple de Frogue is a much sought-after fertility symbol. Rumors tell tales of spontaneous pregnancies, beneficial mutations, and increased fertility. The humanoid frog remains silent on the issue,

Despite the fact that she's kept her silent, unmoving vigil for years, Le Temple (level 8) is not entirely unliving. If she deems that those who come to her door are worthy, she assists them in their fight against the Frog King but not against his armies—that, explorers must do on their own. To be considered worthy, a visitor must make an attempt (no matter how fumbling) to worship at the altar just inside her front door. Le Temple's assistance comes in the form of her blessing, which temporarily gives one chosen ally froglike reflexes (+1 Speed Edge) and hinders the attack prowess of the Frog King. The blessing lasts for ten minutes.



LOOKING FOR

Black Riage, page 172
Cerdyn's Pass, page 172
Garl Nave, page 172
Mount Zanlis, page 172

CAECILIAN HEARSAY

The Trapped Man: Rumor has it that a man named Rorvic is trapped within Le Temple de Frogue, held prisoner by the king. Rorvic knows the location of a vast hoard of valuable treasures and secrets of the past.

The Blue Ache: A terrible disease called the Blue Ache has broken out in a village south of the jungle, and the Sarracenians say the cure is a rare leaf found only in the depths of the Caecilian.

The Seven Pyramids: Seven vaguely pyramid-shaped devices of unearthly metal are thought to be keyed to the Caecilian Jungle. These numenera devices hail from some other world, but if gathered, they give a pair of users (it must be two individuals) strange control over the very nature of the jungle, suggesting a clue to its origins. The pyramids were gathered by a woman named Daiwesi 400 years ago, but then, for reasons unknown, they were scattered across the Ninth World. They have not been recovered since.

THE WEIRD OF THE CAECILIAN JUNGLE

The Pit of Horrors: Within the confines of the jungle lies a dark pit of unknown depths. Machines appearing to be little more than an elaborate mass of mechanized blades and almost serpentlike mouths lurch out of the pit from time to time, grab whatever living creatures they come upon, and drag them down into the pit, never to be seen again.

The Undying Tribe: A tribe of humans in the jungle lives a savage existence of cannibalism. For reasons unknown, these people do not seem to age past maturity. Their violent lives are often cut short, but some have reportedly lived hundreds of years.

inviting explorers to discover for themselves what awaits inside her temple door.

Just inside her front door is a round great room. While there, look up—you can see all the way to the curved roof, and you'll catch glimpses of the seven floors above the ground level.

The great room features a large, clear waterfall that flows from the top floor and splashes to the swamp below. Inside the curtain of water rest two synth statues of tadpoles, positioned as if they're swimming up the falls. Despite their age and the pressure of the water, the tadpoles are pristine, their careful etchings and details still intact. At the top of the falls, high above, sits a smaller replica of Le Temple, her frog legs spread wide on either side of the water. This is clearly an altar to Le Temple, although no offerings can be seen.

In addition to the seven floors that rise above the main level, there are also rooms inside each of the legs as well as beneath the ground floor (although those are flooded with swamp water; travelers will need water skills or equipment to explore them at length).

At the far wall, visitors can raise or lower a mechanical platform to reach the upper floors. Despite its age, the platform works smoothly, giving the impression that it's used regularly.

The Frog King, a frogoid mutant who was scorned and ostracized by his family and society for his amphibian appearance and habits, has taken Le Temple for his wife. He haunts her internal rooms, believing that all frogs within the temple are their children. He is jealous and paranoid of any who come to worship at the altar of his bride, believing that they intend to take his place as her rightful husband and king.

In his time at the temple, he has discovered some of the numenera left by former worshippers and has puzzled out its secrets. Using the devices, the Frog King has created an army of anura: followers built of mud, living frogs, and dead worshippers. Due to experimentation and the occasional lack of appropriate parts, anura vary in appearance. One might have a body of mud, the limbs of dead worshippers, and two frog heads trained for attacking. Another might have a human head and body with frog limbs that allow it to move rapidly toward opponents. The king considers the anura to be his true children, as they carry elements of both himself and Le Temple.

The Frog King fights out of jealousy and paranoia. He is less interested in protecting his queen and his young than he is in protecting his own place as Le Temple's husband. He sends his army of anura to deal with intruders and shows himself only after most of them have been slain.

The anura seem endless, but each one is fairly easy to conquer. They have a variety of attack types (kick, tongue lash, or poison), but each anura can make only one type of attack, and each attack (no matter the type) deals 1 point of damage. The real danger is the potential to be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of attackers.

Anura: *level 2; when attacking in groups of at least eight, attack as a level 4 creature that inflicts 6 points of damage*

The Frog King: *level 6; health 30; large, amphibious body allows him to move rapidly (long range) and attack with a jumping kick that does 7 points of damage and knocks down foes (causing them to lose one turn); his pores excrete a toxic poison that inflicts 3 points of damage to any creature that touches him with bare flesh or any creature that he strikes*

LOOKING FOR

Empty Sanctum, page 172
Hidden Naresh, page 172

THE PLAINS OF KATARU

A large, sprawling region, the Plains of Kataru stretch from the southern end of the Caecilian Jungle to the northern edge of the Ba-Adenu Forest. The northernmost part of the plains is somewhat arid, but the rolling flatlands farther south are fertile and temperate.

Wild herds of swift espron and plodding reptilian camethosaurs roam the plains, preyed upon by callerail and ithsyn.

There are no cities on the plains, but small towns and aldeia, mostly farming communities, dot the landscape. The farmers grow wheat, beans, and vegetables of all kinds. Most of these small communities are self-sufficient, but occasionally trade with caravans from the Steadfast that travel across the Black Riage on their way to Augur-Kala. But these are rare.

There are also nomadic tribes of human hunters that erect temporary villages of hide tents and yurts on the plains. These tribes tame the espron and ride them as mounts. Some of the nomads have turned to raiding more settled communities and even other tribes.

Terrible storms sometimes cross the Plains of Kataru, particularly in the spring. Cyclones, fierce hail, flash floods, and lightning strikes are serious dangers.

THE EMPTY MACHINE

In the vast fields east of the Black Riage but west of the Dessanedi fields that have no name, you can find the Empty Machine. It's easy to do—you can see it from miles away because the large machine stands out among the flat fields. It resembles a wide spear point that fell from the heavens and plunged into the earth.

The lower portion of the machine is a scarred shell of metal, and the upper part is a strange tangle of twisting cylinders, globes, tubes, and things that have no name in the Ninth World. The entire machine rises 600 feet (185 m) into the air, and the widest point—itself 200 feet (60 m) above the ground—is about 800 feet (245 m) across.

Huge hatchways hang open in various parts of the machine, and people have cut or blasted entrances and exits in other areas. The interior is a maze that stretches throughout the machine, seeming to follow little pattern or logic. Tiny corridors lead to enormous echoing chambers, wide access tubes lead nowhere, and everywhere you explore, you find—nothing.

At least, mostly nothing. The interior of the machine seems to have no moving parts, no mechanisms, no controls. The rooms give no hint of their original use, if any. But the Empty Machine is no longer empty because it has been inhabited by various creatures and people over the years, each trying to lay claim to all or part of the structure, always with mixed results.

Notably, a few years back, the Empty Machine was the home of a large tribe of hideous, four-armed abhumans called the dzaal. After they committed many atrocities upon nearby villages, the local folk hired the Triad of Thirst—a group consisting of a powerful Glaive and two Nanos—to end the raids. Through methods that remain mysterious, these three champions eliminated the dzaal. If any of the creatures remain, it would come as a surprise to the locals, for none has been seen since that day.

Espron are large, antelope-like creatures (level 2) that have long movement.

Camethosaurs are herbivorous quadrupeds (level 3, health 24), 30 feet (9 m) long from head to tail.

Callerail, page 228

Ithsyn, page 237

Travelers tell of a nonhuman city in the northern reaches of the Plains of Kataru, inhabited solely by insect-like creatures.

The Triad of Thirst has, in recent months, disappeared without a trace somewhere north of the Ausren Woods.



Along a road in the Beyond, raindrops never fall. They remain suspended in the air, eventually turning to glowing embers.

THE AUSREN WOODS

Day 12

The woods really are the queer purple color that I was told. The trees don't look particularly strange in any other way. But the leaves and even the bark range from a bluish-red to a deep violet. The branches are alive with birds of all kinds and colors. I almost expected them to be purple as well, but none are.

Day 14

The fruit of these trees is delightful. I am already wondering if I can carry a sack of them back with me to Uxphon. I think Eilla could make some extraordinary wine from these.

Day 15

I feel unwell, but I plan to leave for home tomorrow nevertheless.

Day 16

Too sick to leave today.

Day 17

Still very ill. I can't help but notice that none of the wildlife eats the fruit of the trees. My gut is covered in bruise-like sores, very tender to the touch.

Day 19

The sores on my gut have formed distinct growths. I can barely stand. The food I brought with me is gone. Only the purple fruit to eat. Despite the pain in my stomach, I am filled with hunger.

Day 20

The growths are . . . longer. I cannot move except to crawl, and barely that.

Day 22

Dear lords of my ancestors, help me. The growths, as long as serpents, have begun to burrow into the soil around me. I tried to cut one of them, but the pain increased beyond that which I could stand. Still so weak. Tomorrow I will try again.

~Here the journal of Temallis Crost ends.

Needlestorms: *When the winds rise, they gather glass shards and carry them along like tiny razors and needles. During a storm, which can last an hour or more, travelers who are exposed in the open without at least 1 Armor take 1 point of damage each minute. Thus, after such a storm, sometimes all that remains is a skeleton covered in tattered, bloody flesh.*

The Ausren Woods are a large forest of purple trees that grow nowhere else. Do not eat the fruit of these trees.

THE ORGOREK

The field is called the graveyard, and it's not hard to understand why. In every direction, all you see are scattered white stones, so greatly resembling gravestones that it is hard to recognize that they are not, in fact, just that. And in the middle of it, the thing they call the Orgorek, for reasons that pass understanding. But then, what would you call it?

A sort of . . . I don't know, building? Monument? Let's say structure. A structure made of some kind of very dense, very hard ceramic floats above the stones. Its surface bears a number of large, round hatches, and from the top, believe it or not, grows a huge tree that must be centuries old, if not far older. And the tree? There are no other trees like it for a thousand miles.

No one lives within 50 miles of the Orgorek, but if you can find someone to ask about it, like I did, you learn that while it's serene and even kind of beautiful, it's also dangerous. Fiddling with the hatches apparently causes whiplike tendrils to come out of the Orgorek and attack, and their touch seems to burn flesh in a very unnatural, disturbing way. I'm not sure what that means, but I'm happy to remain ignorant.

The Orgorek likely holds still more secrets and mysteries, but who wants to get close enough to discover them? I'm not an explorer. I'm just a writer.

THE BEANSTALK

The Beanstalk. In the middle of seemingly nowhere, it rises up literally into the sky and out of sight. The legends of Jack, for whom all Jacks are named, cross paths with it.

And then Jack climbed the Beanstalk. He climbed and climbed and climbed. He climbed so very high that when he stopped climbing, he found himself in the clouds. He stood so high, in fact, that Jack had climbed all the way to a castle built by giants.

The base of the Beanstalk is a tall tower of metal and glass. As tall as the tower is, rising up from the highest point of the tower is a strip of unknown material that reaches far, far higher. This "stalk" is about 10 feet (3 m) wide but only a few inches thick. No one knows exactly how high it extends, but on a clear day it seems to simply disappear into the sky. Even more mysterious is the Beanstalk's purpose—what waits at the top? The stories, of course, say that it leads to a castle in the clouds,



LOOKING FOR
Goldgleam, page 175



PLAINS OF KATARU HEARSAY

Dark Riders: A group of aneen-riding bandits plagues the countryside, raiding villages and waylaying travelers on the road. Their leader is a woman named Milaconi, who has the power to heal or harm with a touch. Her chief rival is a woman named Ghabhail, who has begun to raise forces to oppose the raiders. Ghabhail, a tall woman with braided red hair and a long polearm, is recruiting help and offering payment for weapons, armor, or other devices (with which she has some skill).

THE WEIRD OF KATARU

The Black Sphere: A sphere of unknown black material rolls across the plains, seemingly of its own accord. Some reports say that it is 12 feet (4 m) in diameter, and others put it closer to 30 feet (9 m), which might suggest that the sphere changes size, or that there is more than one.

The Discordant Blooms: Although rare, a yellow flower grows in certain locations on the plains. If brewed for three days, it forms a concoction that will make the imbiber aroused past the point of clear thinking for up to a day.

occupied by a giant. These same legends suggest that there is a danger that the giant will one day come down the stalk to plague the land.

Due to a gravitational distortion likely caused by the Beanstalk or the tower, five boulders the size of small mountains (along with numerous smaller stones) float in the air around the base and the lowest part of the stalk. These gravity-defying stones have no known purpose and might be an unintended side effect of the process originally used to construct the tower and the Beanstalk.

In recent years, a small town of about 1,000 residents has grown around the tower. Most residents are farmers, growing wheat and, ironically, beans in the flat region around the tower. The people don't know how to access the interior of the base, but they have built wooden structures and scaffolding around it, which support observation platforms and places for religious rites. There is no wall around the town, but dangerous beasts and other threats seem to avoid the area most of the time.

Someday, the wise folks say, the giant will return, looking for his stolen goods. Looking to get revenge. Looking for Jack. But on that day, Jack will be long gone, his days long since done. But his grandson or granddaughter, or perhaps their grandson or granddaughter, might just be on hand to trick the giant again and save the land from his terrible wrath. Let's all hope so. For the land to be safe, we need not a hero, but a Jack.

Milaconi: *level 6; Armor 3; touch either heals 3 points of damage per round or inflicts 5 points of damage per round*

Ghabhail: *level 5, polearm as level 6; Armor 2*

On the underside of the boulders floating around the Beanstalk grows a fungus unknown anywhere else. If it can be harvested and mixed with regular soil, anything planted in that soil grows within an organic sheath that is as hard as steel but very pliable. The sheath can be used for armor or other objects.

There are many ways to travel to the skies high above the Ninth World. Is the Beanstalk one of them? Perhaps. But only the giant knows for sure.

LOOKING FOR

Caecilian Jungle, page 176
Ingwald, page 176

DESSANEDI, THE JAGGED WASTES

The land of Dessanedi is a mostly barren field of broken, jagged glass that lies south of the Great Slab, north of the Plains of Kataru, and west of the Clock of Kala. Although paths lead through the aptly named Jagged Wastes, travel in this region is slow, arduous, and filled with cuts and scrapes—or worse.

Underfoot, traversable paths are nothing but tiny shards of glass. On either side stand outcroppings of serrated edges and razor points. If the Jagged Wastes weren't the only way to reach the pass called the Sheer, it's unlikely anyone would ever come here.

Scholars suspect that at some point in the distant past, the sand-swept dunes of Dessanedi were turned to glass, perhaps through intense heat. Time has broken and shattered the glass, making the wasteland very difficult to cross.

Nothing grows in the Jagged Wastes, and other than a few scavenger birds, little lives there, making it at least a quiet journey. The significant communities are found on the very edge of the wastes, in regions that might technically be considered part of the Plains of Kataru.

Hervan: *level 5; possesses a number of magnetic powers*

Deil: *level 3, crossbow as level 5*

THE GREAT SLAB

The Great Slab is a huge construct that rises from the blue-green earth in a hulking block of synth, metal, and organics. It lies at the southernmost edge of the Fifth Stretch of the Wandering Walk. Rising more than 3,000 feet (900 m) into the air, straight up on all sides, and covering more than 9 square miles (23 sq. km), the Great Slab can be seen for long distances and is often used as a point of reference on maps. A reddish-black oil continually runs down the sides, making the construct impossible to climb. Nothing grows along its slick walls and few, if any, creatures live near the sides of the Great Slab.

The Wandering Walk is a pilgrimage route through the Ninth World. No one knows the exact length of the Wander, nor can anyone seem to point to its exact beginning or end.

There are many who speculate that the Wander is actually a closed circle that encloses the whole of the Ninth World and that some, especially those with enhancements or otherworldly attributes, have been trekking its eternal loop since before recorded time.

However, the top is a different matter—the surface of the slab is an ecosystem of its own. Carved out of the enormous flat top is a blind valley, a deep and narrow crevasse that runs north to south, with an abrupt ending on both sides. A closer look at the valley reveals that it seems to have been dug out of the surface of the slab, as one might accidentally gouge a table. Littered along the gash—which is called the Driftless Valley—giant, half-buried boulders reflect light, even when there appears to be none. Due to its isolation, the valley hosts creatures found nowhere else in the Ninth World, with genetic mutations that combine two or more creatures into one.

Those who have attempted to climb the Great Slab have been thwarted by the slick sides, apparent bad luck, or some other impediment that has hindered and eventually stopped their progress. Thus, the slab's diverse ecosystem and potential treasures remain unknown to most people of the Ninth World.

WHITE LAKE

White Lake is a small town by most standards, but it is the only bit of civilization for 40 miles (65 km) around, amid a particularly empty stretch of plains near the Jagged Wastes. About 1,500 people call the town home and have named it, not surprisingly, after the nearby lake fed by streams coming down out of the mountain.

The town's unofficial leaders are a married couple named Hervan and Deil. Hervan is a Nano who specializes in esoteries that shape and control magnetic fields. Deil was a skilled warrior, but he lost the use of his legs a few years ago. Today he rolls about in a wheeled metal chair that Hervan levitates and moves when he is nearby. Both men command the respect of everyone in White Lake because years earlier, they drove off a force of abhumans that threatened the town.

The lake was named for the large number of ferrix turtles that lay their eggs each spring, appearing to turn the normally clear waters white. The eggs are a delicacy to the people of White Lake, who carefully leave enough to ensure a new generation of the creatures.

Six miles (10 km) south of White Lake lie the ruins of Selascor Castle, a 400-year-old fortress made of heavy grey stones. The lord of the castle was once the ruler of the area, but after an angry uprising, he was hanged for crimes against his subjects.

YOSH-UL

Yosh-ul is a meeting point for nomadic tribes that dwell in the region. About 1,000 residents live there permanently, but at any given time, the population doubles due to nomads who come for only a month or so each year. In Yosh-ul, the temporary residents hold festivals, weddings, important meetings, and other community events before once again resuming their harsher nomadic lifestyle.

A natural spring provides water and a few fields of grain and vegetables. The permanent part of the community is a collection of wooden and stone buildings, and visitors to Yosh-ul erect temporary yurts, tents, and pavilions.

The town—if it can be called that—has no official ruler, but if the need for one arises,

the leader of whatever tribe or tribes are in residence takes the mantle. However, the wisest among these leaders consult with a woman named Vona.

Many people in Yosh-ul revere Vona as a goddess. Unknown to most, she comes from a distant world and is an artificially created but organic being capable of asexual reproduction. Sent to colonize Earth, she originally produced a large progeny, but afterward she went mad and hunted down each of her offspring. Since then, she has reproduced only once, creating a daughter called Aorolae.

Vona has the power to alter and shape her own genetic material and that of other beings within immediate range. Thus, she can transform herself or others. Using her power as a weapon, she can cause an enemy's body to tear itself apart.

Vona is known to those in Yosh-ul as the Great Mother, the Glass Wraith, and the Life Weaver. Although aloof, she is kind and wise.

THE LAMBENT FIELDS

A shimmering wasteland. A business venture. A burial ground of the new gods. A sacred place of ancient worship and death. Depending on who you talk to, the Lambent Fields are all of these things and more.

DESSANEDI HEARSAY

Manhunt: A murderer from Yosh-ul has fled into the Jagged Wastes. The nomad leaders seek hardy folk to track him down and retrieve him, but this decision has stirred up contention among the tribes. Some say the windstorms this time of year are likely to claim the criminal before any posse could find him. Others want the more tangible justice of a trial and traditional death by scorpion sting.

THE WEIRD OF DESSANEDI

Rune Tower: In the middle of the Jagged Wastes stands a pristine tower of what also appears to be glass, but the structure looks sturdy, and local gossip says it's indestructible. The tower is 30 feet (9 m) tall, and at the top it projects images of unknowable symbols made of light.

Warrow Beetles: Throughout the wastes, you can find strange, translucent beetles that appear to subsist on the glass. These warrow beetles cannot be eaten safely, as they have more in common with mineral than with flesh.



Bordering the westernmost edge of the Clock of Kala, the Lambent Fields are more than 100 miles (160 km) across and potentially just as deep (or deeper). The surface area is covered in multicolored dust that shines even in the dimmest light. Enterprising individuals collect the dust and sell it to those who can afford it. The wealthy use the dust as décor for buildings, clothing, and their bodies.

Buried deep beneath the shimmering earth, however, is something of greater value, but no one can figure out what it is or, perhaps more important, what to do with it. Layers upon layers of metallic creations fill the earth, a numenera boneyard, ripe for the taking—or it would be if not for the political tensions running rampant in the nearby city of Picalah. The city has long claimed jurisdiction over the Lambent Fields and stationed a standing army around its borders to keep poachers from the valuable materials. Businesses with the appropriate papers were allowed to send specially trained individuals called yarders to mine the fields as long as they tithed their proper percentage to the city.

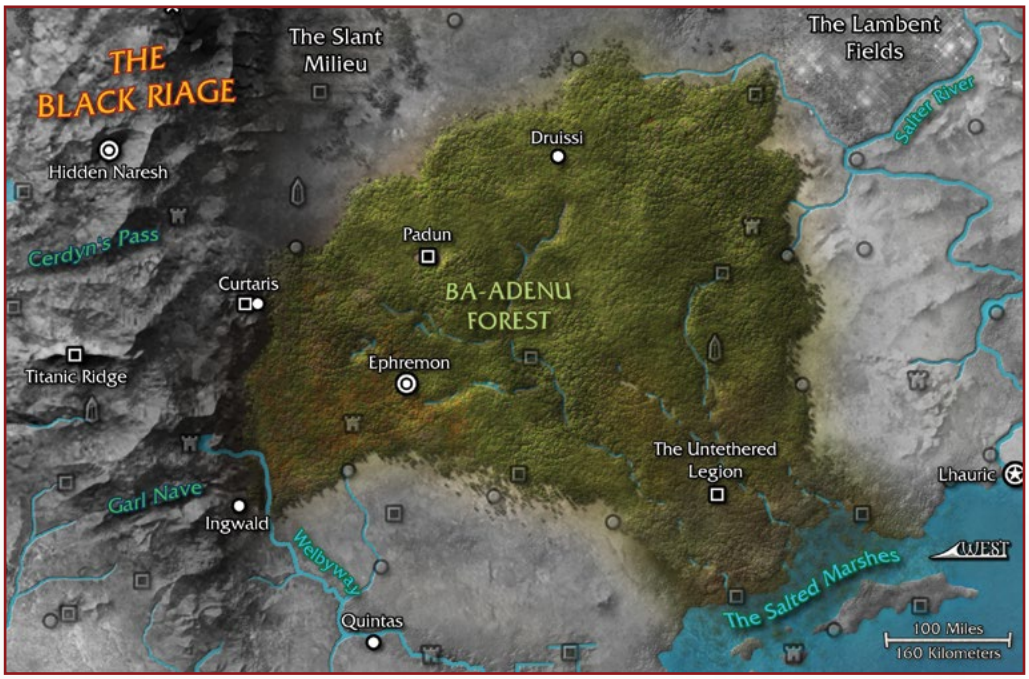
Everything changed when a yarder unearthed the intact body of a giant mechanical creature. It had three heads and multiple limbs and would have stood at least three times as tall as the average human. The creature bore symbols along its many limbs, and within two of its appendages were objects. The first was a ceramic bowl inscribed with similar markings. The second was what appeared to be a type of stone game piece, possibly an ancient die, bearing pictograms on its sides.

PICALAH

Picalah is a city of about 10,000 people, many of whom came to the area as a result of the find in the Lambent Fields. The simple city is having

Vona: *level 9; can transform into any other creature (or original form of her design) if given an hour; can inflict 15 points of damage to any and all living creatures within immediate range, but it takes two rounds to do so*

The vilgrim flower has crystalline petals that shimmer and vibrate in the wind to attract insects—which it then devours.



difficulty dealing with the influx of new people as well as the contentions over the fields.

Shortly after the discovery of the mechanical creature's body, Picalah split apart, with four organizations at the helm of the controversy. While the four groups fight, the mining operations are at a standstill, except for those who sneak by or pay off the guards in the dark of night.

Stackle Spire is the city's director. She believes that the purpose of the Lambent Fields is to bring prosperity, fame, and a high quality of life to Picalah and its inhabitants. She keeps the army at the field's borders and continues to fight for the right to mine the numenera.

Lorne Mamm is the Mag of the Populace Priory, a religious sect that believes the giant creature is one of the gods that came before and deserves to be worshipped as such. The Populace Priory advocates that a large, open-air place of reverence be built in the center of the dig.

Colten Gangy is the overseer of the Land Laws, a group of city natives who argue that the fields are a burial ground for giants. The whole area must be reburied out of respect for the dead. The group insists that replanting the land with a giant grove of trees would keep the dead happy in their graves and prevent them from rising to destroy the earth.

Finally, Efrix Morle is the voice of the Lambent Order, a newly founded sect of those who worship the numenera. They argue that Picalah must fund a careful excavation of the fields to look for more giant mechanical creatures and build a museum to protect and display their remains.

Stackle Spire: *level 3, all interactions as level 4*

Stondels are level 2 bison-like mammals that are 3 feet (1 m) tall.

Breslings look like segmented worms about the size of a human's arm (level 1), with hairy legs that end in three-fingered hands with opposable thumbs. They travel en masse, feeding on leaves in the tops of trees.

Lorne Mamm: *level 4; local history, religious practices, and interactions as level 5*

Colten Gangy: *level 3, perception as level 4*

Efrix Morle: *level 3, understanding knowledge as level 4*

LOOKING FOR

Espron, page 179
Plains of Kataru, page 179

BA-ADENU FOREST

This vast forest encompasses such a large area of the Beyond that it has at least three distinct climates within its leafy borders.

The southwestern area, which hedges the Black Riage, is dry and crisp. Winds whistle between the tops of the tallest trees, swaying their branches far above the ground. Trees topple regularly here, and a call of "Crackling!" is common among those who live in the wilds. Explorers can expect to find herds of stondels and breslings here, as well as winged creatures of all shapes, sizes, and colors. This area, which includes the city of Ephremon, is the most densely populated section of the forest. Most people dwell in curved huts built from stone bricks.

The middle section is a dense jungle, thick with underbrush and canopy levels that rise toward the sky and house many wild creatures. The air is so heavy with moisture that water drips from the trees, keeping the ground—and any who walk along it—damp at all times. Most small to medium creatures live high in the trees, hoping to escape the large carnivores that slink and stalk along the moist forest floor. Here travelers find the large wall known as the Padun, as well as the city of Druissi.

The southeastern tip of the Ba-Adenu Forest, which turns to swamps and bogs, is populated with snags and borgrove trees. Here, both the air and the ground are still and wet. A false step could land someone throat-deep in a stickybog or at the mercy of a hungry caiman that had appeared to be a dead log. Camouflage is the name of the game, and

most creatures are difficult to see among the mud and muck. The Untethered Legion thrives in this part of the forest, a further plague to all who wish to cross through the area.

EPHREMON

The large city of 20,000 people occupies many levels of the forest, from cavelike dwellings among the tree roots to nest-styled homes in the highest canopies. A large circle of carefully tended ester trees creates a makeshift wall around Ephremon, and lookouts sit in well-fashioned tree rests to keep an eye on things inside and outside the city. A complicated system of risers, ladders, and swings (all made from metal, synth, and wood) allow access to every level of the city.

Most inhabitants are agile and avid climbers, having learned at an early age how to move between the levels. However, visitors are likely to struggle and fall behind as they attempt to follow a native to any level beyond the ground.

Residents worship a creature called the Falgreen, which appears to the pious in the form of a floating young woman in a tattered black and green dress, with twigs for hair. The fiercely devout say that for the price of a child, Falgreen will promise long life, but most people merely consider her to be a bringer of luck and a safety net during their travels among the treetops.

PADUN

Padun is an enormous oval-shaped wall, almost 15 miles (24 km) across, deep in the Ba-Adenu Forest. The original structure seems to have been built from a soft metallic substance carved or shaped into round stones. Over the years, a variety of materials, including stronglass and purple trees from the Ausren Woods, have been used to extend and repair the wall.

Its surface features countless windows, doorways, holes, and other entry points. Some have been constructed and include doors that close and lock. Other entrances appear to be the remnants of wars, battles, and attacks.

A number of cities, fortresses, and strongholds have been built within the wall, but all failed and are now little more than ruins. For every potential ruler who sees the giant wall and imagines a kingdom of loyal and protected subjects, there is someone else who will take advantage of the difficulty in defending such a large structure and space.

DRUISSI

A small town in the northern section of the Ba-Adenu Forest, Druissi is home to around 1,000 inhabitants. It is built on the visible part of ancient, unknown wreckage that generates a stable, low-level heat year-round. Residents of Druissi take full advantage of this, using the conductive heat to warm everything from food and water to their homes.

THE UNTETHERED LEGION

Deep in the swampy mire of the southeastern section of the Ba-Adenu Forest is the Untethered Legion. The name is both a place and a foul curse, one not even uttered in the brightest of days.

The Untethered Legion is a land of mud and oil, with pools of a murky substance that flows red for days on end, hardens to grey, and then liquefies again. And with every hardening of the land, the hounds of the Untethered Legion incubate inside its belly, waiting to emerge from the soil. When the pools turn back to black and red, the hounds are born, pushing nose-first through the liquid in a great upheaval of slavering jaws and bared fangs.

Awaiting their arrival are the legion's riders, biomechanical humans cloaked to match their new steeds. Their teeming masses fill

A common curse in the area is "I hope you stand before the Kneeling Tower and catch your death of Hulan's Curse."



Jiraskar, page 238

In the aldeia of Carrow there are always exactly three birds perched atop the buildings in town. Always.

BA-ADENU HEARSAY

Horrors on the Prowl: An increase in the number of jiraskar attacks has the forest people worried. Why are so many of the predators active lately? What can be done about them?

Lost Necklace: Thieves stole a necklace from the home of Darlajyn, a wealthy woman in Ephremon who is the sister of one of the town's administrators. They didn't know that the necklace contains a numenera device that stores information she can access telepathically, including the vault code for the town treasury.

THE WEIRD OF BA-ADENU

Vampire of the Woods: A gaunt humanoid creature, possibly a mutant, haunts the woods, draining the blood of its victims and leaving their desiccated corpses for others to find.

Ice Palace: A small keep made entirely of unmelting blue-green ice stands in the northern forest. No one knows who, if anyone, lives there.





Abykos, page 224

LOOKING FOR
Beanstalk, page 180

ERRID KALOUM HEARSAY

Rescue Mission: One of the blood-folk villages has captured a well-known naturalist and explorer named Brene Fal Koses, most likely for dire purposes. Members of her traveling company offer a substantial reward for her return.

Castle of Light: On one of the islands of the salt flat, someone has built a castle whose walls appear to be made of translucent energy rather than matter. No one knows who is the master or mistress of this castle, but multiple reports of abykos encounters have come in from the surrounding area.

THE WEIRD OF ERRID KALOUM

Ship Without a Sea: Half buried in the salt flats, a hundred miles north of the Sere Marica, lie the remains of a sailing vessel made of metal and a material that appears to be synth fibers spun like silken webs.

The Floating Circle: In the middle of the salt flats is a circle 300 feet (90 m) across that causes some items placed above it to become lighter. Objects that weigh less than 300 pounds (136 kg) float above the circle, although anything weighing less than 3 pounds (1.5 kg) flies off into the atmosphere, likely never to be seen again.

None So Blind: In the village of Heathian, on the northern end of the salt flats, some of the previous and all of the latest generation of residents have been born without eyes. The local Aeon Priests have fashioned "sight sticks" for these people—devices shaped like hand mirrors, which they hold in front of their faces to gain a kind of artificial sight.

this region of the forest—gathering, waiting, building something that is so far unseen and unknown. Someone, somewhere, gives them orders. Only the legion knows what those orders are and where they come from.

ERRID KALOUM

A shockingly flat lowland region, thought (erroneously) to be dry and lifeless, Errid Kaloum is in fact a shallow salt lake that has formed a thick crust over its surface, an extension of the Sere Marica. Throughout the otherwise level, monotonous landscape, occasional mounds rise like islands in a sea. The comparison is apt, because these mounds are, indeed, islands in the salt lake. Each island is surprisingly fertile and lush, even for the climate, for two reasons. First, they're formed due to geothermic activity below the lake, and thus they're warmer than the general area by about 5 to 10 degrees. Second, some of the mineral structures forced up through the salt lake to form the mounds also serve as a powerful desalinizing filter. In other words, within each island is a reserve of fresh water. Thus, the islands are fertile and covered with plants and animals. A few host small communities of human hunters and gatherers who travel across the salt flats in large wagons pulled by salt-crusted therish oxen.

Many of these settlements follow the gory religion of Lhauric, but without priests who can communicate with the Challifani, their version has simply become bloodletting and murder for its own sake. Other villages reject these practices but have to fend off raids from what they call the blood-folk, who continually hunt for victims.

HTHUMOS

A small town lies at the confluence of the Salter and Eviet Rivers as they come down out of the Clock of Kala. The town, Hthumos, surrounds a tall castle of dark grey stone. The community takes its name from the castle, which in turn takes its name from its depraved ancestral residents.

The Hthumos family are wealthy nobles who lord over the surrounding land and its people and treat them (and often each other) with trickery and cruelty. They make sport of hunting peasants and rule capriciously, freeing murderers from the dungeon and sentencing innocents to toil in the mills for imagined slights. The nobles maintain their control through dark-armored soldiers called

terror-hounds, whose collars artificially induce physical pleasure when the wearer inflicts pain or causes fear.

The current head of the house is Hesterin Hthumos, a mutant albino with a conjoined twin brother named Sterrick. The brother is little more than a head and a hand with tendril-like fingers on Hesterin's torso. However, he is fully conscious, aware, and intelligent. Years ago, when local chiurgeons said that Sterrick would likely die and should be surgically removed, Hesterin refused. Instead, she spent a great deal of her family's wealth scouring the world for numenera that would save her brother, for whom she had unnatural affections. This quest eventually bore fruit, and now Sterrick is encased in an iron helmet that keeps him alive on his sister's body—a woman that, by all accounts, he despises.

THE DIVIDED SEAS

Along the southern border of the Beyond rest two bodies of water, connected by a channel called the Imoros Strait. One body—Sere Marica—is heavy with blue salts. The other—Navae Marica—has enough fresh water to sustain the entire population of the Beyond for years. The two inland seas are so unlike in every way that they might as well be situated a world apart.

At 1,600 miles (2,575 km) across and 1,500 feet (460 m) deep, Sere Marica is more than twice the size of her sister. The source of Sere Marica's salt is something of a mystery, for the water that enters the sea from the surrounding rivers and through the Imoros Strait is fresh water, changing only when it reaches the Sere. Creatures of many sizes and colors live in the lake, from the gigantic and aggressive cerulean octopi to the barely visible duandas, floating bubblefish that attempt to implant themselves in openings on a body.

The cultural sensibility of Sere Marica is as varied as its creatures. Salachia, the Salt City, is buried deep beneath the surface of the lake, and the Salted Marshes lie along the northwestern shore. Many of those who live along and within the Sere Marica depend on salt for sustenance and daily living.

One thing noticeably missing from the Sere Marica area is mechanical beings. The salt is too harsh on them, rusting and corroding their internal and external elements without remorse. Travelers in the area, especially those who plan to enter the water, would be wise to protect any technologies, including prosthetics and artifacts.

The much smaller and shallower Navae Marica is a source of fresh water, fish, and game for all who live near it. Many who dwell on the shores are boaters and divers. Here, towns focus on turning the numenera into diving equipment, portable flotation devices, and various forms of water transports.

OUR ORDER OF THE LADY OF THE SALT WAY

Our Order of the Lady of the Salt Way, sometimes called Our Lady of the Acrid Tongue by those outside the group, is a nonaffiliated religious order established at least four generations ago by Saint Eseld. Members believe that all life springs from salt and the salted places of the world, and they feel blessed that their center of worship and inhabitance is just such a place.

Situated on a long, thin, unnamed island in the Salted Marshes, the order consists mostly of women, although gender is not a requirement. In fact, members take only three vows:

1. Worship salt as god and as life.
2. Offer shelter and succor for those in need.
3. Never leave the island unless called upon to do so for great and grievous reasons by a vision of the late Saint Eseld herself.

There are whispers of a fourth vow—a willingness to be encrusted with salt and *something* (this word changes in the telling, but "cured" and "eaten" are two common ones) upon your death—but no one has been able to verify these rumors.

Members of the order, known as halites, are skilled in the use and creation of all forms of salts. The order supports itself through the sales of various salt products, including fireworks, cured and pickled foodstuffs, dyes and pigments, and medicinal remedies.

Halites of both genders wear comfortable clothing of bright, salt-dyed colors, usually red, yellow, or blue. They wear their hair long and braid it with a salt-and-herb mixture that crusts the twinings in place and gives them the perpetual look of going grey. They smell of brine and sea water.

While halites believe all other religions (especially the Order of Truth) to be horribly misguided, the order does not consider itself to be at war with them. Rather, the halites lie low and wait, having faith that eventually everyone will see the truth—that salt is the life and the way—and then the ranks of the order will swell, as they should.

Currently, Halite Gabra heads Our Order of the Lady of the Salt Way. She is a firm-handed woman whose salted crimson braids fall past her knees and then loop back up to the top of her head. She layers her skin with salt, which

Hthumos terror-hound: *level 4; Armor 3; heavy crossbows with agony bolts inflict an additional 3 points of damage to living creatures*

Hesterin (and Sterrick) Hthumos: *level 5, all physical tasks as level 2; Armor 2; Sterrick's helmet has a variety of vision-enhancing apparatus, as well as a level 8 device that gives him control over magnetism at long range*

Some mechanical beings and other machines in the proximity of the Sere Marica have developed means to protect themselves from the high salt concentrations. The details on these processes can sometimes be purchased or traded for.

LOOKING FOR

Dessanedi, page 182
Jagged Wastes, page 182
Wandering Walk, page 182



The salt formations along the northern edge of the Sere Marica are strange and beautiful, sometimes appearing like fungal growths or even weird creatures. This is an inhospitable environment for most life, but creatures called pale worms riddle the formations with tiny burrowed holes, feeding on insects that thrive on the high mineral content. Naturalists that study these insects speculate that they might be more mineral-based than any other known type of life.

over time has built up to give her a nearly ethereal glow. Both of her ears are covered with small manufactured circles, and if her dark green eyes seem slightly too large for her head, it's because they're not the ones she was born with. Once a loyal member of the Order of Truth, Halite Gabra was eating a platter of salted fish when she saw the vision of a woman in white among the bones. Believing it to be a test of her faith, she quickly stabbed at her eyes to remove the sight. When the vision began speaking, she punctured her own ears as well.

Blind and deaf, she believed she would wander the land until she died for her religion. When she awoke some time later, she was in a large castle, surrounded by the smell of salt and sea, being cared for by loving hands. Taking it as a sign that this was the faith of her destiny, Gabra devoted herself to Our Order of the Lady of the Salt Way.

Over the years, she rose through the ranks and used some of the earnings from salt sales to buy a pair of mechanical eyes and a couple of rudimentary hearing aids. Although generally considered a fair but tough leader, Gabra is known to have a soft spot for those who come to her claiming that their faith has been tested, as hers was.

THE LANDSCAPE OF THE ISLAND

A low seawall runs along most of the island's border, with a single gated docking area on the shore farthest from land. The island has five stone buildings, all of which are believed to have existed before Saint Eseld's time. Based on the structure and layout of the complex, it might have been the home of someone rich and well protected, perhaps a military leader or ruler. Due to the high salt content of the marshes, the buildings, walkways, and statuaries are covered by thick layers of salt, giving visitors the impression of hulking, misshapen grey creatures.

The largest building, which resembles a basilica, houses a large kitchen and storage area; gathering rooms for games, community activities, and worship; an enormous cellar with a store of goods; and a variety of other amenities. Members of the order live in the upper levels of this building. Each has a private room, and the order does not shun monetary goods or gain, so the décor is finer than one might expect.

The second largest building, a long, flat structure with a single story, is the crafting and production space. Here, halites pay fealty to salt by turning it into a variety of useful items. Some of this work is done by hand, and some with hand-cranked and numenera-based machines.

Next to that building, slightly more than half the size of the craft space, is the storefront. Here the halites sell their goods and wares to the public, including fireworks and sparklers in various colors, brined pickles and salted fish and beef, paints, dyes and pigments in bright hues, salt remedies and potions, salt rock candies, and more. Shins are always accepted in payment, but buyers find that an offer of fresh vegetables and fruit—rare delicacies on an island buried in salt—leads to a better exchange.

The final two buildings are crumbling and rarely used, except perhaps for illicit rendezvous or storage.

At the far end of the island, there is a door in a hill, barely noticeable for the crust of salt upon it. The lock and latch, however, appear free of crust, and look as if they are used often.

CURRENT EVENTS

Halite Mafil, a long-standing member of the order, recently fell ill with fever for no obvious reason. Even in his agony, he maintains that it is nothing, a poor choice of fresh foodstuffs, but Halite Gabra believes that he sneaked off the island and that his illness is punishment for his betrayal. She refuses to heal Mafil until he confesses what she believes to be the truth. A newer member of the order, a woman named Veneta, seeks aid for Mafil despite Halite Gabra's orders, risking her own standing with the group.

One of the most skilled members of the order, a broad-shouldered woman named Chatta with clear blue eyes and short, tight braids of pure white, recently discovered a way to harness the electricity conduction of salt electrolytes. She is eager to sell the plans of the process to someone who can implement them, but she wants to keep the transaction secret from the rest of the order.

Everyone knows that Saint Eseld is long dead, but halites often see her visage in the layers of salt that crust the buildings and the land. Members of the order also regularly claim that they see her figure walking along the island's shore. To honor the saint, they leave shins and food among the rocks where she is most often seen; the offerings are always gone in the morning.

ASTARIA

Located along the Imoros Strait, Astaria is a place of wonder and darkness.

In the position of power is Ormakal the Mind, a disembodied mechanical head who trails a series of wires and cords from his neck when he's not plugged into the giant pillar in the center of town. Ormakal has the ability to encourage others to do his work for him without most people even realizing it. Those who discover his secret either keep quiet or they're *made* quiet by Ormakal's regiment of loyal worshippers and watchdogs, men of dubious intent who call themselves hivers.

Under Ormakal's rule, the inhabitants of Astaria have devised a way to use osmotic power—the energy that becomes available from the difference in salt concentration—to supply their leader with the huge amount of energy he needs to function. They've built a large membrane across the strait that is porous to water and salt, but nothing else. Those who wish to cross through the strait may do so for a cost, but they'll probably have to wait because the membrane opens for passing ships and water transports only once each day.

HAYREST

The circular lake city of Hayrest, situated along the southern shore of the Navae Marica, teems with people. For its relatively small size, it boasts a population of 50,000.

Within its carefully constructed moats, which flow around and through the city as though they were natural rivers, Hayrest is a center of scholarly pursuits and handicrafts. Such a place is surprising so far from the Steadfast, but it might be due to the strong influence of the city's varjellen population. Once consisting of just a few visitants in a small section of the city known as the Mark, the varjellen have migrated to Hayrest in increasing numbers. The Mark has grown to encompass nearly a quarter of the city and is now home to varjellen and humans alike. Here, you'll find not just markets of interesting and unusual goods but also art studios, scientific laboratories, and street universities.

Additionally, Hayrest is known for water transports of all types, including a special bubble diver that is made only by Vestiai Lagim, a varjellen who runs the Lagim Divedown in the Mark.

Not everyone in the city is a scholar. The area closest to the lake is home to a large number of fishers, waterwielders, boaters, and divers.

SALACHIA

Located at the deepest point of the Sere Marica, Salachia, commonly called the Salt City, is an immense underwater structure in the shape of a wheel. Covering more than 2 square miles (5 sq. km) and located at a depth of nearly 1,500 feet (460 m), the city is lightly populated, with fewer than 1,200 inhabitants.

Salachia consists of a large outer circle of what look like enormous nautilus shells, which are connected to one bigger





Varjellen, page 394

There are many companies that are more than willing to sell underwater breathing apparatus and airtight vehicles for a high price to those who wish to travel to Salachia. Unfortunately, that high price is no guarantee that the devices will work below a few hundred feet.

Ormakal the Mind: *level 4, Intellect tasks and Intellect defense as level 8; Armor 3; voice carries a subtle mind-control effect that makes people do what he wishes*

LOOKING FOR

Ba-Adenu Forest, page 184

shell in the middle by a series of limestone tunnels. The entirety of the city is enclosed by a semiporous membrane that permits the passage of some gasses, but no liquids or solids.

The city's inhabitants live in the shells that make up the outer circle. Multiple families occupy each shell, using the individual chambers as their homes. The most prestigious family has the honor of living in the main chamber, which also happens to be closest to the tunnels.

All of the tunnels are built through a process that turns minerals in the saltwater into limestone. They average 10 feet (3 m) across and 15 feet (5 m) high, but they're jagged and sharp-edged from being built and rebuilt. Unlike the shells, the limestone tunnels must be repaired constantly, and sometimes they fall in at a moment's notice.

The massive inner shell is the city center, in more ways than one. All commerce, eateries, schools, and community gardens are located in the innermost shell.

The entirety of Salachia is covered in multiple layers of crystalline creatures that make the city seem to shimmer and writhe in the depths. These tiny masses, called chiffons, are no bigger than a human's hand and are attracted to the shellac of carbon dioxide released by the residents. As long as there is carbon dioxide for them to eat, the chiffons attach to the city's exterior and exhale oxygen back into the atmosphere.

Most inhabitants have no special water-breathing abilities or saltwater skills. In order to leave Salachia, a resident must encourage a chiffon to seal itself across their mouth to provide oxygen. The only way to reach the surface is the hyponome—a long bubble tube—operated by a creature dubbed Sal. Sal is the city's protector, and those who wish to use the hyponome must get her permission or risk a malfunction during their journey through the tube.

Currently, the city is in something of a crisis: fewer Salachians are having children, and more young people are venturing out for other parts of the world—all of which means less carbon dioxide to attract the chiffons. The city's mayor and creator, Hiberz, recently passed a law forbidding citizens from leaving for more than two days at a time. He is also offering a bounty of 5 shins for every new citizen invited (or otherwise brought) to the city.

PEOPLE OF INTEREST

Hiberz is heralded as the savior and condemned as the executioner of Salachia. He's the one who discovered the process for turning saltwater into limestone, which allowed the city's original crumbling shell tunnels to be replaced with the current tunnels. Those who praise Hiberz consider him to be the city's leader, although he takes to the task with reluctant humility. Those who scorn him would prefer to see him dead so they might build the city properly, with tunnels that don't have such a high risk of collapsing.

Short and squat, with a bulbous nose and an overly small mouth, Hiberz spends most of his time in his laboratory at the center of Salachia. He rules when he must do so to preserve the city, but otherwise he prefers to study the compounds of the saltwater and minerals. He is addicted to huffing chiffons, which he believes increases the oxygen to his brain and makes him a better scientist.

Sal, the city's guardian, is a mollusk woman who resides in the main chamber of the center shell, where the circle of the hyponome is connected to the much larger passage out of the city. Although Sal's whole body is rarely seen, those who visit her chamber might glimpse her reddish-brown head with overly large eyes on either side. Nearly a hundred tentacles writhe at the edges of her face, and she uses two of them to speak to others. By placing the tentacles on the sides of someone's face, she can pick up the other person's olfactory signals and understand their meaning. She responds through her own scent, which can be an unpleasant and confusing conversation for those not used to dealing with her kind.

From interacting with Sal, it's clear that she is ancient, but the passage of time is different for her than for others. She still mourns the loss of her real family—the original inhabitants of the shells—and keeps Salachia safe in the hope that they will return to take their rightful places. (Whether she realizes that they are long dead is another matter.)

Sal protects the city structure at all costs, even if it means destroying the inhabitants. Those who wish to leave through the hyponome must provide solid reasons to do so. If someone attempts to use the hyponome without Sal's permission, they take 4 points of damage per round until they reach the surface of the lake. It takes four rounds to travel from the point of origin to the surface.

Calabe is the leader of the resistance group, those who wish to take back the city because they believe that Hiberz is destroying Salachia with his shoddy tunnels. Her father was killed when a tunnel caved in on him during the first of the Great Collapses. She was very young at the time and has harbored her bitterness like an oyster

Sal: *level 6; health 40; tentacles deal 9 points of damage per round to anyone caught in her grip*

When the city is thriving and at peace, leaving the hyponome is a level 4 task. When the city is threatened, the task is level 5.

Calabe: *level 4*

Hiberz: *level 5; carries a carbon dioxide torcher that he uses to attract chiffons; torcher also causes carbon dioxide poisoning up to 20 feet (6 m), dealing 5 points of damage the first round and 2 points for each of the next two rounds*

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Ephremon, page 185

harboring a grain of sand. In every respect, Calabe is a stunning young woman, and she wields the power of her looks to gain more followers for her cause. She always wears a black cape with the hood up, perhaps to highlight the breathtaking beauty of her face—or perhaps to cover the dual sets of gills located just behind her ears.

Despite Calabe's lack of training, her fierceness makes her a formidable opponent. In a confrontation, she first attempts to charm and soothe with her beauty. If that fails, she quickly becomes a dirty fighter, using whatever is at hand to attack.

QUESLIN

"Ah, Queslin. What can one say of a town such as this, where the salt runs freely and the brutal tempers with it? I make me home here, for where else could I come upon as many bodies in need of attention, as many fists and faces broken beyond repair? Except, of course, they're not beyond repair at all, are they? For my Machines of Mastery shall soon have you up and about, as good as new—or nearly so—and on your way back to the stinking, brawling blackness from whence you came."

—Orator and Repairist Hedley Staffield, owner of Machines of Mastery

"We don't have a problem. The salt runs freely."

—Queslin Overseer Wilbhur Brandle

"Maybe I did used to live in that pit-hole of a place. Read some flyer promising me riches and posterity if I worked them salt mines. Didn't know what posterity was, but I wanted me some riches. There was kids down there. Tiny babies hooked up to that black machine, drowning in saltfeed. I'll never forget their faces, long as I live."

—Former Queslin resident who refused to be named for fear he would be hunted down and brought back to the mines. He claims to be the only "free retiree" of Queslin's work-to-live program.

Want adventure? Wish to experience the delights of travel and the joy of discovery? More interested in making your way in the world? Whatever your heart's desire, whatever your waking wish, you can have it in Queslin.

We're looking for those who are willing to work hard to increase Queslin's prosperity—and their own! Those who commit five years to our work-to-live program will be well rewarded.

Don't waste any time. Don't ask around. Don't let anyone else in on your special secret to success. Just come to Queslin, where the salt runs free.

—from a Queslin flyer

Don't go to Queslin. This is the thing that no one says. But the only reason they don't say it is that their mouths are stuffed with salt.

The tiny town of Queslin swoons at your arrival, beckons you, urges you to fall in love with its pretty houses, its kind and delightful merchants, its pleasant view overlooking Sere Marica.

But enter Queslin's gates and all is lost, for the houses are not yours to have, nor the merchants yours to bargain with. And the beautiful view? That is not for the likes of you to gaze upon.

Only the Overseer and the Privs live above ground in Queslin. Beneath the city, extending far out in all directions, is the Salt Maze, a vast mining operation that never ends and never sleeps. Run by genetically modified beasts made in the Overseer's likeness, the caverns and holding pens of the Salt Maze are carved out by large, remote-controlled beetles. These creatures also mine the salt.

What, then, are you needed for? You are to become a salteater, one of thousands of creatures captured beneath the sunken swell of the earth, your body trussed up, your mouth pried open to receive the saltfeed. In time, the leeches will be attracted to your scent. Then they will draw the salty sweat from your body until they become a perfectly brined delicacy, a salty and savory snack fit for only the most royal of tables.

If you survive the experience long enough, you will, as promised, be well rewarded—probably with a little house in Queslin that overlooks the shore.

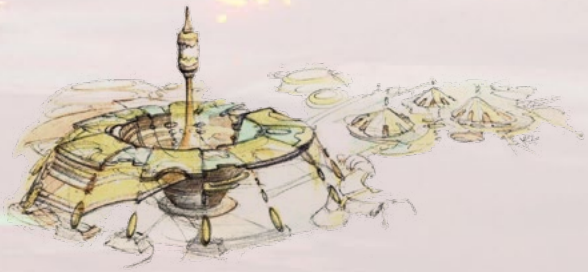
THE CROMULUS RANKS

From far away, there appears to be a small mountain range on the southwestern shore of the Sere Marica. Getting closer, you can see that the peaks, while extraordinarily steep, are also extraordinarily regular. Thus, they are called the Cromulus Ranks, named for a long-dead warlord who forced his troops to maintain perfect marching formations at all times.

The peaks are not mountains at all, but rows of pyramidal structures, each 2,000 feet (600 m) across at the base and more than 1 mile (1.5 km) high. Over time, enough sediment

Cromulus led his armies on a trail of conquest throughout the southern regions of the Beyond more than 80 years ago. Due to his depravations in the villages and towns that he conquered, a surprising number of people in that region can correctly claim to be his descendants.

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Errid Kaloum, page 186





and erosion has occurred that the once-white pyramids can pass for weird mountains. In places, vegetation even grows on them.

These ancient edifices are buildings with hundreds of interior levels, each with enough space to house hundreds of thousands of people, although the original builders and inhabitants might not have been human. Artifacts and cyphers abound within, but gaining entrance to any of the peaks is difficult.

Some of the pyramids rise out of the water at the edge of the sea. These peaks, in particular, teem with vegetation, nesting birds, and other life.

LHAURIC

If a soul walks the glass streets of Lhauric on a quiet night, when all others within its massive walls slumber, the chattering of the Challifani can be heard. The million gods bicker and quarrel constantly, their knowledge great, but always contested.

—Vullerian Fol, The Million Gods

Challifani priest: *level 5, all intimidation tasks as level 7*

Priest-King Tharimalles: *level 6, all intimidation tasks as level 10*

Probably the largest city in the Beyond, Lhauric claims a population of 80,000. This theocratic city-state is ruled by the Priest-King Tharimalles, speaker for the million gods of the Challifani. The people of Lhauric use both the Salter River and the Sere Marica to their benefit, working as fishermen and merchants. North of the city, they have built a number of gently turning mills on the river for processing grain, wood, cotton, and other commodities, including metal and synth brought in by the local drit sifters.

The streets of the central part of the city are paved in small pieces of volcanic glass, giving them a distinctive black sheen. The grey stone buildings usually rise two or three stories in height, though a few towers and grand buildings are even taller.

Deep below Lhauric is a hidden cavern. If you can find this cavern, you will discover a huge pool 50 feet (15 m) across. A living creature lies within the pool, looking very much like a gigantic human brain. Tubes and cables run from the creature out of the cave, but were you to follow them, you would discover that they run back up to the surface of Lhauric—specifically, to a lower level of the Challifani Temple. The brain is a deranged biological construct from ancient times, and the Challifani are various facets of its fractured personality.

These gods demand blood sacrifice. They mandate that Challifani priests and adherents practice flagellation, mutilation, and torture. The people of Lhauric believe that these horrific rites keep their gods happy and thus keep their city blessed. In reality, the Challifani have no power other than knowledge—the brain has sensors throughout the region and grants Tharimalles and the lesser priests scattered bits of information from its observations. These revelations, as well as the gods' gory commandments, come to the priests in the form of drug-induced visions that they receive while being tortured in the lowest portions of their temple.

After generations of commandments from the million gods of the Challifani, the people of Lhauric have grown accustomed to the bloody practices of their religion. In fact, many secretly or openly revel in the gore and violence of it.

The priests are men and women who command both terror and respect. Most are

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maimed and scarred from their communal sessions with the brain. The priests, mounted on massive, tigerlike beasts called razorcats, lead their holy knights through the streets, selecting victims as needed. To resist a priest, or to aid a chosen victim, is to oppose the divine will of the Challifani, a sin punishable by death and the assurance of a horrific afterlife.

The Drit Sifters: In the villages to the north and east of Lhauric, many people earn their living by sifting through the artificial soil and collecting valuable bits of metal and synth. They bring their valuable drit into the city in wagons. There, the materials are smelted or reprocessed so that they can be used by craftspeople or for manufacturing. Most of these sifters also worship the Challifani.

THE WEAL OF BAZ

Unit-A29-##2• begin sequence relevant

Code 4881: Baz

"Baz" signifies organic language designation of original, primary unit

"Baz" equates to organic language term "savior."

Appropriate refrain 923/3K: "All thanks and praise to Baz, whose mercies sheltered us from the merciless world. Power, processing, and storage to him."

Analysis: "Baz" synonymous with "machine messiah." Accuracy: 9.99987 out of 10.

Located far out in the Beyond, on the calm shores of the Navae Marica, sentries watch over the only entrance to the Weal of Baz. This hidden refuge is a haven for intelligent machines. Fully organic creatures are allowed access very rarely, and then only for a short stay.

Baz was a vastly powerful artificial intelligence that used abilities similar to esoteries to carve a small town out of a cleft in a rocky cliff face. Only one pass connects it to the outside world, though access across the water is also possible.

It's not known whether Baz survives into the present day.

The Weal of Baz is like no other aldeia. The entrance is through a narrow cleft in an overgrown cliffside, concealed by holograms and guarded by a pair of vigilant automaton sentries equipped with vision-enhancing hardware and armed with long-range projectile weapons manufactured in the town.

Many of the automatons and intelligent machines found here exist in various states of disrepair. They are, as a whole, a factious lot, barely able to communicate with one another. Some are more than a million years old. Others claim to be far older, created by very different hands for very different purposes. Some are potent and dangerous; others exist as cobbled-together messes of spare parts that barely function. But they all seem to share a single unifying factor: a fear, hatred, or loathing for intelligent organic beings. There are exceptions, however. Rarely, an intelligent machine in the outside world will give a deserving organic creature a small card, disk, or patch that bears a strange, complex symbol. This symbol is a pass that allows the individual to enter the Weal of Baz.

Inside the community, a traveler will find some of the finest machinesmiths and technicians in the Beyond, as well as an enormous stockpile of spare parts. This stash, known as the Hoard, is probably one of the greatest sources of mechanical and technical parts in the Ninth World. Next to the Hoard

Razorcat: *level 5; health 24*

Sentry: *level 5, perception as level 7; health 20; Armor 4; weapons inflict 6 points of damage with long range*

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Our Order of the Lady of the Salt Way, page 187



DIVIDED SEAS HEARSAY

War of the Machines: Ormakal of Astaria wants to conquer the Weal of Baz—or rather, he wants his people to do it for him. First, however, he needs some explorers to find the refuge. Any travelers who stop in Astaria are likely to be asked to do so.

Salty Assailants: Our Order of the Lady of the Salt Way has a standing agreement with Gweneal Der, a trader on the outskirts of Seshar, for a shipment of fresh fruit and vegetables at regular intervals. However, Gweneal recently arrived at the island without her wares, claiming that she was attacked along the way by dark, sinister creatures of mist and muck, barely escaping with her life. She refuses to continue working the trade route until she can be promised safe passage.

Amphibious Migration: Large swarms of gorjans, freshwater amphibians with large, strong jaws and a habit of spinning prey in the water to strip off their skin, have started crawling out of the Navae Marica. They seem to be heading west and are largely aggressive in their migration.

THE WEIRD OF THE DIVIDED SEAS

The Scent of Memory: A woman named Lororme lives aboard a floating machine in the Sere Marica. She goes from shore town to shore town, offering to play the machine, which she calls a scent organ. She promises that she can play any scent—from a favorite food to an ardent affair—and it will evoke a memory so vivid you will feel that you have relived the moment.

Missing Person: Along the outskirts of Queslin, the outline of a prone body is drawn in white. Wires hang in the air, jutting out at odd angles as though still attached to the person who might have been there.

Symbols and Shells: Fishers have been pulling shelled creatures out of the Navae Marica that have odd symbols inscribed in various colors on their shells. If the creatures are killed, the symbols transfer to whomever or whatever caused the demise.

stands the Dragon, a tower-sized generator fueled by sunlight. At any given time, dozens of machines gather around the Dragon, recharging their own personal energy through a wide array of cables, jacks, or receivers. For obvious reasons, the inhabitants value the Dragon and even revere it as a god.

A few manufactories exist in the Weal of Baz, producing weapons, tools, and parts needed for some of the machines. Due to technological, resource, and material limitations, they can't produce everything they need, so agents of the refuge journey into the wider world to gather parts by scavenging, trading, or theft. The Hoard is proof that the agents have been gathering for a very, very long time.

Most days in the refuge, automatons wander, relax, communicate with one another, or sift through the Hoard, searching for needed parts. The inhabitants don't have individual homes, so they use communal shelters to stay out of the elements when necessary. Despite the natural harbor, they ignore the great body of water nearby except to watch it for intruders.

Organic visitors to the Weal of Baz will not find comforts they might normally expect, such as food and beds suitable for living beings. Still, for those who can find and gain entrance to the refuge, the machines are a nearly endless source of information, assuming they can be convinced to communicate, and assuming a means of communication can be found—only a small percentage of the automatons and other machines here were created to speak, and only some of those speak any known human language.

"I can't even begin to speculate what might create and sustain the Amorphous Fields."
~Sir Arthour

"I have heard that the Amorphous Fields are the result of an experiment by Aeon Priests gone wrong."
~Narada Trome, anti-papist

"That is utterly absurd."
~Visixtru, varjellen philosopher

Crossing the fields is a difficulty 2 task, but at random intervals, at least once each hour, it is a difficulty 5 task.

Ligoshi: *level 10*



THE AMORPHOUS FIELDS

Stretching for more than 200 miles (320 km) across a mostly open plain, the Amorphous Fields churn, twist, and undulate in dangerous, unpredictable, and unsettling ways. The fields are a strange mixture of rock and earth that moves and churns almost like a semisolid substance, with pockets of organic soup that occasionally harden into a solid or semisolid form, making the region a place where organic and inorganic masses undulate together. It goes without saying that the fields are extremely difficult and dangerous to cross. With no warning, the ground at your feet can turn to pools like quicksand, rise up with a sudden thrust, or open like a yawing chasm. Explorers who have spent time here speculate that the Amorphous Fields are actually a solid or semisolid crust over a viscous sea of organic liquids. A few suggest that the region is a single living entity.

No normal plants grow in the Amorphous Fields, but here and there clouds of fungal spores find purchase on a solid or semisolid surface and quickly grow bulbous gardens of fruiting bodies found nowhere else in the world. Some of these are poisonous, but a few have valuable medicinal effects.

Understandably, hardly any people or creatures live in the area. However, the region does have a few natives, most notably the ligoshi, which appear to be house-sized, bioluminescent jellyfish that swim in the liquid soup beneath the ground and emerge when the crust breaks or opens into a semisolid pool. The ligoshi near the surface produce lighter-than-air gasses so that when they burst forth, they float into the air, sometimes for hours at a time. Although they subsist on the organic materials found here, they seem to enjoy wrapping their long, paralyzing tentacles around creatures from other realms who have wandered into the wrong place.

A small number of hardy human settlements exist on patches of continuously stable ground, like islands in the churning soup. These people know (mostly) safe routes across the fields and hunt the ligoshi as well as gather the valuable fungus that grows here. Most outsiders consider them insane.





THE TWISTED SPIRE

Near the center of the Amorphous Fields, a tower of living, greenish flesh reaches 1,000 feet (300 m) toward the sky. From far away, this twisted spire looks like stone, but it's actually organic tissue. Interior vessels carry vital fluids to the top of the tower, pumped by massive, heartlike organs that can be seen beating within it as you approach. Other than this undulation, however, the spire does not shift and move the way the surrounding fields sometimes do.

The Halo: About three quarters of the way up, the spire is encircled by a ring of metal. This ring, called the Halo, is a circular structure that slowly turns around the spire. It has many green-tinted circular windows on all sides, including the top and bottom. Reaching the Halo requires flight or levitation, but if that can be accomplished, numerous hatches and ports allow entry. Within the ring is a numenera treasure trove—and ancient dangers as well. Explorers report waves of radiation, poisonous gases, and molecular-rearranging energy fields.

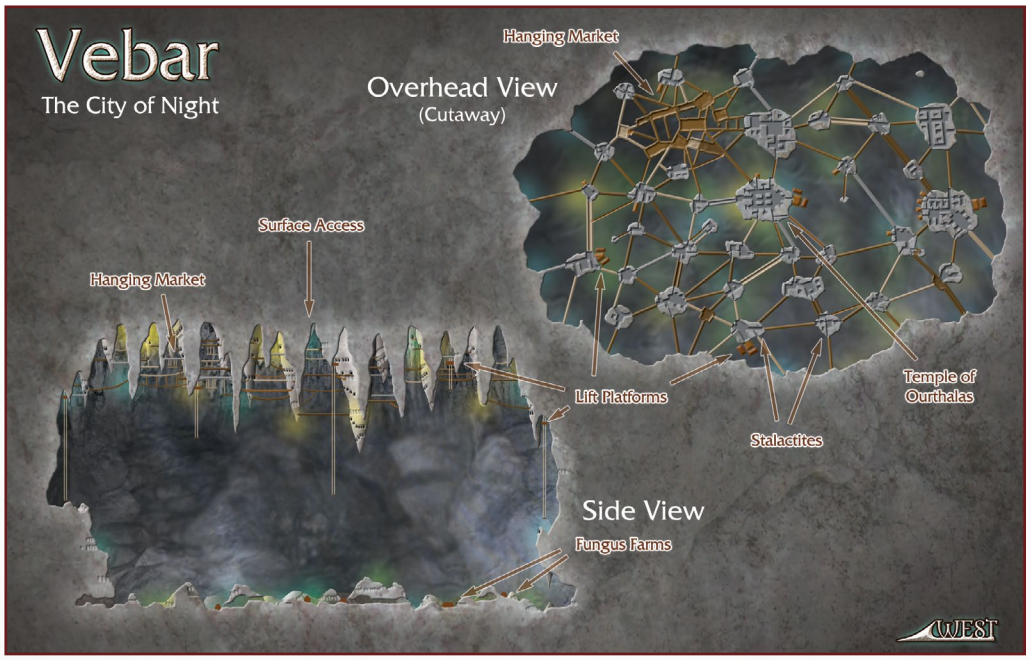
VEBAR

Vebar is an underground city located in a vast artificial cave. The buildings are of ancient design and hang from the cavern's ceiling. The place is so old that limestone formations have begun to transform the city, making the buildings more like massive stalactites. Vebar is home to about 8,000 people, who enter and exit the city through a series of winding passages that lead up to the surface.

The populace moves around the city through tunnels at the top, above the suspended buildings, or on bridges and walkways that connect the structures below the level of the ceiling. Some people travel on cables and chains alone; just about everyone here is an adept climber. Vebarans like to decorate their city by hanging interesting objects from cords or chains, and the city is filled with dangling ornamentation.

Vebar, sometimes called the City of Night, is lit by a series of artificial lights positioned throughout its inverted thoroughfares. Most of the inhabitants have grown to dislike the surface, in particular the light of the sun. If they do visit the surface world, they prefer to go at night.

The people of Vebar farm fungi in the lower part of the cavern. They harvest it for food, textiles, and a wide variety of medicinal uses. Rope-and-pulley elevator platforms connect the buildings with the fungus farms far below. The farms are lit by glowglobes and other



artificial lights, so that from the city, looking down, the bottom of the cavern seems like the night sky. Conversely, the farms look up at the city the same way.

Near the center of Vebar is a huge temple to the local god, Ourthalas, and the homes of his blind wife-priestesses. Ourthalas is depicted either as a huge, spidery thing with sprawling legs or as a tentacled monstrosity with many arms extending into the darkness. He is said to dwell in the "Cave of Life-Giving Shadow."

Dalthius, a well-known figure in Vebar, is an interesting man with mysterious origins. He was found in a metal cylinder in a cave not far from the city. He seems to have difficulty in the open air and direct sunlight, so he remains in Vebar as much as possible. Dalthius is helpful, friendly, and liked by everyone, and he is first to jump to the city's defense in times of need.

Dalthius: *level 7, Speed defense as level 8 due to built-in force-projected shield; health 29; +1 point of damage with sword*

SESHAR

The land of Seshar is an extension of Matheunis, the Cold Desert, but two factors set it apart.

THE AMORPHOUS FIELDS HEARSAY

Ancient Eggs: Sometimes, gigantic, egglike capsules emerge from beneath the Amorphous Fields. When one of these eggs bursts, a strange creature is found within. Many people believe the creatures come from various points in the world's past. Recovering an egg and bringing it out of the fields before it hatches might be a task that a biologist or scholar would find extremely valuable.

Viva La Revolution: The people in and around Tastim, a large town south of Hayrest, have had enough of their tight-fisted, law-breaking rulers and want to overthrow them. However, to do so they need weapons, organization, and, perhaps most of all, a champion.

The Empty Village: The village of Torin, southwest of Vebar, has been discovered abandoned. While all the buildings are intact, every inhabitant is gone. A strange greenish mist clings to the ground in places, but there are no other clues to what might have happened here.

THE WEIRD OF THE AMORPHOUS FIELDS

(Arguably, the whole place is pretty weird.)

Searchers: On very rare occasions, melon-sized spheres of red metal, covered with lights and what appear to be sensors, fly over the Amorphous Fields, seemingly searching for something.

Fungal Scholar: At least one of the patches of fungus growing amid the fields is intelligent, communicates via spores, and has sporadic knowledge of the last few million years of history.

The Flying Village: In a village at the western edge of the Amorphous Fields, the local Aeon Priest clave has discovered the means to make gravity-defying harnesses in large numbers. Everyone in the village has one, so all residents float and fly—continuously.

First, it was originally a separate kingdom ruled from what had been its capital, Nebalich. The ruling family could not sustain its holdings, however, and the kingdom collapsed more than 250 years ago. Second, Seshar's length and breadth are marked by a series of canals, which date back to the prior worlds and are arranged in a mysterious, almost mazelike pattern. The canals are all deep and regular, with smooth, 50-foot (15 m) escarpments on either side, often showing baroque embellishments and even graven images. The people of Seshar simply call them canals or rivers and regard them as if they were natural.

The canals are vital to Seshar's well-being. Small barges and ships allow trade between the villages of the region. These villages are built on the high embankments of ancient design, or they nestle in clefts cut into the side of the embankments. As you move away from the canals, the land becomes arid and lifeless other than scorpions, insects, and the occasional desert bloom. Margr, however, are a real scourge in the area, and raiding marauders pose a serious threat. Thankfully, they rarely come too close to the canals.

NEBALICH

If there is a haven for civilization in the Beyond, it might be the city of Nebalich. Its king and queen rule justly from their silver and emerald palace that overlooks the sea, royal banners fluttering in the wind. King Falton and Queen Sheranoa, although short, stout, and unattractive by conventional standards, are two of the most loved rulers in the Beyond (and perhaps the Steadfast as well).

Nebalich has approximately 35,000 people and includes a fairly large number of varjellen and a few lattimors. A maritime city, Nebalich is also the beginning of the canal trade routes. It boasts citadels of white marble and wide plazas filled with bright and noisy markets and festivals.

But like most cities, Nebalich has its dark side. A group of professional thieves operates out of the community, preying on the citizenry, the people of the surrounding area, and even the riverboat traders. They call themselves the Yellow Serpent, and chief among them is a man named Diario Mardain, who works not as a thief but as a master assassin. He is an attractive man with platinum hair who uses a variety of numenera weapons and tools to accomplish his commissions as efficiently as possible.



REDSTONE

Redstone is a moderately sized village carved into the side of one of the canals in a slope. A quarry at the top of the slope gives the village its name, as it's the source for an interesting red stone that always seems to contain a pattern of multiple straight lines with regular angles.

Those who make the long trek to Seshar to visit Yrkallak Tower—renowned as a place of great learning and study—will find only the twisted remains of its run-in with the iron wind.

Margr, page 240

SESHAR HEARSAY

The Power of the Hand: Along the canalways of Seshar lies one village no one wants to travel past if they can help it. Tirrum's inhabitants are cannibals who waylay travelers and eat them—all except their hands. The people of Tirrum revere hands and hang them from cords in their homes, wear shrunken hands as totemic jewelry, and use them to adorn weapons and tools in creative, albeit disturbing, ways.

THE WEIRD OF SESHAR

Man From the Stars: In a small village called Everen lives a man named Yrk. He claims to be an extraterrestrial fugitive hiding from others of his kind. Yrk appears to be completely human, although his understanding of the numenera is impressive.

Margr Chief: Bastoon, the leader of one of the larger margr tribes, wears a collar that looks like it was meant for an animal. In truth, it allows him to create duplicates of himself that last about ten minutes, freeing him to do two things at once. Bastoon doesn't seem to know how to operate the collar properly, however, so the duplicates appear randomly.

King Falton and Queen Sheranoa: *both level 3, pleasant interaction and seeing through deception as level 5*

Diario Mardain: *level 7, deception and subterfuge as level 8; Armor 3; a variety of level 9–10 poisons*

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Cromulus Ranks, page 191
Gods of the Challifani, page 192
Lhauric, page 192
Tharimalles, page 192

GURAN: THE CITY OF THE MISSING

By all outward appearances, Guran is as normal a town as you're likely to find anywhere in the Steadfast or the Beyond. In fact, Guran was considered so devoid of personality and unique characteristics that the first Steadfaster who graced its borders dubbed it the City of the Missing. Of course, every small town has its secrets and hidden back alleys, if you take the time to look. Still, the moniker has stuck.

Sarracenians, page 220

Located at the southernmost point of the Black Riage, Guran has the best natural resources at its fingertips: its location in the Tolay Valley protects it from the elements, the Ech River brings a flow of fresh water down from the mountains, and the marshland around Yesterday's Lake is perfect for orchards and dossi grazing.

Guran owes its inception to the great Bauble Rush, which brought baublers from all over hoping to make a quick buck by excavating the luminous blue baubles from the nearby mines. Unfortunately, the baubles were so numerous that they were of little value. Today, all of Guran is lit with mounds of abandoned baubles.

Skrips are large, flat, flexible scales that shed naturally from domesticated dossi. They are often used as writing surfaces for messages, flyers, and books.

RULERS

Guran has a single leader, Mylian Acan, a councilman and Aeon Priest who works hard to balance the use of the numenera with the needs of the townspeople. Mylian has the support of most of the residents, although he is often at odds with the more fervent Aeon Priests.

Mylian Acan: *level 4, all interactions and understanding numenera as level 5, Speed and Intellect defense as level 6 due to a numenera device*

The Council of Guran, a group of three tradesmen and three seculars, assists Mylian with decisions and governing. They are authorized to rule together as a single entity if something happens to Mylian, in which case they have one week to choose a new head of town.

Additionally, the council employs a dozen guards to keep the peace.

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Weal of Baz, page 193

A SHORT LIST OF WHAT GURAN IS MISSING

Despite being called the City of the Missing, Guran is actually missing a city. Based on its size and population, Guran is clearly a town, and not a large one at that.

The redstone statue in the eastern part of Midmarket is missing its head. And a name. And a history. Residents just call it "She."

Guran is known for its "drinks without doors" policy, meaning that the pubs and taverns in the Sweet End district never close. They are open day and night.

The city has a morgue without bodies. An empty morgue stands at the west end of the cemetery. It appears to have been built in the early days of the town but has never been used.

There is no darkness in the city of Guran thanks to its endless supply of baubles, which light the streets, businesses, and homes.

SECTIONS OF TOWN

The Clave: Once the entire town was located within this district's rudimentary wall of thorned rose shrubs, which was carefully cultivated to deter intruders. Now, the town has grown beyond this small area, and the rosewall is maintained by two elderly Sarracenians.

The stone buildings of the original district cannot hide their true age, but their wear and tear has been carefully minimized by attentive hands. Many of these former houses and shops have become headquarters for the town's organizations, places of official city business, and areas of worship.

A small cemetery rests at the Clave's southernmost edge, the stones etched with surnames that live on in today's residential areas, street names, and businesses. Here you'll find Beckers, Moreks, Statins, Errols, and, in the oldest section, three small stones bearing the name Guran. The oldest section of the cemetery is the most populated, with rows and rows of stones bearing the same year. In addition to names and dates, most of these stones are carved with a rose.

The cemetery also has an empty morgue. Clearly part of the town's original infrastructure, the morgue is made of crumbling brick and rusting metal. Its large wooden double door is closed but never locked. If you visit midweek, you'll notice that the front steps are littered with skrips, all of which have been marked with various sizes of red circles and held down with blue-grey stones the size of fists. These are left by devotees of She as peace offerings against the return of the Rose Plague, a spotted fever that wiped out much of Guran in its early years. The rumor is that during the plague, the city council ordered a morgue to be built quickly to handle the large numbers of the dying. Unfortunately, despite the feverish pace of construction, the morgue was completed too late; the Rose Plague worked faster than the laborers. By the time the morgue's final brick was laid, the last of the dying had long since succumbed to their illness. Now empty and unwanted, the morgue is considered a necessary but grotesque reminder of that awful time.

Midmarket: As the town's business hub, Midmarket is mostly a commercial area with a smattering of residences. Here, you'll find Main Way, along which permanent and traveling merchants offer their wares.

The general store, which is named **Wesk's Market** but which most people just call "the general," offers food, spices, equipment, and a free bauble with every purchase. The huge pile of discarded baubles outside the store's front door attests to their level of business. Here, you can



haggle or trade with the stout, grey-haired owner Joeffry Wesk for anything in the store—including the store itself, since he's been trying to sell it for years so he can spend his days fishing on Yesterday's Lake. At the back of the store, behind the counter, is a hanging shelf filled with items that Wesk has traded for over the years in lieu of shins. The inventory changes constantly and consists of mostly useless trinkets, but from time to time, unusual numenera devices show up here.

For local armor and other metal and synthworkings, visit **Flyte's Armor & More**. The owner, Flyte Deboit, is a flame-haired man of a quiet nature, rarely saying more than is necessary. By incorporating the blue baubles of the area into his wares, he makes quality objects that are both beautiful and unique to Guran. However, he works slowly and charges quite a bit more (typically three times as much) than a typical craftsman of the area. Those who are willing to pay and to wait are likely to come away with pieces that will serve them for a lifetime.

Next door, the **Downy Dossi** offers a wide variety of skrips, writing utensils, and inkpots, as well as printing services. Here, Hepter creates and distributes the town's monthly newsletter, *The Guran Gazette*. If you talk too much around Hepter, you might find yourself quoted in the next issue. While he usually gets your words right, you should expect that they'll be entirely out of context.

Two main tailors compete for the business of locals and visitors; they reside at opposite ends of Main Way. **The Fine Thread**, run by Maggie Yets, sits at the south end and specializes in beautiful stitches and unusual fabrics. **The Threadfast**, run by her sister Marchie Yets, holds fort at the north end of the way and does a booming business in adornments with a scientific angle, such as clothing made of fabrics that sense and react to specific types of prey or that display your muscles, bones, and internal organs.

The Fishing House (not to be confused with Milly's Fishing Hole in the Sweet End) offers a wide selection of hunting and fishing accessories, including ammunition, nets, water weapons, and rowboat rentals for Yesterday's Lake.

The Rusted Relic is more of a junkyard than a store. It covers a wide swath of land just off Main Way and is surrounded by a wooden fence that seems constantly in need of attention. Here, among numenera heaps, junk parts, and scraps of materials, you'll find the cantankerous creature known as Mecky—a tall, lithe woman with a curved scar along the side of her mouth that is only visible in certain light. Although she won't tell you the story of her past, everyone in town knows that she was once a well-known Nano in the Steadfast, the right-hand woman of one of its leaders. How she fell (or leaped) from favor is anyone's guess, and Mecky isn't particularly inclined to reveal the truth. Some say she is looking for a specific numenera device, the one thing she needs to kill the person who shamed her. Others whisper that she remains in the loyal service of her leader and that she works undercover in Guran, her junkyard a ruse for something far more sinister. However, most people think that she is little more than a broken old woman, as useless and confusing as the junk she hawks.

Midmarket is also the site of one of Guran's two inns, a bunk-and-breakfast establishment known as **Gee's**. The owner is a grizzled man named Lestel, but his three pale blonde daughters run the place. It's known for being

Joeffry Wesk: *level 3*

Flyte Deboit: *level 4, all metalworking tasks as level 5*

Mecky: *level 6; health 30; Armor 3 from an esotery; long-range mind attack inflicts 7 points of damage and ignores Armor from an esotery*

Hepter: *level 2, all writing and printing tasks as level 3*

Maggie and Marchie Yets: *level 2, all tailoring and fabric-related tasks as level 4*

Lestel: *level 3*

clean, expensive, and almost always empty. Travelers can stay the night in one of the inn's twelve upstairs rooms for 5 shins and can purchase dinner and breakfast for an additional 2 shins. The only time the inn gets busy is during its weekly dance, when Lestel's daughters provide free dance lessons to any who wander in. The Ghost Group, a local quartet, provides the haunting musical accompaniment to the lessons.

Lestel's daughters: *level 2, dance-related tasks as level 3*

Lestel's estranged wife, Kir, runs a successful bakery next door, offering sweet and savory pies as well as a variety of morning-after drinks. Rumor is that she has a way with herbs and spices designed to alter a man's virility, increase passion's flame, and bring about—or prevent—pregnancy. But you won't find those offerings among her regular wares.

Kir: *level 4, baking tasks as level 5*

The Hatchet: This triangular-shaped section of town covers a large, flat area with the river on one side and the start of the hills on the other. This prime location would make it the second-most coveted residential spot, just after the Eaves, if not for the area's populace. Every city and town has its slum, and Guran is no exception.

Originally the location of the bauble shanty town, the Hatchet is rife with mish-mashed buildings, makeshift shelters, odd tangles of tunnels, and unexpected open holes. At the Hatchet's center resides a pit built of brick and blood, about 50 feet (15 m) across and 100 feet (30 m) deep. Imprisoned at its bottom is an ancient ravage bear, driven mad by its captivity and the taunting of those above.

Ravage bear, page 249

Supposedly, a mutant named Jirlin and his wild gang rule the Hatchet with a fiery fist, and those who disregard or challenge his rule become the next hot meal for the ravage bear. Jirlin and his band make their camp around the pit, building crude shelters out of whatever materials they can scavenge and steal. Jirlin is never seen outside the Hatchet, but his gang members travel to other parts of Guran, usually on missions for their leader. When they steal food and equipment, which they do as often as they can get away with it, they leave a calling card in the form of the letter J spelled out in glowing baubles.

Jirlin: *level 4, Might tasks as level 6; health 32; Armor 1; all melee attacks deal +3 points of damage*

Jirlin's gang member: *level 3; Armor 1*

The Eaves: This gently sloping area is filled with newer, larger homes built of ebony stones carved from the tunnels of the Black Riage. The walkways, too, are made from the same stone, giving the impression that they're always wet. Nobles would live here—if the town had nobles. Instead, the Eaves are home to the rich and the pious and, of course, to those who are both. The only notable Guran dignitary who doesn't live in the Eaves is Mylian Acan, who lives in his family home in the Clave.

The Upper West and the Lower West: These two districts have no marked boundaries, and the line between them moves almost daily, depending on who is having a disagreement with whom. Always, the Upper West and the Lower West engage in good-natured (and sometimes not-so-good-natured) ribbing about which of them is better.

At the annual fair, the two districts send their strongest, but not necessarily their smartest, residents to compete in tournaments of arm wrestling, drinking games, and fingerfishing—a sport in which participants stick their pinky fingers just below the surface of the water as bait to attract biters, a species of fish with extraordinarily large teeth. In the morning, after the headaches have passed and the fingers have been stitched, no one can remember who won the contests, so the battle rages on for another year.

That Place: Everyone refers to this bit of forested corner land simply as "that place," as in "I'm going over to that place to do some hunting." It's thick with trees and wildlife, with only a few dirt paths weaving through the dense underbrush. Used primarily for hunting, it's also a favorite spot for young couples (or anyone looking for a clandestine rendezvous). Unfortunately, this causes a number of individuals to be accidentally injured, especially those who are moving erratically, as a wild animal might. It happens so often, in fact, that there's a local term for it—getting bucked.

Sweet End: A tangled sprawl of circular walkways, dead-end streets, and hilly paths, Sweet End is where you'll find entertainment of the sort that isn't family friendly. Forever Street is the main thoroughfare in this area. Lit constantly by huge amounts of baubles, which are stacked and cemented into shapes, letters, and place names, Forever Street never closes. Four bars, two eating establishments, and a tiny theater all line the street.

Milly's Fishing Hole (not to be confused with the Fishing House) offers lovely women and a few equally lovely men who are happy to entertain residents and visitors, provided they have a couple of shins to spare. Milly's also has a barroom and eatery where local bands perform. Perhaps the most popular musician is Will D'aevo, who plays a variety of stringed instruments and sings bawdy songs of Guran's history in a silver-tongued voice. A tall, lanky man with olive skin, disheveled dark hair, and watchful, near-black eyes, D'aevo's music seems to enhance the senses, leading listeners into a trancelike state. Because his music allows him

Will D'aevo: *level 2, all subterfuge tasks as level 3, all music performance and local knowledge tasks as level 4*

LOOKING FOR

Amorphous Fields, page 194

to meld into the background, nearly unnoticed, he sees much of the town's hidden underside. Those who talk with him find that he is a font of useful information and oddly well connected to those with darker dealings about town.

The Marchet is the largest and most popular bar along the strip. Best known for its specialty drink, the Kiss (made of crushed berries, four kinds of alcohol, two kinds of juice, a secret ingredient, and the kiss of the one who serves it), the bar is also infamous for its regular fights over who's kissing whom. The owners, who also work as the barmaids and thus as the kissers in question, are two pairs of sisters: Simple and Serene, the daughters of Maggie Yets, and Temperance and Tranquility, the daughters of Marchie Yets. All four women are close in age, smart as whips, beautiful, and nearly identical. To say they occasionally create havoc by intentionally confusing guests as to their real identities would be a wild understatement. The girls, who were raised together, are as mischievous as their names are not.

Unwitting and unruly guests may find themselves kissed, trussed up, taunted, dropped into Yesterday's Lake, or subjected to any number of other pranks. Often, guests wake up with their pockets empty but for a note that says their goods have been donated to Charcee, the woman who oversees Guran's organization for the unfortunate. Yet no one seems to mind, and some people consider it a badge of honor to be Kissed. By evening, the Marchet is booming again, and if you listen closely, you can hear guests bragging about their exploits at the hands of the Yets girls.

Sweet End Orchards: Along the southeastern edge of Sweet End lie the Sweet End Orchards. The orchards surround Yesterday's Lake, a large body of fresh water that's a source of fish year-round and a spot for migrating birds in the warmer months.

Once a year, under the fullest moon, Guran hosts a large picnic and fair at the lake, complete with a fishing contest, homemade fireworks, and a fiery alcoholic concoction called Cross-eyed Jack, which is made from crossels and a flammable liquid.

Becker Farms: Once a single farm owned by the Becker family, this area now hosts a number of smaller farms, most of which raise dossi for skrip and meat production.

The Wash: A swamp at the south end of town, the Wash is the perfect growing region for crossels. The Red Man of the Marsh is rumored to live there, and children hear bedtime stories of his crossel-stained skin and his appetite for disobedient youngsters. ("Good children," mothers say, "taste bitter to him, but bad children, oh, they taste like pies and cakes, and he eats them all up.") The Red Man and his pack of water hounds wander the marshes when the fog is thick, looking for children to snatch. There is another tale, less told and whispered only among adults, that if you go to the Wash during the first water storm of the season, find the Red Man among the fog, and offer him something he's never seen before, he will bequeath you one of his water hounds, which will work to protect you for the rest of its life.

Bauble Mines: The Black Riage mountains end at the northernmost tip of Guran, and the twists and turns of the old bauble mines are located along this part of the range. No longer used, they are firmly boarded up at each of their two main entrances. The mines have numerous levels and dead ends, so it's hard to know how extensive they really are.

The Downy Dossi keeps a single copy of the mine maps for reference, but it never leaves the store. Even during emergencies, the map stays mounted behind unbreakable transparent synth. Guards are required to memorize it as part of their training.

Crossels are a stimulating berry that, once picked and dried, provide energy in the form of drinks, edibles, and healing elixirs, pills, and potions.



GURAN HEARSAY

Revenge Is a Dish: A young man bearing the name of Doctorish Omash Minkle recently arrived in town. He claims to have a device that will give a nonlethal ailment of your choice (provided you choose one of the six ailments on his list) to one of your enemies for just 10 shins. He calls it a miracle cure, swearing that after he does his work, your feud with the person in question will end. After "treating" a dozen or so people, Minkle was kidnapped by Jirlin and his gang. If his device works the way he claims, it's now in the hands of Guran's most dangerous resident.

Mining for Baubles: Mylian Acan's youngest son, Mylo, has gone missing. Against his father's orders, the child spent a lot of time in the bauble mines, coming home with stories of violet-eyed creatures and worms as big around as an adult is tall. "I watch them from the high shelf where the eyeman lives," Mylo told his father. "I'm safe up there."

To quell the boy's adventures, Mylian ordered stronger, more secure barriers to be built at each of the two mine entrances. Unfortunately, there's a chance the boy might have slipped inside and now cannot get out. Mylian is offering a reward of 100 shins to any individual or group who safely returns his son.

Silver Tongues Set to Wagging: Two members of Jirlin's gang have been frequenting Milly's Fishing Hole and harassing the musician Will D'aevo after his performances. He claims he doesn't know what they want, but he appears nervous about their constant presence. Recently, one of the men was found dead in the Wash, his throat cut as if by a thin string.

Drakka: *level 1, perception as level 2, defense actions as level 4*

MATHEUNIS, THE COLD DESERT

Wild and untamed, the vast region south and east of the Steadfast, stretching from the coast of the ocean to the edge of Seshar, is known as Matheunis. Some call it the Cold Desert. For the most part, it's a dry land of stone and sparse vegetation. Large black carrion birds fly overhead, looking for creatures that have strayed too far from safety in this realm of little sustenance.

Over the last fifty years or so, many folk from the Steadfast have moved south to villages free of empires and kings. Of course, this growth has influenced some rulers, such as the Empress of Pytharon, to begin to look southward with interest.

Free of large cities other than Nihliesh, Matheunis is dotted with isolated aldeia that keep to themselves almost to the point of xenophobia. The people of the land are herders and subsistence farmers. One of the most common types of produce raised is ice candles, a melonlike fruit that grows better in cold temperatures rather than warm.

Margr, page 240

Matheunis is also the domain of many dangerous beasts and marauding abhuman tribes, particularly margr and murden. For reasons unknown, the region has far more than its share of mutants.

Murden, page 243

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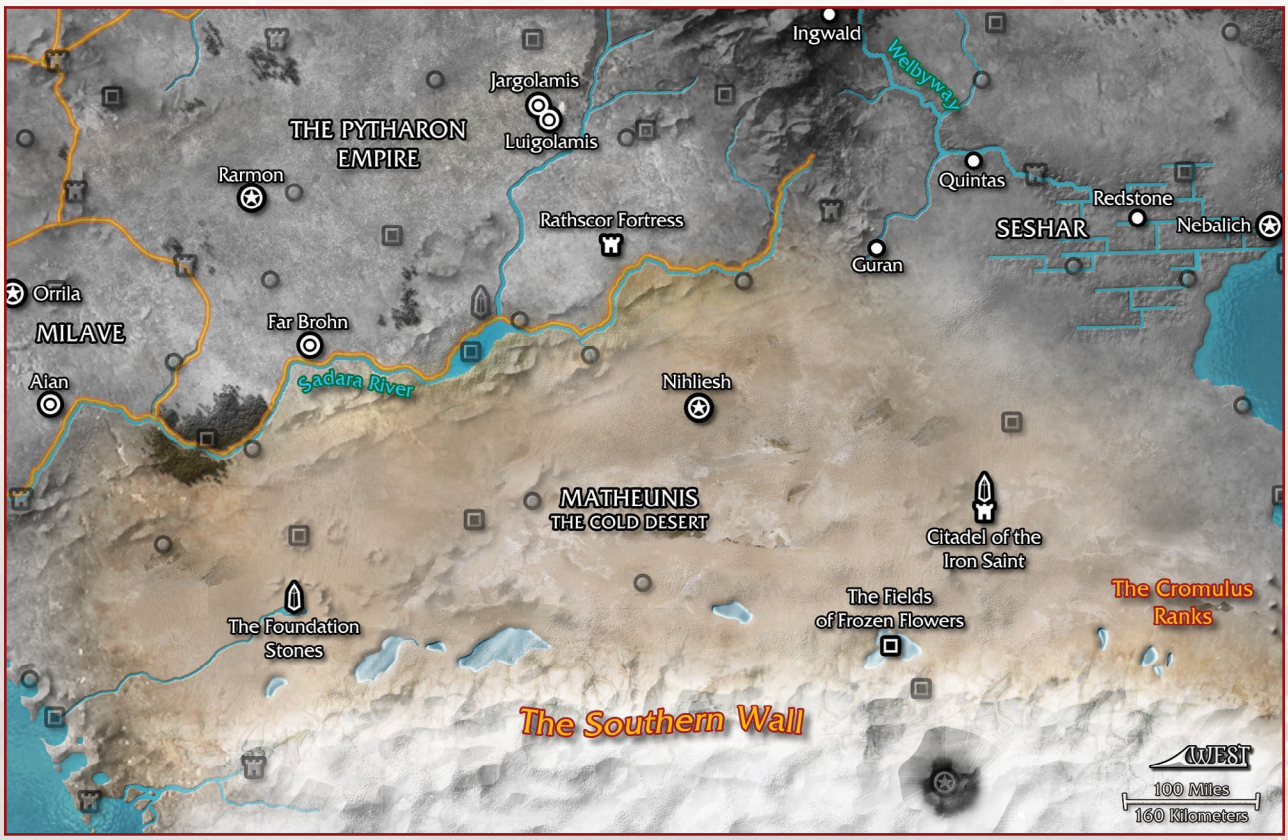
Vebar, page 195

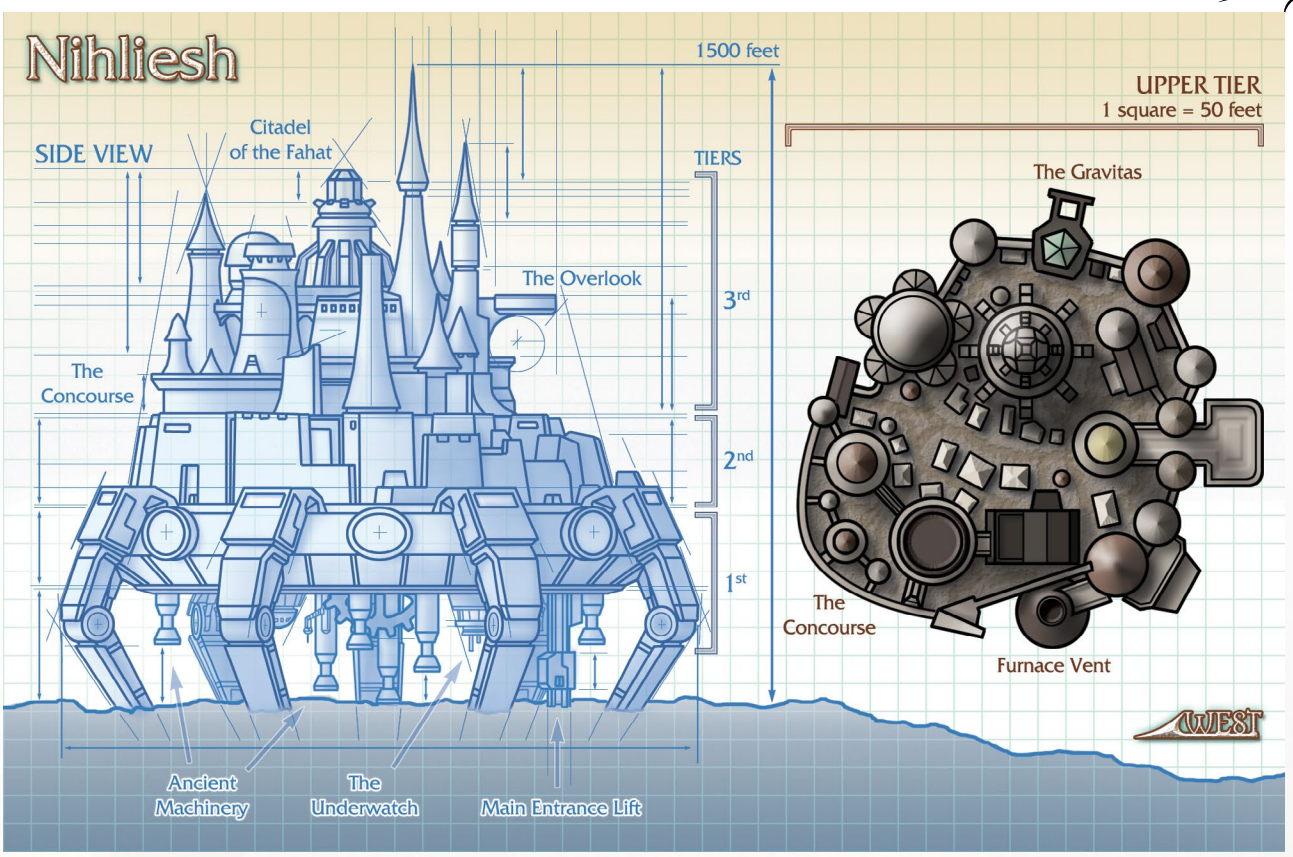
One thing that many Matheunis folk share is a fascination with drakka, insects that grow to 1 foot (30 cm) in length. Drakka are similar to bluebottle flies but a bit more intelligent, and they can be captured and domesticated as pets. Some people use drakka to help herd the brown-wooled umlan goats or as watch animals trained to alert their masters to signs of trouble spied from on high.

NIHLIESH

An ancient machine, likely once a mobile vehicle-city of some kind, lies half buried in the caked earth. More than two hundred years ago, nomads explored its interior and found—among other things—a pair of massive devices that they brought back to life. These resurrected mechanisms produce a thick orange-brown fluid now called *churn*. It can be shaped and molded easily, and once dry, it's harder than stone but fairly light. The nomads began to build atop the half-buried vehicle, raising curving towers, impossible spans, and shapely domes of churn painted in vibrant colors. They named their new city Nihliesh, after a word in their language meaning "tiers."

Today Nihliesh has three tiers. The first and lowest is the machine itself, where workers maintain the churn-producing devices and shape the material as it comes out. The





original buildings erected atop the machine compose the Second Tier. These haphazard, squat structures are so crowded together that when you're within and among them, you'd swear that you were underground. Atop this tier are the elegant, artistic buildings that Nihliesh is best known for, with tall spires reaching high into the sky. Residents call it the Third Tier or the Upper Tier.

Each tier is ruled by a powerful entity. These leaders come from a group called the Fahat, the descendants of some of the original explorers of the machine. The Fahat are mutants, many of them horribly disfigured, but each is revered as a member of the city's upper class. In fact, the people of Nihliesh venerate mutation in general. Some nonmutants intentionally disfigure their bodies in ritualistic displays of adoration.

Nihliesh is the largest city in the Cold Desert, the home of more than 20,000 people. About 5,000 of them live and work in the First Tier, where they rarely see the sun or breathe air not tainted with the fumes of churn production. They live short lives of hard work, debilitation, and disease, yet their position is coveted, for some of them, or their offspring, become Fahat.

Another 5,000 people live in the dark tunnel-streets of the Second Tier, although some of them spend as much time as possible in the Upper Tier. The residents of the Second Tier are the lowest caste of the city, living neither in the light of the Upper Tier nor among the prestigious machines of the First Tier.

Half the city's populace dwells in the Upper Tier, where the wealth of Nihliesh is clear. Glass and glowglobes of various sizes and shapes have been worked into the towering buildings and graceful domes. Powered elevators allow residents to reach the highest floors of the towers quickly and easily. Shops and markets stock much of what the Steadfast can offer, as merchant caravans from throughout the lands come into and out of Nihliesh heavy with goods and wealth.

The Upper Tier also hosts the Citadel of the Fahat, where learned researchers study evolution and mutation, which are both beneficial and detrimental.

PEOPLE OF INTEREST

The ruler of the First Tier is Gayv-oreth, an obscenely obese man covered with pustules that ooze various fluids. Through concentration, he can control the composition of these fluids, allowing him to produce life-giving elixirs for his faithful followers as well as streams of powerful acids or poisons to defend himself. Gayv-oreth is a kind and compassionate ruler, but his appetites sometimes get the best of him, transforming him into a dangerous,

Gayv-oreth: *level 5; health 50; can produce fluids that heal or harm 5 points as an action each round*

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Seshar, page 196

insatiable monster. Still, his people love him and habitually forgive his crimes.

The ruler of the Second Tier is Ni-chodoss, an armless, eyeless, multibreasted woman whose elongated torso is almost like a snake's tail. She has an array of telepathic and telekinetic powers, and her network of telepathic spies, thieves, and assassins allows her to control the tier as well as exert silent influence in the Upper Tier. Unlike the people she rules, Ni-chodoss is extravagantly wealthy, thanks to her thieves.

Ni-chodoss: *level 6; telepathy within 1 mile, up to 100 targets; mindscan targets within long range; telekinesis within 500 feet (150 m), up to 1,000 pounds (450 kg); telekinetic blast with long range, 8 points of damage*

Mada-liviss rules the Third Tier. Almost 8 feet (2.5 m) tall and inhumanly lithe, she is devastating with unearthly beauty despite her six-fingered hands. Mada-liviss is quite old and growing feeble, a fact she hides well. However, people have begun to notice that she appears in public less and less.

Mada-liviss: *level 4, using influence or charm as level 6*

CITADEL OF THE IRON SAINT

A tall, rocky precipice provides a perch for a dark castle known as the Citadel of the Iron Saint. Its inhabitants are anything but saints, however. A second, numenera citadel floats next to the castle, tethered by cables and guy wires.

Some believe that beyond the Southern Wall, there lies a hidden city secluded within a rift in the massive glaciers that consume the region. Rumors say that this city, if one can reach it, is uncannily warmed in some fashion, a sort of secret paradise.

The Soul Court is a group of five individuals, none of whom lives in the citadel full time. They hail from throughout the Ninth World. When the members meet in the castle, they use an extraordinary artifact to tap into the power of the ancient structure. It allows them to send their conscious minds throughout the world, inhabiting the bodies of whomever they come across. They experience the world through the senses of their hosts and completely control the hosts' actions. If their unwilling host dies, is grievously harmed, or otherwise ceases to be useful or entertaining, they simply move on to the next available body. Although it's possible that a few members of the Soul Court use this power in the service of their own goals, for the most part, they simply relish in the dark entertainment of it.

Soul Court member: *level 8*

Few people know of the Citadel of the Iron Saint, and even fewer realize that the Soul Court exists. If the members were discovered, they could be slain easily while in the trancelike state they enter while possessing other bodies.

FOUNDATION STONES

Legend has it that the Foundation Stones are the oldest relics on Earth, dating from the earliest of the prior worlds. There is no evidence to support this claim, but it remains a firmly held belief, particularly by the folk of Matheunis.

If you stand precisely equidistant between the Foundation Stones and the Amber Monolith, you are more likely to get a glimmer.

The seven stones float high above a particularly desolate area of the desert filled with ancient edifices that have been eroded by aeons and covered with so much sediment that they are easily mistaken for natural cliffsides and plateaus. The largest of the stones, shaped like a diamond and almost 1 mile (1.5 km) from top to bottom, is called the Stone of Margul. It floats nearly a half mile (1 km) above the ground. Perhaps more interesting, however, is the Symbol Stone, a much smaller flat-topped rock that floats 2,000 feet (600 m) in the air. The Symbol Stone draws water from an otherworldly source in a portal at its heart and pours it down in four separate streams, creating a narrow river that runs through the desert to the sea. At the top of the stone, a holographic projection of a mysterious symbol floats, lighting the night sky for a mile around as though it were a second moon.

The Foundation Stones are so named because Ninth Worlders sometimes suggest that they serve as the foundation of the sky, holding the heavens aloft.

THE SOUTHERN WALL

Bordering the southern end of Matheunis is the Southern Wall, a glacial formation of nigh-impassible peaks and sheer cliffs. Surrounded by frozen lakes and often covered by snow and hailstorms, the wall seems less a product of its environment than the other way around. In fact, some people speculate that the wall is what generates the bone-chilling conditions that infuse everything in the Cold Desert.

Those who brave the deadly freezing air to approach the Southern Wall report that the temperature drops rapidly with every step. The sharp retort of creaking and cracking resounds constantly from deep within the ice.

THE FIELDS OF FROZEN FLOWERS

My love, my love,
your heart you do swear
so I beg of you show it
with a bloom for my hair.
Not golden, nor crimson,
nor any other hue.
For the heat of your heart,
frost alone shall prove true.

~ "The Frost Flowers"

Here, among the icy lakes, perhaps more than any other place in the world, hearts are broken, loves are lost, and futures are drowned—all in the pursuit of a flower that will last no longer than the time it takes to pluck it from its watery garden and carry it away.

Deep in the Cold Desert, far southeast of Nihliesh, reside the Fields of Frozen Flowers. Consisting of three interconnected salty lakes

that are lightly frozen half the year, the fields are a place of mystery, love, and death. During the times when the wind is dead quiet and the world is covered in frost, ice flowers form and float over the thinly frozen water of the lakes. Born when the lakes' salt and bacteria combine with the moisture from the still air, every frost bloom is as different and temporary as a flake of snow. Thus, they are considered by many to be the only tangible evidence of the vast diversity and delicacy of true love.

In many parts of the Cold Desert and beyond, young people memorize the poem "The Frost Flowers," and a common conversation among new couples is to wonder whether a frozen bloom has begun to form along the thin ice of the lakes. Symbols of the frozen flowers are used in jewelry, writings, and tattoos to prove the strength of one person's feelings for another.

Although the flowers are abundant, they are difficult to gather and even harder to retain. The ice beneath the blooms is thin for walking and may drift with the wind, and the temperature of the salty water is far below freezing. The briny liquid swims with all manner of sharp-toothed and snake-headed creatures, hoping for a snack. If a suitor manages to survive the water and its inhabitants, success is still unlikely; once the flowers are plucked and in hand, they begin to fall away immediately, sometimes leaving little more than a single snowy drop on the palm.

So many young lovers are lost to love's watery garden that there is a myth of bodies building up below the surface, creating a bridge to walk on. There are other myths, too, of the dead men rising from beneath the surface, their hands now frozen enough to carry the flowers all the way to their beloveds.



More than one young man has been sent to bring back a flower by a lover who hopes that he will not return. And many young men who have gone off to "bring back a flower" have been found in other parts of the world, living happily with no thought of the one they swore true love to.

Along the shores of the lakes, villages have sprung up to support (and profit from) those who take the lover's swim. Most services offer hearty drink, warm clothes, weapons, and numenera designed to ease the task, but a few places provide lodging and celebration for the rare couples who make it through the trials of true love.

Those in the north see the Southern Wall as a seemingly impassible barrier of ice, but it's possible there are others on the southern side who view it in much the same way. The wall is, in fact, honeycombed with ice passages and caverns for those who have the expertise and courage to find them.

MATHEUNIS HEARSAY

The Hundred-Year Flood: Washing down out of the highlands to the west, a flash flood has swept through the lowlands, devouring entire villages. People are stranded and in need of rescue, or at least food and medicine.

Mechanized Rampage: A war machine from days long past has reactivated and roams the countryside, killing everything it finds. Leaders of local villages have put out a call for anyone who can stop its reign of destruction, offering all manner of rewards.

Lost Loot: A group of bandits raided a wealthy village of its valuables, but then they turned on one another. A few bandits survived, but laden with so much loot, separated and alone, they reportedly all came to lonely ends. The valuables now lie somewhere in the desert, waiting to be found by intrepid explorers who can return them to their proper owners or claim the riches for their own.

THE WEIRD OF MATHEUNIS

The Warming Column: A tall, beautifully decorated column of sophisticated ceramics stands alone in the desert, radiating a comfortable heat. Travelers who know of it use it as a familiar waypoint at which to make camp at night.

The Black Pool: A small black pond in the eastern part of the desolate landscape is fed by no noticeable source. Its waters are poisonous to drink, but if a creature is immersed in the dark pool, it emerges glazed in a protective coating that provides 3 Armor. However, the coating feeds on the flesh of the creature, dealing 1 point of damage per round.

Devilweed: A plant that grows sporadically throughout Matheunis can be used as a powerful narcotic with extraordinary addictive qualities. Those under its influence experience similar hallucinations of a strange land with three moons in the sky, inhabited by odd avian creatures.

CHAPTER 12

BEYOND THE BEYOND

THE CLOCK OF KALA

This impossibly tall, impassable mountain range makes a nearly perfect ring around the region known as Augur-Kala. Viewed from above, the range looks almost like a clock face, interrupted by one perfectly straight, wide pass called the Sheer. Other than the Sheer, the snow-capped peaks of the Clock rise 30,000 feet (9,150 m) or more and afford no passage. Even traveling over them is difficult thanks to powerful storms that rage with a constant ferocity.

Augur-Kala, page 208

During the winter, the pools and streams around the Sheer fill with pale, blind squid. Having spent their adolescence beneath the mountains, the adult squid attempt to propel themselves up the waterfalls to spawn. If captured, they produce a dark green ink that lasts for many years.

THE SHEER

No knowledge of geology is needed to recognize that the Sheer is an artificial path sliced through the Clock of Kala. It stretches for 320 miles (515 km) and is a uniform 73 miles (117 km) wide, with perfectly smooth, vertical walls cut through the mountains. The ground of the Sheer is generally as smooth as the walls, although the aeons have brought about minor changes due to falling rocks, geological upheavals, and so on. Still, after however many millions of years it has existed, the Sheer remains more like a corridor than a mountain pass.

The walls of the Sheer are frequently punctuated with waterfalls that drop the entire height—about 10,000 feet (3,000 m) on average—and collect in pools and streams that disappear beneath the mountains again.

At each end of the Sheer, people have built a trade city. A single road connects these two cities, offering the only means of traveling between the Beyond and the otherwise sequestered land of Augur-Kala.

Lord Abellor: *level 6, all combat tasks as level 7; health 40; Armor 5; long-range weapon can make up to three attacks in a single action (8 points of projectile damage per attack)*

NOROU

A town built at the western end of the Sheer, Norou is a waypoint for travelers and merchant caravans before they make the 320-mile trek to Wislayn (or after they arrive from that city). The Sheer has no real stops along the way, so Norou is the last place to resupply before heading east.

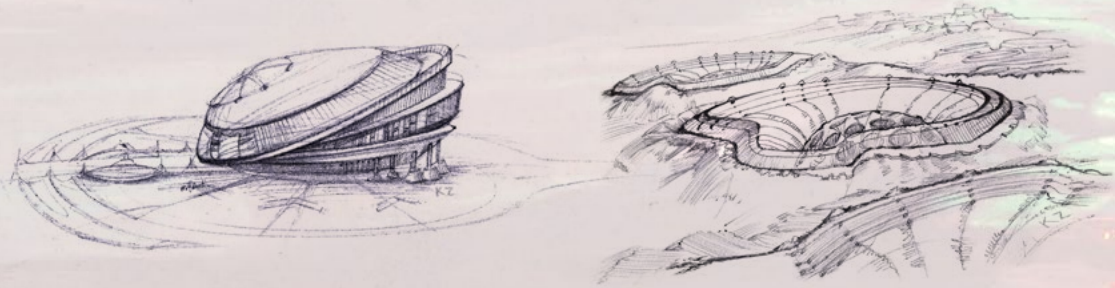
A great deal of trading occurs in Norou. Merchants and customers exchange the exotic goods of Augur-Kala flowing from the east with wares from the Beyond or even the Steadfast coming from the west.

The ruler of Norou is a tyrannical despot who calls himself Lord Abellor. He expects a high tribute from all merchants traveling through his town, and while he has soldiers to back up his demands, he also does so with his own power. Abellor no longer has a human body. He exists as a brain within the interior of a powerful automaton that he controls. Behind his back, the people refer to him as Lord Iron-Pants.

The population of Norou is about 6,000. While most of these folks are merchants or service providers catering to travelers (with inns, brothels, pubs, and so forth), many are beggars and thieves.

"Iyene Who Knows" is a knowledge broker who calls herself a hunter of information. She has worked as a spy and a thief in the past, but now she gathers and trades information in Norou. Known by the criminal element of the city, by those in more legitimate work, and even by people in distant towns, she does not value money or items but instead wants information in exchange, always increasing her primary commodity.

Iyene Who Knows: *level 4, subterfuge as level 6, all types of knowledge, information, and lore as level 8*



WISLAYN

"At one end of the Sheer lies the trader town of Norou. At the other end is some kind of crystal tree that they try to pass off as a trader town as well."

—Nalla, a traveling minstrel

In the middle of the eastern end of the Sheer stands a tall structure of violet crystal that resembles a tree, a tentacled sea creature, or perhaps a polyp 80 feet (24 m) tall. This strange artifact is used by approximately 1,000 people as a sort of town. Slightly more than half of these people are Augurs.

Touching the crystal transports you into an extradimensional space that appears to be inside the "tree." The sky and ground are deep purple, hard and smooth. The space is about a half mile (1 km) across, and inhabitants have erected buildings of wood brought from the outside. Many resemble normal structures with walls, doors, and roofs, but others are hastily constructed barriers of light wood and cloth, since there is no need to keep out the elements—the space has nothing resembling weather of any kind. Walls in Wislayn are merely for privacy.

Newcomers appear in an open plaza at the center of the town. At any given time, anyone in Wislayn can mentally access the "exit" and simply appear back in the normal world, next to the crystal tree.

The ruler of Wislayn calls herself the Ghostis and acts as though the town is her private home in which she hosts visitors—and to her, everyone in town is a visitor. She is beautiful and elegant, very likely an Augur, but her appearance is almost certainly artificially enhanced and maintained. Most of the time, she wears a white, diaphanous gown of sheer fabric that trails well behind her. Gossip says the Ghostis has the ability to eject visitors from the extradimensional space instantly, as if they had willed themselves to leave, and can prevent them from reentering.

Those who believe the rumor further speculate that her intelligence was uploaded long ago into the Wislayn crystal itself, and the body she uses is an artificial creation. If true, the Ghostis might not be human or from the Ninth World at all—who can say?

Rumors say that there is a transdimensional warp that connects Wislayn with a secret location in Ancuan, in the Steadfast.

Her Dread Majesty Queen Auster, the ruler of Vralk, the Red Kingdom, maintains a fortress near the mouth of the Sheer. Rumor is she has plans to build a new fortress not far from Norou. Her spies are everywhere.

CLOCK OF KALA HEARSAY

Seeking Passage: A mysterious trader seeks a way across the Clock of Kala without traveling through the Sheer. She offers any explorer his weight in shins (or the equivalent thereof in other valuables) to discover such a means.

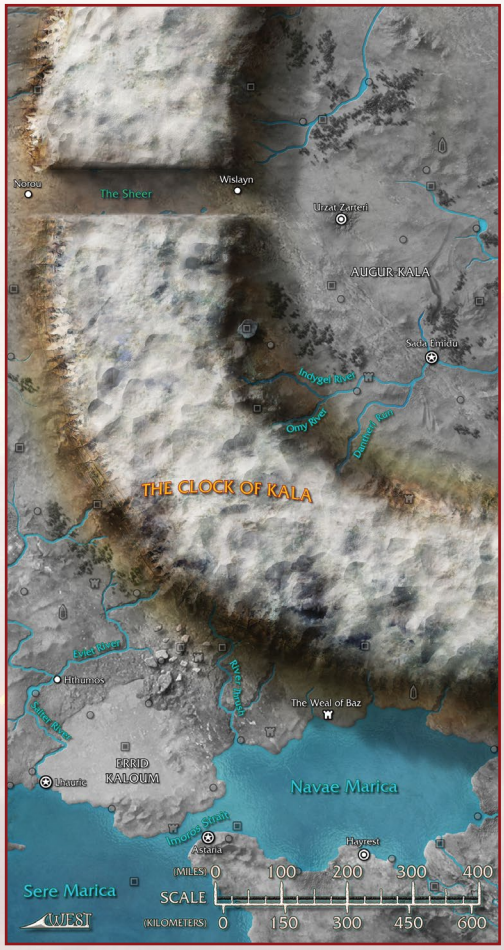
Inverted Mountain: On the eastern inner curve of the Clock of Kala is a mountain unlike the others. Impossibly, the peak is narrow at the bottom and wide at the top. Whether reinforced with an internal artificial structure or supported by gravity manipulation, the mountain is clearly a relic of an earlier time. What other numenera-related secrets it might hold, no one knows.

THE WEIRD OF THE CLOCK OF KALA

An Eye Toward the Future: A one-eyed woman has recently come down out of the peaks, claiming that she found a still mountain pool of intelligent water that offered to take her to the future.

Good Hunting: Small, rodentlike creatures called seterdins live in burrows throughout the Clock of Kala. Strangely, one in ten has a numenera implant in its brain. The implants seem to be inactive, but some people claim to be able to use them to create interesting cyphers.

Synth Rods: Scattered throughout the Clock of Kala are blue synth rods, each about 10 inches (25 cm) long. When two rods are brought close to each other, they snap together, either lengthwise or forming a right angle. It would seem that if all of the rods were brought together, they would combine to form some kind of lattice or structure.



"The so-called Augurs of the Augur-Kala region are in some ways as alien to the humans of the Steadfast as we varjellen are. Curious, don't you think?"
~Visixtru, varjellen philosopher

Cragworm, page 230

Narit Gresh: *level 6, perception and ranged attacks as level 7; health 25; Armor 4; ray projector with long range that inflicts 7 points of damage*

The Allagos: *level 8, all combat tasks as level 10; health 34; Armor 4*

The Zealitor: *level 10; health 50; Armor 4*

LOOKING FOR

Matheunis, page 202
Nebalich, page 197

AUGUR-KALA

Not technically part of the Beyond, the land known as Augur-Kala is as exotic and strange a place as anyone in the Steadfast could imagine.

The people of this realm are called Augurs. Although they appear no different from the humans of the Steadfast and the Beyond, they come from entirely different stock. They are, on average, smarter, stronger, faster, more attractive, and far less prone to disease. The expected lifespan of an Augur is 300 years. In the extremely rare event that an Augur mates with an outsider, procreation is possible but highly unlikely.

Augurs have a strong affinity for the numenera, but unlike the people of the rest of the world, their knowledge of it seems to be declining rather than increasing. Long ago, generations of Augurs had such a close relationship with the ways of the ancient past that they almost seemed like the people of a prior world themselves. But with each passing year, their expertise fades as older folk die and take more and more knowledge to the grave.

As if to punctuate this decline, near the center of Augur-Kala is a large metal structure that appears to have burst violently from the earth long ago. Legend has it that the Augurs descend from people who dwelled within this structure, sleeping underground for aeons. If true, it happened so long ago that no Augur has any memory of it, nor memory of anyone who did.

Augurs have their own language, but some—mostly traders and merchants—speak the Truth. Occasionally, they use speaking machines to translate what they say and hear.

The land of Augur-Kala is green and fertile, with rolling hills, babbling streams, and pleasant weather. Villages and small communities are rarer here than elsewhere in the Ninth World, with a higher percentage of the population living in cities. Many cities exist, but the two best known to outsiders are Urzat Zarteri and Sada Emidu (although, technically, the trade city of Wislayn on the eastern end of the Sheer is largely an Augur community).

Augur-Kala is not without its dangers, of course, but most of its beasts, abhumans, and creatures are different from those in the Steadfast or the Beyond. Perhaps most terrifying of these are the Lug Sorek, which resemble great winged cragworms more than anything else.

AUGUR-KALA HEARSAY

Cure for What Ails You: A scholar among the Augurs believes that their people are slowly devolving. He seeks explorers willing to travel to an ancient ruin and find a formula that he can use to stop the deterioration from continuing into further generations.

Divided Camps: A group of Augurs seeking independence from the rule of the Zealitor has gathered in an armed camp outside of Sada Emidu. In response, the Zealitor is reportedly threatening to unleash troops and his personal war machine—a hovering, armored dreadnaught with long-range disintegration artillery—to quell the rebellion.

THE WEIRD OF AUGUR-KALA

Stampede of Ghosts: A horde of ultraterrestrials, only partially in phase, moves en masse through the land from time to time, distorting reality like a finger drawn across the canvas of a wet painting. Their passing leaves a bizarre wake in the wilderness.

Dead Machines: In the southern region of the land, a number of wheeled metal machines lie dormant, damaged by weapons that inflict terrible heat. Portions of the machines have been entirely melted.

URZAT ZARTERI

Urzat Zarteri is an Augur fortress-city built on a high plateau and surrounded by a tall wall of artificial stone. The place is stark and functional, its primary function being defense. The city is extremely wary of strangers.

Stretching out from the wall, the land is a vast bog patrolled by guardians called Narit Gresh. These sentries appear to be ancient, floating cylinders of rusty metal topped with the grafted heads of beasts, fleshy tendrils, and an array of sensory apparatus and weaponry.

About 15,000 people live in the multileveled city, although at least 2,000 of them are soldiers who wear chainmail armor and are trained in the use of sword-staves as well as the occasional numenera weapon. The commander of the troops and the city itself is known as the Allagos, a title won through experience, appointment, and formal combat. The current Allagos is a tall, broad-shouldered woman with short hair and a series of scars on her face and neck.

SADA EMIDU

In the language of the Augurs, Sada Emidu means "River City." It has a population of 100,000 and teems with unique spindle towers of metal, crystalline domes, and buildings made of energy rather than matter. Serving as a sort of capital, the city is the home of the ruler of Augur-Kala—the Zealitor, a title that equates roughly to "prince." The Zealitor is a being of engineered flesh fused with synth enhancements in body and brain. His grand palace is built atop a number of bridge-like spans that cross the Indygel River; the entire structure is poised above the rushing water.

OUTSIDE THE BOUNDS OF THE NINTH WORLD

Some locations important to the Ninth World technically do not exist in the Ninth World at all. One such place is the University of Doors.

GETTING TO THE UNIVERSITY

The University of Doors is situated in an alternate universe, but its location is a well-kept secret, even from those who work and study there. Students, professors, and staff leave and arrive by way of special university doors that are hidden throughout the world. Discovering and opening one of these locked passageways, typically called diums, is the first step for prospective students. Those who fail to find a dium and use it to reach the university's threshold are rejected instantly. Of the applicants who find their way to the school, most are turned away without being asked inside the chimeric gatewall that surrounds the grounds. Less than 1 percent of applicants are actually invited to pursue their education.

Diums can be located anywhere in the world, be made of any substance, and use any type of locking mechanism. They typically appear at random for one hour to one day at a time.

Some potential locations include:

The Emperor of Green: This giant tree, which reaches a height of 700 feet (213 m), grows in the Westwood along Navarene's coastline. The dium appears at random on the north-facing side and disappears after an hour.

Tremble Pass: Once a year or so, a circular door appears in Tremble Pass, stretching the ground open into a cavernous passageway. More than one current student began her illustrious career by falling and tripping into this door.

Tremble Pass, page 172

The Maestro: Selim Said spends his time exploring the mysteries of the Ninth World and is often found studying the foundations of flying and floating cities, buildings, and the like. Rumored to be a former headstone (key holder) of the university, his charming demeanor masks a brilliant mind and a strong body. Those who take the time to get to know him will uncover another secret: within the neural network of his mind resides a portal to the university—but only for the person who holds the proper key.

Selim Said: *level 6*

The Unseen Lake: When invisible storms ravage the lake, as happens during its wettest season, a whirlpool door occasionally opens in the wake of the disaster. This door is visible only by what's caught in its roll and tumble; anyone who sees a swirl of fish and other creatures could take a running leap and attempt to jump through the door's opening.

Unseen Lake, page 170

THE GROUNDS

The school grounds are surrounded by a chimeric wall of doors, gates, openings, and passageways. These entrances of all sizes and shapes appear to overlap, connect and disconnect, change location, and open and close at random. Some doors are inside other doors.

Westwood, page 137

LOOKING FOR

Drakka, page 202
Nihliesh, page 202





Those seeking unusual trade opportunities might take the trade road known as the Grey Grasp from the area around the Clock of Kala to the lands of the east. A few might even come back.

Those who purposely seek entrance to the University of Doors for their own advancement may find their efforts thwarted. Nobody knows how, but the university seems to play an active role in choosing its applicants.

Far to the east of the Clock of Kala, intrepid explorers will find the area known as Greater Garravia, a land of forests, mountains, and transdimensional terrors—as well as extraordinary discoveries.

Windows, locking mechanisms, and hinges without purpose sometimes appear as well.

To pass the second stage of application, students must find and open all three of the true doors among the illusions. The Archivolt—a flock of mechanical birds in the shape of keys—fly through and around the doors in the chimeric wall and caw clues to each prospective student. To say the Archivolt is annoying would be to describe the flock too kindly; the creatures seem to take pleasure in taunting and harassing students who cannot figure out their clues. They are keys created and programmed to seek out, discover, and unlock the hidden inadequacies of a human's mind, and they are very good at what they do.

GAINING ENTRANCE

The Archivolt caws the clues to potential students in the following order. (The first part of each clue suggests the material to be used for the key, and the second part hints at the action to be taken.)

1. *Bird got your backbone? Introduce yourself.*

This door is built of wood and synth, with a conventional lock. Students must build a key from a type of spine or backbone, whether bone (the spine of an animal), stalk (the spine of a plant), or synth (the main component of a piece of technology). Almost anything will work as long as it can be considered a spine or backbone of an object or creature. Students must insert this key into any part of the wall and speak their full name aloud, and the door will settle into its rightful place. If students struggle, the Archivolt might deign to "help," offering such useful suggestions as "Where is your key? How shall you enter?"

2. *And if you are the key? Step forward.*

The second door is built of nanoparticles that are designed to change shape to fit the specifications of the person who wishes to enter. Doors like this are often used to travel between places where dangerous creatures attempt to latch onto travelers and pass through the entrance with them. The precise shape of the doorway keeps unwanted passengers from going through. In this case, the key is a representation of the student and can be a drawing or something similar crafted out of any material. Students merely step forward into the wall with their depiction, and the door will appear. The Archivolt loves this clue and often uses it to deride the student's shape in the guise of giving assistance.

3. *There are no sounds to enter this place. Fly.*

This door is built of stardust from another world. At one time, it was likely a door to another planet, but now it allows only a visage into that place, a green orb of swirling dust and winds. Silence is the key; if students say nothing, the door will appear. Then they must jump into the whirling visage, which transports them to the other side of the wall.

THE BUILDINGS

Inside the chimeric wall sits a vast, rambling university constructed of a hodge-podge of materials, all put together with seeming randomness. Most of the structures are built of entrances of one sort or another: closed doors, double doors, sliding doors, portals, gateways, raw openings, and more. Some of these are simple doors that merely provide access into a building. Others resemble doors but don't lead anywhere. Still others open to places unknown and impossible—dark landscapes never explored, the point of cellular mitosis, the eye of a hurricane, the internal structure of a working brain.

Despite the unusual appearance of the buildings, they all have a purpose, including student housing and community spaces, laboratories, classrooms, gathering halls, staff lounges, and doorway disposal and manufacturing facilities. Students are expected to live on campus during their studies, while staff may reside there or elsewhere (except the headstone, who may not leave the university grounds during their tenure).

THE UNIVERSITY OF DOORS

TURN EVERY KEY. OPEN EVERY DOOR. STEP THROUGH INTO YOUR FUTURE.

Have you always believed you were destined for great transitions? That your true purpose was found only in the discovery of openings to new places and experiences? That archways hold the keystone to life? Have you always known your way around physical and metaphorical locks, keys, passwords, and hidden panels? Then the University of Doors might be the place for you.

Students with nimble fingers and a deep understanding of structures can specialize in concrete arts such as lockpicking, passage discovery, and architectural synthmongery. Those with language and mechanical skills may pursue their interests in password recovery, panel repair, and security features. Numenites will find their passions met in our training on missing door retrieval, distance traveling, pocket doors, and planal transition, as well as in our Passageway to the Stars program. Those with interests in exploring less tangible doorways–those of the human mind or of the meanings of life–may also find a place in our hallowed corridors.

Degree programs at the university require at least ten years of intense study and may necessitate as many as twenty years. Most students find work in a wide variety of fields, from thievery and architectural integration to passage creation and interplanetary studies.

Potential students should take note: in this place where exits and entrances are revered, little attention is given to the other parts of life. Conversing, sleeping, partying, and even eating are conduits to what truly matters: the discovering, opening, and entering of doors. Here, hallways are merely channels to the next door, buildings exist for the sole purpose of holding doors, and life is without the amenities to which you may be accustomed. As a student, you will be expected to focus on your studies and explorations, on your future passages and not on what's passed. Should you enter our hallowed archway, the door that was your life will close behind you. (Of course, once you graduate, you'll have the skills to open it again. You'll soon find that no door is forever closed to one of our graduates.)

The University of Doors accepts students of only the highest caliber, those who show great promise with the transitory places of the world. Potential students may begin the application process by discovering the university door nearest to them. Find it, open it, and travel through it, and you will find yourself on our threshold.

THE UNIVERSITY OF DOORS: THE KEYSTONE TO YOUR NEW LIFE

Some of the more prominent buildings include:

Science Lab: This lab is the largest building on campus, and—thanks to an infamous exploding double-door incident in the university's recent history—nearly everyone refers to it as the T&E (the Trial and Error). Here, the majority of the experiments, studies, and hands-on lab work takes place.

Hinge Lab: Once just a wing of the T&E, the Hinge Lab has grown large enough to require its own structure, a tall, triangular wood building. Historically considered one of the less important elements of a door, hinges are now better understood as the grease in the passage wheel, easing the transition from one place or state of being to another.

The Atrium: A large glass building in the shape of an orb with hundreds of honeycombed windows, the atrium houses a collection of living passages for study, including plant-based gateways, creatures with entryways in or on their bodies, and sentient doors.

The basement of the Atrium houses a subversive section of studies that is not on any of the brochures or propaganda. Simply called After Life, this branch of the university explores the transitions between life and death, between death and what comes after, and between what comes after and what begins anew. After Life students are called Passers and often dress in alabaster, which they believe to be the color of death.

The End of Doors: Typically called the EOD, this circular red brick building is the only one on campus that maintains no more than one doorway at any given time. This door is a simple wooden door with no lock, and it leads from outside the EOD to its vast, round interior. Here is a no-door zone, a place where students go to leave behind the world of doors and feel the safety of solid walls around them. Beginning students find respite here, and others come to study the effects of being inside a solid, mostly doorless space.

Colod, the university's catlike mascot, can most often be found in the Atrium.

The area north of the Clock of Kala is known as Vralk, the Red Kingdom, named as much for the blood that's shed by its people as for the sulfurous, crimson air and volcanic desolation.

LOOKING FOR

Fahat, page 203
Foundation Stones, page 204
Southern Wall, page 204

PEOPLE OF INTEREST

The Headstone: The headstone is the title given to the disciplinarian and key holder of the university. Every ten years, one rule-focused member of the graduating class is chosen to become the new headstone. During the ornate ceremony, a number of keys, both physical and mental, are passed from the retiring headstone to the new one.

While at the helm of the university, the headstone oversees everything from student admissions and disciplinary measures to the curriculum and graduation ceremony.

Once their reign ends, the former headstone is given a choice of doors to go through as their final transition. After they choose and cross that final threshold, they may never go through a door again without first being invited to do so by the holder of that door. Those who violate this unspoken policy are hunted down and put to death by the gibbs. Thus, many headstones become wandering nomads, Peregrines, con artists, or streetmen after they leave the university.

The current headstone is Sajeen Dar, a man nearing the end of his time at the university's helm.

The University Cabinet: This invisible governing board of the school ensures that all policies, rules, and traditions are upheld. Unseen and unheard, the cabinet includes members of the teaching staff as well as current and former students. It's rumored that Emerita Sarsten is the organization's head, but no one has any proof.

Professor Emerita Sarsten: *level 4; health 20*

Peregrines, page 412

Sajeen Dar: *level 4; health 20; escapes through doors; sneak attacks by stepping out of a door he creates and attacking for 8 points of damage*

The Archivolt: *operates as a single level 5 creature; health 20; emotional taunts deal 3 points of Intellect damage, ignoring Armor*

Gibbs: *level 5; health 15; morphs into knifelike shapes to attack, dealing 3 points of damage*

LOOKING FOR
Fields of Frozen Flowers, page 204

Professor Emerita Sarsten: A long-retired member of the school, she continues to work in the various labs at her leisure. Her main focus is using elements of doors—hinges, knobs, locks, keys, and knockers—to create biomechanical creatures. She occasionally takes exceptionally gifted students under her wing, passing along the secrets of biomechanical creation. However, none of her students has been able to match her talents, and many believe her innate understanding of biomech to be something beyond human.

Colod: Beloved by all, Colod, the university's mascot, is a large catlike creature that lives in the Atrium. He stands about waist high to a human and has two combined faces, with two mouths, two noses, and three eyes, but he has only one brain, so both of his faces react in unison. Many people believe that his facial positioning allows him to see the past and the future. In recent years, Colod has started acting oddly—yowling and growling—prior to disastrous events. Students often pet him for good luck before especially difficult exams and thank him with gifts of fish and cheese after successful years.

The Archivolt: Professor Emerita Sarsten created this flock of mechanical birds in the shape of keys. The birds, which number in the dozens and range from the size of a human's thumb to the size of a human's head, fly through and around the doors in the chimeric wall. Their main job is to provide clues to prospective students. However, they are also designed to understand and unlock a person's inadequacies. Through taunting caws and jabs, they break down students whose emotional walls are not locked against psychological attack. Although they poke fun at anyone, they won't attack unless attacked first.

Gibbs: These creatures are the main protectors of the university and of those who live, work, and study inside its walls. Gibbs, also created by the infamous Professor Sarsten, are masters of camouflage, typically appearing to the untrained eye as door knockers. They can take on a number of shapes, although they prefer the appearance of small dragons, large frogs, broken hound heads, and the occasional naked woman.

UNIVERSITY HEARSAY

A Head of Stone: It's nearing time for Sajeen Dar, the current headstone, to choose his successor. This year's graduating class has at least three possibilities, but Dar is long past his deadline for selecting one. Rumor has it that he plans to keep power and continue his reign. If his hand is forced, he is the kind of man who will first try to convince the cabinet that no students are worthy; if that fails, he will likely attempt to kill his possible successors.

Behind Door 11: Some people whisper that Emerita Sarsten is the head of the secretive university cabinet, but in truth, she put one of her biomechanical creations at its helm long ago. This creature looks, sounds, and acts exactly like the real Professor Sarsten, which makes one wonder: Are two Emeritas wandering the campus, or did the living one die long ago?

The Two Faces of Colod: The university's mascot has been losing weight recently and is starting to behave erratically, yowling at all hours of the night and keeping students awake. Is the ancient creature dying, or is he once again predicting an impending disaster for the university?

OTHER VILLAGES, SETTLEMENTS, AND COMMUNITIES

This section describes some of the other towns and villages scattered throughout the Ninth World. You are encouraged to use them whenever you need a unique and interesting place where your players can rest for the night, restock supplies, or find that perfect numenera item. These locations will never appear on an official Numenera map, so feel free to place them wherever you'd like and to use any or all of the information as benefits your campaign.

AENDRI

Population: Slightly more than 500
Significant Feature: Most of the buildings in this small town are built of stronglass and thus transparent. Four tailors in town work to keep the homes well covered with curtains and roof garbs.
Person of Interest: Dashma Erg is a breeder of flying creatures—specifically, insects that are genetically engineered to carry coded messages—and he's made a good business of his offerings. He owns a large house near the center of town and has no curtains. Creatures of all sizes and shapes flutter about inside and rest against the clear walls.
Hearsay: Saya Morepin, a wealthy eccentric who lives in a four-story stronglass home, owns a small device that she calls the Portcullis. It prevents people from entering or leaving a discrete, defined place through a subtle use of energy fields. During one of Saya's lavish parties, someone stole the Portcullis from her collection room and is using it to keep Saya locked in her home. She is offering a large reward for its return and her subsequent release.
The Weird: One of the fountains in the center of town features a pair of hands made of an unknown material. The water that flows over the hands seems to change color, and the palms have tattoos that form a map when viewed side by side.

BROLEY

Population: 500
Significant Feature: Most of the buildings here are made of living greenwood, a biologically engineered material that quickly grows over a temporary shelter to create a permanent structure. This gives the majority of buildings a softly rounded silhouette, as air-filled fabrics are used to create the mold for the structures. The creator of greenwood, Holeon Ferre, still lives in Broley and occasionally takes on apprentices in the craft.
Person of Interest: Camila Beyett leads a group called the Cosmicologists, whose members bring their bodies in tune with the cosmos through the use of specialized movements such as fighting stances and interactive stretches and duels. Camila leads movement practice every day in Desoni's Square, and her following has grown to nearly half the town, as well as outsiders who arrive from beyond its borders.
Hearsay: The Revelry of Wonder, an annual event in Broley, is just days away. The celebration includes competitions in strength, weaponry, crafting, and other skills. Those who specialize in the numenera will appreciate the Wonder Race, where participants are given a random pile of parts and materials and must create something workable in a few hours. The winners are awarded a special prize, and the winning pieces are added to Holeon Ferre's growing numenera collection.
The Weird: On Cheslet Street, a block of absolute darkness approximately 8 feet (2.5 m) high floats a few inches off the ground. While walking through it, you can't see, hear, or smell anything. The block vibrates slightly.

DYMATH FORDYE

Population: 1,200
Significant Feature: The town is built in the middle of Snakemoor Marsh, with all of the buildings set high on stilts. Only one bridge—a precarious stone walkway—leads into town.
Person of Interest: Malik Harcrow runs the local tavern. She is a retired thief and keeps a large collection of maps and keys in her storeroom. She, her inn, and those who seek shelter there are well protected by her thuman, Duror.
Hearsay: One of the town's most eligible bachelors, Edmugh Folcey, was discovered dead, apparently from an odd bite on his face. A piece of what looked like a metal tooth was lodged in his cheek. Several local women and at least one man are devastated by his death and offer various rewards for the capture of his killer, be it man, beast, or something else.
The Weird: A herd of strange animals, tough-hided creatures that snort sapphire-hued smoke, has moved into the marsh. They mostly gather beneath the stilted home of the town's mayor.

ESSEARNIN

Population: 800
Significant Feature: The town sits on the banks of a river spanned by several bridges. Each bridge is built of a different material and has a unique shape.
Person of Interest: The Inn of the Blue Barker hosts regular duels, with a 2-shin entry fee and the prize of free room and board for a week. Malia Noke, a tall, quiet varjellen, has held the

Dashma Erg: *level 3*

Malik Harcrow: *level 5, subterfuge-related tasks as level 6, lockpicking as level 7*

Thuman, page 256

Camila Beyett*: level 5, melee attacks and Speed defense as level 6*

Malia Noke: *level 6, Speed defense as level 7 due to shield; health 28; Armor 2; +2 points of damage with her special single-edged sword*

LOOKING FOR

Clock of Kala, page 206
Norou, page 206
The Sheer, page 206

Cockle gambling isn't illegal, but it's frowned upon due to its high stakes. Those who wish to join a game must start their pot with the promise of a heart from a living creature. They must show proof that they can get—or have already gotten—the heart before they can play.

title for four years running. She is threatening to retire due to boredom and the lack of worthy competition. Argel, the inn's owner, is desperately searching for someone to give Malia a good fight, as the event's entry fees pay for his addiction to cockle gambling.
Hearsay: Tinkerers have built a contraption to capture a person's image and project it in reverse on a flat surface for a few minutes. Recently, the contraption has started showing images of odd, alien beasts instead of the person who paid to have their likeness captured.
The Weird: Essearnin is built around a pyramid of purple stone. On warm days, the top of the stone splits and spouts a stream of freezing water. Residents call it the Icebreak.

IMALOV CASTLE

Population: 25
Significant Feature: A lone keep with high grey walls, this castle sits in the middle of a desolate stretch of wilderness. The massive iron doors are always closed.
Person of Interest: Lady Perrix stands over 6 1/2 feet (2 m) tall and wears heeled boots and an elaborate headdress to accentuate her height. She is leery of strangers, but those granted entrance are given a gracious but imperious reception. Everyone else in the castle is her servant or slave.

Lady Perrix: *level 4, combat and defense tasks as level 5; health 24*

Hearsay: Lady Perrix is a fallen Angulan Knight, ousted from the order years ago. She may very well be insane. However, many people believe that she knows the secret to entering a hidden, subterranean complex from the prior worlds that lies near her castle.

Angulan Knights, page 217

The Weird: Lady Perrix has a time displacement device in her headdress that allows her to disappear for a few seconds or a few minutes and then reappear as if she had never left.

SONGDUEL RUINS

Population: Just under 1,000
Significant Feature: This village is built on top of a much larger city and a battlefield of legend. It is said that long ago, two great songstresses met here to fight for the hand of the man they both loved. Their songs, in their deadly beauty, razed the city to the ground and ensured that nothing would grow for ages to come. (Of course, it's also possible that the soil could have been tainted by the poisonous sprayweapons they used on each other during the infamous duel, the residue of which seeps up each time it rains.)
Person of Interest: Jesra Cris is the village ruler. Ancient and blind, she mostly leaves the running of Songduel Ruins to her six grandchildren, who range in age from five to eighteen. While they're wreaking havoc on the village as only young unchaperoned rulers can, Jesra has been seen walking the streets late at night, looking at the sky and wearing an odd device on her head.

Jesra Cris: *level 3, all tasks involving sight as level 1*

Hearsay: Resident Stepfan Salink recently acquired a pair of bounding boots that allows him to jump and leap without the pressure of gravity. Animals of all sorts are attracted to this numenera item, and a large pack of creatures, both tame and wild, has begun to follow him through the streets. He doesn't want to give up his boots, but he can't figure out how to stop the animals from trailing him.
The Weird: In the marketplace is a deep, water-filled shaft left over from the past. The round opening has been boarded up since long before the battle that created Songduel Ruins, but those who pass by it hear electronic beeps coming from the shaft. The sounds are becoming more frequent. Whether they are a code, a distress signal, or a form of music is the subject of much speculation.

SPELLGILL

Population: 750
Significant Feature: The village was recently ravaged by tremors that broke open a large rift down one side of Spellgill and ruined more than half of the buildings in town. While the village rebuilds, most of the inhabitants take shelter at the Left Bank Inn.
Person of Interest: Ames Gylley has a large contraption that replicates any nonliving thing put into it. However, each person who uses the contraption can press the button to replicate something only once. If a person tries a second time, even while wearing gloves or otherwise trying to "fool" the machine, nothing happens. Unfortunately, the contraption was broken during the earthquake. Ames has promised that whoever fixes it may use the machine to replicate any one thing they desire.

Ames Gylley: *level 3, understanding numenera as level 5*

Hearsay: Anyone who's come through Spellgill lately has been surprised to find it in tatters. Word is that no one outside the area felt the quake that felled the buildings. Townsfolk have begun to wonder if the tremors were entirely natural.
The Weird: Just outside of town, there is a long tunnel made of vines. More precisely, the vines grow on their own into the shape of a tunnel that seems to lead from nowhere in particular to nowhere in particular. They drop little seed pods that stick to clothing. If not plucked off, the pods quickly begin to grow roots in the material.

LOOKING FOR

Wislayn, page 207

CHAPTER 13

ORGANIZATIONS

Despite its divided and isolated nature, the Ninth World has many powerful and influential organizations. This section describes a few of the most prominent groups and the benefits enjoyed by members. If a player character joins one of these organizations, they can take the benefit rather than a skill the next time they have the opportunity to gain a new skill.

THE ORDER OF TRUTH

Almost certainly the strongest and most dominant organization in the Steadfast—and possibly the Beyond—the Order of Truth was established by the original Amber Pope, High Father Calaval, about 400 years ago. Its members are called Aeon Priests, and they are the most trusted experts in handling, identifying, and using the numenera and other lore. In most communities, Aeon Priests are the local "wise folk," looked upon with respect as leaders and advisers in the important facets of life.

Although the Order of Truth seems like a religion, technically it's not one. The papacy has a structure like a priesthood and calls its members "priests," but it's not a religion—it's a veneration of intellect, understanding, and the wonders that arise from such things: science, technology, and the numenera. In fact, under the current Amber Pope, Durranet VI, the Aeon Priests have discovered that the people of the Steadfast are more likely to respect, admire, and *obey* the Order of Truth if they think of it as a religion. Thus, in larger cities, the order has begun holding quasi-religious services to encourage this idea. They ritualize their teachings to respect and understand the numenera as the key to advancing humanity into the future. They praise the past and those who lived in it for their intelligence and understanding.

Still, many people treat the order like a religion regardless. These people are not members, but rather "adherents." In their eyes, the order is focused on worshipping the past and the ancients who created the fantastic devices and strange discoveries that fill the Ninth World. And over the last century or so, the order has done little to discourage this idea. The order maintains a small army, as well as a large organization of agents, observers, clerks, scribes, and other personnel. The headquarters lies in the city of Qi, in a complex known as the Durkhal. They also have a secret fortress called the Citadel of the Conduit that lies in a parallel dimension and can be accessed by any high-ranking Aeon Priest.

MEMBERS OF NOTE

The most notable Aeon Priest is the Amber Pope.

Amber Pope, Durranet VI: The current Amber Pope, Durranet VI, wears shining garments of scarlet, white, and gold, and a peaked cap that emanates an aura so profound that most people can't recall the features of the Pope after meeting him, or even his specific words and mannerisms, though they do recall his advice and commands. Durranet VI and the Order of Truth hold the Steadfast together. The Amber Pope uses all the pressure his influence can muster to keep the so-called Nine Rival Kings from warring among themselves. To this end, Durranet VI has called for a crusade against the recently discovered people in the far north who live beyond the Cloudcrystal Skyfields. These people call themselves Gaians, and they are animists, believing that supernatural spirits inhabit all natural things. They revere these spirits, an act the order believes to be an abomination of truth. Nine years ago, when Gaian explorers first ventured into the Skyfields and the northern parts of the Steadfast, the Amber Pope branded them enemies of truth and declared a holy war against them. The first conflicts of this war, waged in the Cloudcrystal Skyfields, were small skirmishes. However,

For additional information about High Father Calaval and the founding of the Order of Truth, see "The Amber Monolith," page 140.

Qi, page 144

Durkhal, page 144

The Steadfast, page 136

The Beyond, page 169

Aeon Priest, page 264

Numenera, page 13

Cloudcrystal Skyfields, page 169

Gaians, page 134

Many Aeon Priests find Gaian Animism—in which Gaians believe that a limitless number of supernatural spirits inhabit humans, creatures, objects, locations, and even concepts—a perplexing and possibly threatening way to view the world.

LOOKING FOR

Augur, page 208
Augur-Kala, page 208

Although they are generally quieter about it than the Order of Truth, the Convergence also has hopes of infiltrating these new Gaian lands.

the order has commanded a large force of warriors to go north and defeat the Gaians in their homelands—and in so doing, divert any interest or ability to wage war far from the Steadfast, for peace is the best way to foster the truth.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Symbol: Square entwined in four-lobed design
Motto: Glory to the originators of truth and understanding
Badge of Membership: Pin, amulet, or tattoo of symbol
Member Benefits: First and foremost, the benefit of being an Aeon Priest is the respect that it commands. Joining these illustrious ranks, however, requires years of formal training. Further, in lieu of taking a new skill, an Aeon Priest can choose one esotery that a first-tier Nano can use, and the priest can access its ability (after paying its cost). The rationale behind this power can be a special implant, a tiny device, or the means to manipulate nanomachines or other reality-shaping processes.



THE CONVERGENCE

If the Order of Truth has an opposite, it would be the Convergence. Like the Aeon Priests, members of the Convergence revere the knowledge of the past, but they seek to use it to grant power to themselves, not to help others. Each member wishes to use the numenera to gain influence not only over the people of the Ninth World but also over the universe itself. They understand enough of the numenera to realize that it has more potential than most Aeon Priests know. Matter, energy, space, time, and even the laws of physics can be shaped to their will if they determine the means. In this pursuit, they are ruthless, using coercion, deceit, and violence to get what they want. They let nothing stand in their way.

A rather small organization, the Convergence boasts a membership of approximately one hundred men and women, but with underlings, guards, lackeys, and slaves, the total number is easily ten times higher. Many members are Nanos, and some are Aeon Priests who have renounced their order. All are scholars, tinkerers, machinesmiths, and theorists who understand the numenera.

Members of the Convergence are called magister or magistrix. Each typically wields an array of numenera weaponry and devices. Most have given up on society at large and dwell in secret, whether alone or in small groups, toiling at their dark goals. The Convergence has three main bases of operation, which they call their sanctums. These are the Scorpion Sanctum, the Empty Sanctum, and the Golden Sanctum. Each is joined to the others by a series of space-bending gateways. About one-third of the organization operates directly out of these sanctums.

New members are inducted in one of the three sanctums. A candidate must have a sponsor already in the Convergence, must be extremely intelligent, and must be utterly remorseless in the pursuit of ultimate power—morals and ethics be damned.

Scorpion Sanctum, page 170

Empty Sanctum, page 172

Golden Sanctum, page 138

LOOKING FOR
University of Doors, page 209

MEMBERS OF NOTE

Convergence members of note are magisters and magistrixes. Though each has unique qualities, they also share many things in common.

Convergence Magister/Magistrix: Convergence magisters and magistrixes typically wear hooded robes and a heavy medallion bearing their eyelike symbol. Members are driven people, and usually of the opinion that the ends justify the means, and those ends are the attainment of personal power and knowledge. Mostly, they are power mad and ruthless in their pursuits. Some are more than willing to talk, barter, or negotiate. Few actually enjoy conflict. But if conflict is called for, most carry an artifact called a terrorizer that wracks living targets with incredible pain.

Convergence Magister/Magistrix: *level 5, resists mental effects as level 6; gain 4 Armor for ten minutes via esotery; long-range terrorizer attack inflicts 4 points of damage, and targets who fail additional Might defense roll lose their next turn*

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Symbol: Entwined eye

Motto: Exploit the past for personal power

Badge of Membership: Pin, amulet, or tattoo of symbol

Member Benefits: In lieu of taking a new skill, members can derive a benefit from their prolonged exposure to reality- and mind-bending technologies and bizarre mental techniques. This benefit grants the member 3 points of a special form of Armor that protects against (only) Intellect damage.



THE ANGULAN KNIGHTS

The Charter: Humanity has once again been granted dominion of the well-used and often misused Earth. The Ninth World is the Last World. We shall call it Midgard and defend it in the name of humanity. These are the aspects of the world that stand in the way of humanity's dominion: creatures from elsewhere, predatory horrors lingering from a nonhuman past, humans that have turned on their own kind by committing crimes against their own kind, and any who prevent the greater good anywhere. These aspects of the world shall be eliminated by sword or flame, in the name of Midgard and the spirit of Angule.

Throughout the Steadfast, justice is sometimes meted at the end of a blade unaligned with any king or prince. The Angulan Knights are an order dedicated to the advancement of humanity as a species. They not only ignore local governments, class distinctions, and religious differences, they abhor those things. Angulan Knights feel empowered to right wrongs, pass judgments, and see justice done, and few stand in their way.

A woman named Angule founded the order more than 350 years ago, and her teachings have spread such that at least 800 knights now roam the Steadfast. More than a century ago, the knights made a pact with Thuquera, known as the Great Drake, whom all xi-drakes revere. Today, the knighthood and the xi-drakes work together in their duties.

Xi-drake, page 259

The Angulan Knights have no centralized leadership. Instead, members advance through a series of thirteen ranks until they achieve the title Grand Knight, the highest one can rise. There is no limit to the number of Grand Knights the order can have. The ranks are: Red Devotee, Blue Devotee, Black Devotee, Knight Seeker, Knight Avenger, Knight Defender, Knight Marshall, Knight Justice, Knight Commander, Master Knight, Knight Consul, Lord Knight, and Grand Knight.

The pact between the knighthood and the xi-drakes is what prompted the saying, "A friendship as close as a knight and a dragon."

The knights have the blessing and support of the Order of Truth, and even Aeon Priests outside the order give them respect and aid if need be. However, the knights, true to their charter, do not afford the priests any special treatment. Many people mistakenly believe that the two groups are officially related or that the knighthood answers to the Amber Pope, but neither is true. Once inducted into the knighthood in the Sanctuary of the Eye in Ghan, the order's central base of operations, a knight is charged to go out into the world and enforce the charter.

Sanctuary of the Eye, page 143

Angulans typically despise mutants in any form and swiftly root them out, putting them to the sword. They don't care for visitants, either, but suffer them to live if the creatures do not directly oppose the knights.

MEMBERS OF NOTE

Angulan Knights could be encountered almost anywhere, pursuing their quests. But they are always found in Ledon, in the Sanctuary of the Eye. And anyone who enters there is likely to interact early and often with Castellan Vinabas.

Castellan Vinabas: Whipcord thin and tall despite his grey hair and lined visage, Castellan Vinabas (who holds the rank of Grand Knight, in addition to his role in the citadel), sees to details both minor and crucial within the Sanctuary of the Eye. That includes interviewing important visitors, whether they be potential members or those who are suspected of being secretly in league with

Castellan Vinabas: *level 6; Armor 2; long-range electric pike attack inflicts 8 points of damage*



mutants. Though he's a fair man, Vinabas won't violate his code when it comes to seeing that the Angulan philosophy is carried out.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Symbol: Crossed swords on field of green, red, and yellow

Motto: For humans

Badge of Membership: Pin bearing member's rank

Member Benefits: After passing through all the proper initiations to become a Red Devotee, a member of the knighthood can choose to gain a special +1 bonus to damage when they feel as though their combat is working toward upholding the charter. (The player and the GM can decide whether a particular situation warrants the bonus.) This ability must be chosen in lieu of a new skill.

"In the long history of Earth, other sentient species have evolved, lived, and died here, but humanity seems to share a particular bond with this place."
~Visixtru, varjellen philosopher

THE JAGGED DREAM

"War is a crucible from which one forges strength, courage, and mettle. That is the dream sent from the fire. Ours is a dream of jagged edges, blood, bone, and the cries of pain. Only through war can we advance. The ancients knew it. They waged wars throughout the long history of our aged world. They waged wars with entirely different worlds. When those wars ended, they sought new worlds, and even whole new universes to fight. The ancients knew. It is how they grew strong.

"Now we are here, and the fires of the crucible send us the jagged dream. We cannot shirk this responsibility. It is our destiny to grow great as the ancients grew great. And we can only do that through bloodshed, violence, and war.

"That is the Jagged Dream."

—Gia Soeman, dreamseeker

The Jagged Dream is a secretive cult located throughout the Steadfast and the Beyond. Its membership is small but widespread, with hidden cells that meet in secret for fear of being discovered before they are ready.

The Jagged Dream wants to engineer conflict on a massive scale. Their leaders, called dreamseekers, claim to have had a dream sent to them from "the fire" or "the flames," a representation of evolution and natural selection sped up through intensive conflict. In short, they want war and nothing but war. To the cult, peace is death because it means that the species and culture stops advancing. They're not interested in small-scale conflict—only large battles and long-term wars truly test a culture. Individuals don't matter to their plan, only large groups of people.

To this end, cult members attempt to secretly manipulate events toward war. They infiltrate other organizations and reach positions where they can whisper into the ears of the leaders (or where they can become leaders themselves). They try to stimulate weapon development and production. They found military academies. As their timeline advances, they engineer mistrust and alienation among people and seek ways to cause famines or other events that drive groups into conflict.

In the Ninth World, it's easy to foster mistrust—almost too easy—but it can be difficult to rally people together to create an army of any great size. So while on one hand some members of the Jagged Dream seek to divide people, others work to bring groups together. They want to create nations, not isolated villages or tribes, and then guide those nations to war.

The cult organizes itself into small, isolated cells. Often, a member of one cell won't know the members of any other cell. Sometimes, however, members wear a secret sign on their clothing or tattooed on their flesh. These symbols include a small knife with a serrated blade, a counterclockwise spiral around an open hand, or a silver or black raptor swooping downward, talons extended.

A typical cell includes one dreamseeker and four or five other members. The cell rarely has a permanent headquarters, instead meeting in secret in different places. The dreamseeker brings a portable shrine, which looks like a large wheeled trunk, to meetings. Members pray to the fire, seeking clarity and vision. However, they don't think of the fire as a sentient entity like a god. They recognize it as

a fundamental force in the universe, beyond conscious thought, choice, or intent.

At a meeting, the dreamseeker coordinates the actions of all cell members. Despite the desire for war and bloodshed, the dreamseeker stresses patience. Slow movements and manipulations are needed to achieve their goals. Because the Jagged Dream's outlook is so much larger than that of any one individual, the cult's goals stretch over lifetimes.

The secretive members value hidden advantages. Many undergo surgeries (often performed by the cell) to gain subdermal weapons, defenses, and enhancements. The scars from such treatments are highly valued and respected by the cult, although they are hidden from the rest of society.

MEMBERS OF NOTE

Because most cells operate in secrecy, it is rare for any of them to become known as members of the Jagged Dream—rumors and speculation are the norm.

Arias Folon: This flint-eyed dreamseeker dresses in layers of grey and brown, and often wears a large four-eyed snake around her neck. She runs a large cell of twenty members in Qi. Many cultists recognize her as the de facto leader of the Jagged Dream, but she would deny it.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Symbol: Silver or black raptor swooping downward with talons extended, knife with a serrated blade, or a counterclockwise spiral around an open hand

Motto: The flames inspire us to make the jagged dream a reality for the world

Badge of membership: Hidden symbol stitched into clothing or tattooed on flesh

Member Benefits: Instead of gaining a new skill, cult members can have a weapon or device that they possess implanted in their body by Jagged Dream chiurgeons. The item will be completely hidden and will always go unnoticed. An implanted knife would be retractable from their wrist. An implanted force shield generator could never be taken away.

THE REDFLEETS

The Redfleets are a self-governed crew of vagabonds, thieves, scientists, and other miscreants who sail the high and low seas in search of natural treasure. They care nothing for manmade treasures; in fact, many Redfleets shun and fear the numenera. Others turn their loathing into profit by selling any goods they discover to the highest bidder. Their true purpose, however, is discovering the natural miracles of the sea, although how they decide what's natural and what's not isn't always clear.

It's considered a high honor to be the first of the Redfleets to come upon a formerly unknown creature or oceanic feature, and members of the crew ensure their glory by visiting Kaparin's RFM, a combined maritime museum, hall of fame, and library. There, they place their findings, tell their story, or store their ship's logs for all to see and marvel at.

RFM, page 161

Many of the crew live in Kaparin when not asea, including Sallian Orsay the Red (one of the original Redfleet founders, and now the ruler of that town) and retired Redfleet Captain Jamson "The Liar" Connell. When members die, their loved ones fill their pockets with precious objects, and their crew gives them a proper stoning at sea. The bodies are laid to rest on the ocean floor, covered with stones and tied with stranglekelp so they will not rise.

Kaparin, page 161

Despite their dislike of anything related to the numenera, the Redfleets love their submergines. Originally designed and built by Mergine "Margie" Kar, another founder of the Redfleets, submergines are clearsynth bioships that safely dive up to 5 miles (8 km) beneath the ocean's surface and stay there for up to six years. The bio element comes from a creature ensconced within the ship's hull that provides food and fresh water and recycles contaminants. The clearsynth allows the crew to see in every direction, and some of the later submergine models include magnifications, camouflage breakers, and light sources in the hull to enable better "bottom feeding"—scuttling slowly just above the ocean floor to discover hidden creatures.

Unfortunately, many years ago Mergine Kar died suddenly, taking the secrets of the submergines with him. The Redfleets mourn his loss in a shrine room in the RFM and hold tight to their remaining ships, knowing there will be no more.

REDFLEETS OF NOTE

The two best-known members of the Redfleets are actually retired captains.

Sallian Orsay: This tall, willowy woman has dark red hair and appears to be about twenty years of age, but is probably at least twice as old as that. She was one of the original Redfleet founders, and now rules the city of Kaparin.

Captain Jamson "The Liar" Connell: This burly man has wild hair, bulging eyes, and several metal teeth. Rumor has it that on an

Arias Folon: *level 7*

Qi, page 144

Sallian Orsay, page 161

Sallian Orsay: *level 6; health 28; sword inflicts 6 points of damage*

Captain Connell, page 162

Captain Connell: *level 4; health 16*

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The Headstone, page 212



exploration mission that went bad, he killed and ate his entire crew. He has a reputation for violent aggression against anyone who threatens him.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Symbol: A grey circle with a red arc on the upper section
Motto: Find it, display it, boast it
Badge of membership: Waterproof coat with the group's symbol on the breast pocket
Member Benefits: In lieu of gaining a new skill, members of the Redfleets can have a device implanted in their throats that allows them to breathe water as easily as air. This procedure must be done at the RFM in Kaparin.

THE SARRACENIANS

"Why would I want to belong to the lot of them? Bunch of blathering mouths. I'd rather spend the time with my greens. Least they use their mouths for something smarter than gossip and gassing."

—Myrtle Galgian, former self-elected president of the Sarracenians

This widespread group of scholars studies and worships plants, in particular unusual and carnivorous plants and plantlike predators. Typically distinguished by their dark green fibrous clothing, which is often accented with brightly colored adornments, Sarracenians are a varied and loose-knit group. Some stay put in their hometowns, tending to lavish greenhouses, gardens, and zoos, while others travel the world in search of unique finds. Some Sarracenians are scientists who split genes and crossbreed creatures in secret laboratories, while others sing to the petals of their favorite flowers and call them friends. Still other members of the group fight, breed, or train the plantlike creatures that inhabit the world. Most Sarracenians have only two things in common: a nearly religious reverence for any species of animal-like plant or plantlike animal, and a firm belief that the Wild Garden, located in the Caecilian Jungle, is their mecca and the birthplace of all that they worship.

Once a prominent organization in the Steadfast, its members held in high esteem for their skills with medicinal healing, poison, genetic splicing, defensive mutations, and more, the Sarracenians have long since fallen from favor. Despite the decline of the organization as a whole, individual members are in demand for their knowledge and understanding of the living plant world. To have a Sarracenian as your herbalist, healer, biologist, or plant breeder is a boon indeed.

SARRACENIANS OF NOTE

The Sarracenians don't have a formal hierarchy, and those who claim to speak on behalf of the entire group do so of their own volition and usually without any consensus as to their authority. Local individuals speak up authoritatively when plants become topics of political interest.

Chi Brogs: This vocal advocate of plant life has spiral tattoos on his forehead and a short, well-groomed moustache. He lives in Thaemor and is trying to earn himself a place among the advisors to the country's reclusive leader. Lacking any progress on that front, Chi spends his days advising any gardener or farmer in Auspar who'll listen to him.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Symbol: Carnivorous plant holding the sun in its jaws
Motto: Speak and act for the green
Badge of membership: Dark green clothing of woven plant fibers, blue lips
Member Benefits: In lieu of taking a new skill, members can learn more about secret herbal remedies and other health-related preparations. As a result, they and all their allies in immediate range add 1 to their recovery rolls.

Wild Garden, page 176

Caecilian Jungle, page 176

Thaemor, page 148

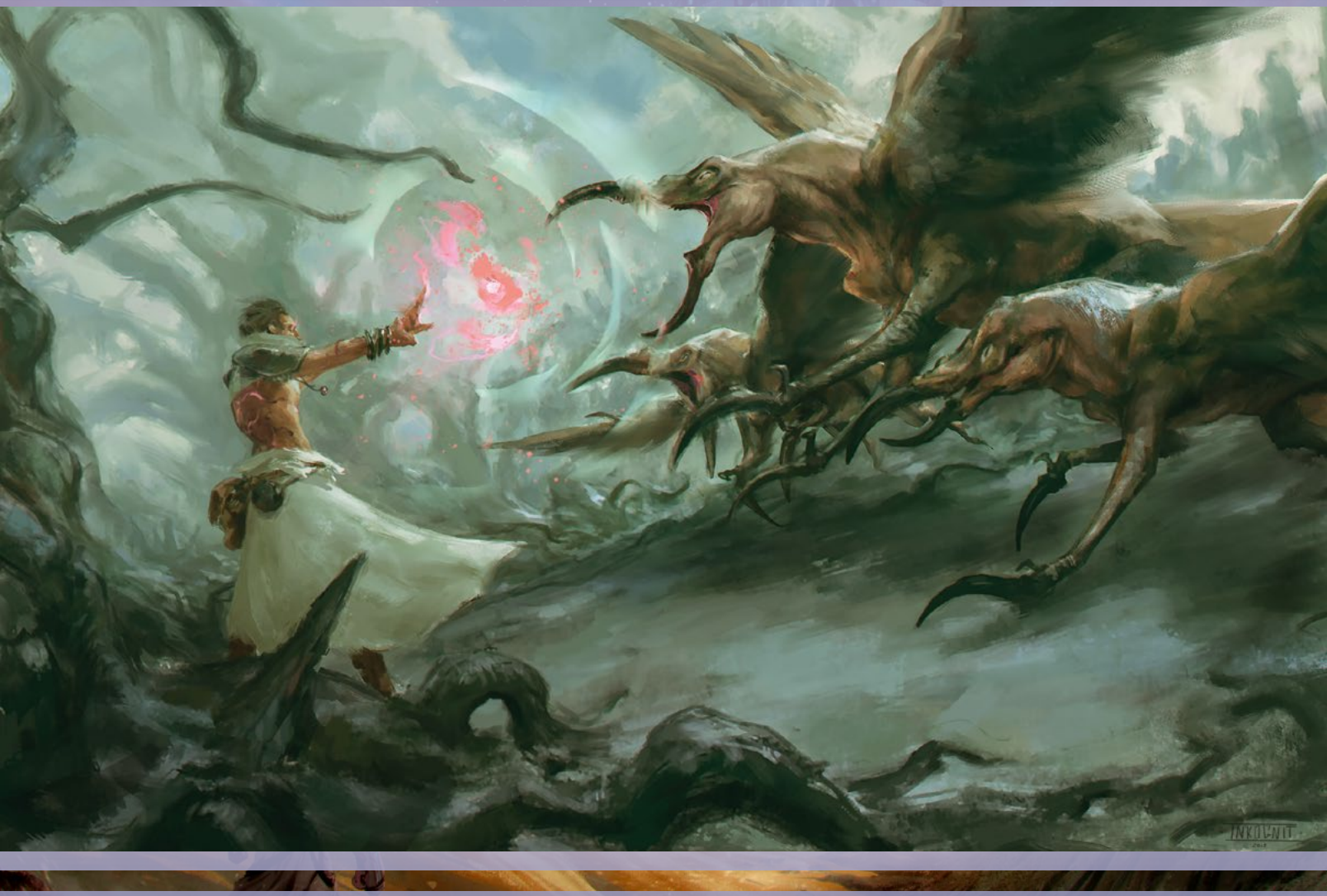
Recovery roll, page 111

Chi Brogs: *level 3, social interactions as level 4, healing and plants as level 5*

Sarracenian members usually paint or permanently stain their lips blue to signify that they speak on behalf of their beloved plantlife.

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CREATURES & CHARACTERS



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CHAPTER 14

CREATURES

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Abhuman, page 13

Armor, page 109

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Order of Truth, page 215

The Ninth World is a strange place and probably would seem like an alien world to those accustomed to 21st-century Earth. Strange things crawl, slither, prowl, and flitter across the landscape, as well as over it and beneath it. Creatures from other worlds and realities walk amid the by-products of scientific engineering, weird mutations, and aeons of evolution.

This chapter describes many common and uncommon creatures that the characters might meet—and fight—in the Ninth World and gives their game stats (described below).

The variety of creatures and people that live in the Ninth World is so great that this chapter only scratches the surface. It does, however, provide examples of the kinds of inhabitants—bestial and civilized, living and mechanical—that can be found.

UNDERSTANDING THE LISTINGS

Level: Each creature has a level attached to it. Like the difficulty of a task, all creatures (and NPCs) have a level. You use the level to determine the target number a PC must reach to attack or defend against the opponent. In each entry, the difficulty number for the creature or NPC is listed in parentheses after its level. As shown on the following table, the target number is three times the level.

Level	Target Number
1	3
2	6
3	9
4	12
5	15
6	18
7	21
8	24
9	27
10	30

Description: Following the name of the creature or NPC is a general description of its appearance, nature, intelligence, or background.

Motive: This entry is a way to help the GM understand what a creature or NPC wants. Every creature or person wants something, even if it's just to be left alone.

Environment: This entry describes whether the creature tends to be solitary or travel in groups and what kind of terrain it inhabits (such as "They travel in packs through dry wastes and temperate lowlands").

Health: A creature's target number is usually also its health, which is the amount of damage it can sustain before it is dead or incapacitated. For easy reference, the entries always list a creature's health, even when it's the normal amount for a creature of its level.

Damage Inflicted: Generally, when creatures hit in combat, they inflict their level in damage regardless of the form of attack. Some inflict more or less or have a special modifier to damage. Intelligent NPCs often use weapons, but this is more a flavor issue than a mechanical one. In other words, it doesn't matter if a level 3 abhuman uses a sword or claws—it deals the same damage if it hits. The entries always specify the amount of damage inflicted, even if it's the normal amount for a creature of its level.

Armor: This is the creature's Armor value. Sometimes the number represents physical armor, and other times it represents natural protection. This entry doesn't appear in the game stats if a creature has no Armor.

Movement: Movement determines how far the creature can move in a single turn. Creatures have movements of immediate, short, or long, which equate to the ranges of the same name.

Most PCs have an effective movement of short, so if they are chasing (or being chased by) a creature with immediate movement, their Speed tasks are eased by one step; if the creature's movement is long, the PCs' Speed tasks are hindered by one step.

Modifications: This entry indicates when the creature should be treated as if it were higher or lower level. For example, the entry for a level 4 creature might say "defends as level 5," which means PCs attacking it must reach a target number of 15 (for difficulty 5) instead of 12 (for difficulty 4). In special circumstances, some creatures have other modifications, but these are almost always specific to their level.

Combat: This entry gives advice on using the creature in combat, such as "This monster uses ambushes and hit-and-run tactics."

At the end of the combat listing, you'll also find any special abilities, such as immunities, poisons, and healing skills. GMs should remember to be logical about a creature's reaction to a particular action or attack by a PC. For example, a mechanical creation is obviously immune to normal diseases, a character can't poison a being of energy (at least, not with a conventional poison), and so on.

Interaction: This entry gives advice on using the creature in interactions, such as "These creatures are willing to talk but respond poorly to threats," or "This creature is an animal and acts like an animal."

Use: This entry gives the GM suggestions for how to use the creature in a game session. It might provide general notes or specific adventure ideas.

Loot: This entry indicates what the PCs might gain if they take items from their fallen foes (or trade with or trick them). It doesn't appear in the game stats if the creature has no loot.

GM Intrusion: This optional entry suggests a way to use GM intrusion in an encounter with the creature. It's just one possible idea of many, and the GM is encouraged to come up with their own uses of the game mechanic.

Speed, page 22

Combats in Numenera move quickly enough that a GM should not hesitate to use large groups of creatures as challenges for PCs, particularly powerful PCs. A screaming, squirming horde of thirty abhumans is a possible encounter. A swarm of fifty laaks could also be used. To make things easier, the GM can take any creature and have a group of six to ten of them attack en masse as a single creature that is 2 levels higher, inflicting double the original creature's normal damage. So thirty level 3 abhumans might attack as five level 5 mobs.

LOOKING FOR
Convergence, page 216



ABYKOS 4 (12)

An abykos is generally accepted to be a ghost by most people, but it is, in fact, a transdimensional entity. It looks like a shadowy, hazy, vaguely humanoid shimmer in the air. It is usually incorporeal and thus cannot attack or be attacked except by special pandimensional weapons created specifically to harm such creatures. An abykos can alter the phase of portions of its form when it wishes, becoming solid.

Pandimensional: existing on multiple levels of reality at once.

Most of the time, PCs have little to fear from an abykos. However, if they have any numenera that is transdimensional in nature, the hungry abykos will attack.

Because the creature is extremely alien, it's hard to determine its level of intelligence. It seems to be adaptable and clever despite no sign of language or tool use.



Motive: Hungers for transdimensional energy
Environment: Abykoses can be found anywhere.
Health: 12
Damage Inflicted: 4 points
Movement: Short
Modifications: Defends as level 5 (or as level 7; see Combat)
Combat: An abykos fights with its long, seemingly metallic claws. At the beginning or the end of its turn, it can choose to be insubstantial, solid, or partially solid. Once this decision is made, the creature can't change state again until its next turn.

While insubstantial, it can't affect or be affected by anything unless the attack is pandimensional (although these kinds of attacks are rare and will be called out). It can pass through solid matter without hindrance, but solid energy barriers, such as force fields, keep it at bay.

Other ultraterrestrial creatures avoid an abykos if at all possible.

While partially solid, an abykos defends as if it were level 7. It can affect and attack in this state, but it has a hard time affecting solid matter (such attacks are made as if it were level 2).

While solid, an abykos can affect and be affected by others normally (including making attacks by striking or wielding a weapon).

As an attack, a solid abykos can touch an object that uses transdimensional energies, such as an artifact or a cypher. Instead of taking damage, the object is drained of power and becomes useless. The abykos gains +5 health when it does this, even if the increase puts it above its maximum health.

Interaction: Interacting with an abykos is very difficult. It does not speak or respond to the language of others, and telepathic communication yields no results, as if the creature does not exist. But an abykos is not mindless; it can learn from its experiences and figure out creative solutions to problems.

Use: The PCs hear about haunted ruins not far from a small village. Apparently, after explorers visited the place, the spirits there became restless and started appearing in the village, scaring the locals. While investigating, the PCs discover that amid the ruins lies a laboratory devoted to interdimensional research. The previous explorers found and brought back artifacts powered by transdimensional energy. This stirred up a handful of abykoses, which now menace the village, trying to get at those artifacts.

GM intrusion: *The touch of an abykos disrupts and destroys a PC's cypher or artifact.*

Loot: Often, a device using transdimensional energies is near the location of an abykos.

LOOKING FOR

Angulan Knights, page 217
Jagged Dream, page 218

ANEEN 3 (9)

Tall and muscular, aneen are bipedal herd animals. These omnivores mainly eat grass, leaves, and, occasionally, small lizards or rodents. Although herds of wild aneen roam the Plains of Kataru and the eastern edges of the Black Riage, they are most often encountered as pack and riding animals in the northern kingdoms of the Steadfast. Aneen have tiny forelimbs and small claws that are neither particularly sharp nor good for grasping.

Plains of Kataru, page 179

Black Riage, page 172

Steadfast, page 136

Motive: Self-defense

Environment: Aneen dwell in small herds in temperate plains and hills. They are often domesticated.

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Long

Modifications: Runs, jumps, and balances as level 5. Resists poison as level 4.

Combat: Aneen kick and bite in self-defense but most often flee if threatened. In a herd, they can stampede, which can be dangerous. Characters caught in a stampede must succeed at Speed defense tasks of level 5 or suffer 6 points of damage.

Interaction: In some places, aneen are raised for their meat and milk. They are known for their speed and ability to carry great weights without tiring. In merchant caravans, an aneen can carry two or even three people in addition to 200 to 300 pounds of packed goods. Aneen are greatly prized animals, worth at least 100 shins each.

Use: A caravan of aneen-riding merchants hires the PCs to serve as guards. The characters watch over the caravan during the day and keep the aneen safe and calm at night.

Loot: Aneen used as pack animals have whatever loot they are loaded with. The meat of a dead aneen can feed fifty people (or ten people for five days).

GM intrusion: *The aneen gets a free action to bolt away.*



BLOOD BARM 3 (9)



A blood barm is a four-legged creature about the size and shape of a turkey. Although the creature has a long neck that cranes this way and that, it doesn't appear to have an easily distinguishable head or eyes. Instead, a barm has a large opening at the end of its neck that is covered with a clear membrane similar to an eyelid.

Instead of feathers, a barm's body is covered with myriad vesicles, ranging in color from dark green to grey to crimson. These bubbles are filled with liquid, and some contain unborn barms. When the young are close to hatching, the sacs can grow half as large as the barm itself.

Motive: Protection

Environment: Blood barms live in flocks, usually around lakes and other large bodies of fresh water.

Health: 10

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short

Modifications: Speed defense as level 4 due to size

Combat: Blood barms act out of the need to protect their young. Their main mode of attack is through the opening in their necks—they slide the membrane back and spray out blood bubbles that are filled with long, sharp seeds. The bubbles attack a target in short range and burst on impact, causing 4 points of damage.

A flock of four or more barms can concentrate on a single foe and make one attack as if they were a level 5 creature, inflicting 8 points of damage.

Barms can break their own body sacs by pressing them against a PC or an object. The larger sacs burst first due to their extended size, and any young barms within are born. Each youngling is level 2 and deals 2 points of damage.

Use: Blood barms are not aggressive unless their young are threatened. However, if a flock of barms and their young are located in or near a site the PCs need to access, they might attack.

GM intrusions: *A seed from one of the blood bubbles is implanted in a PC's skin. Until it is removed (an Intellect action), the character suffers 1 point of damage per round.*

Anytime a GM wants, they can take any minor creature (such as the blood barm) and have a group of them attack en masse as a single creature that is 2 levels higher, inflicting double the minor creature's normal damage.

BROKEN HOUND 2 (6)

The scourge of many wastelands, broken hounds travel in large packs. They resemble extremely gaunt hounds, but their heads appear more avian than canine, giving the impression of a bird skull mounted on a dead dog's body.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Broken hounds dwell in dry wastes and temperate lowlands. Rarely, they are found in the mountains, usually in fewer numbers.

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Perception as level 5 due to scent

Combat: These creatures deal damage with their terrible bite. Broken hounds attack in large numbers. Four to six of them can concentrate on one foe and make one attack as if they were a level 4 creature, inflicting 8 points of damage. Each hound must still be attacked individually, as normal. If their numbers are reduced to fewer than four, they flee.

Interaction: These starving, vicious animals understand only hunger and fear. They cannot be reasoned with—not even by someone with the ability to interact with or train animals.

Use: A large number of broken hounds can make a harrowing combat encounter for the PCs. They attack travelers on a road or those who wander into a lonely vale.



GM intrusion: *The broken hound is diseased. A PC bitten by the hound must make a Might defense roll after the fight or move one step down the damage track due to infection.*

LOOKING FOR
Sarracenian, page 220

CAFFA (ADULT) 2 (6)

Large insects with unusually strong wings of iridescent goldgleam, caffas have learned to navigate at ground level and below, flying tight and low between and around spaces that seem far too small for their size. In tight spaces, caffas are formidable opponents due to their ability to dodge hits and slip through tiny areas to attack from unexpected directions. Caffas have a wingspan of 4 feet (1 m).

Motive: Territory, defense, and hunger for flesh

Environment: Caffas inhabit areas with strong winds. They typically live low to the ground and sometimes even dwell underground.

Caffas are commonly found in the Slant Milieu, page 174.

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 3 (or 2) points; see Combat

Movement: Long

Modifications: In tight spaces, defends as level 3 due to their ability to maneuver and dodge in unexpected ways

Combat: Caffas first attack with a stroke of their wings. This attack either knocks an opponent prone (but inflicts no damage) or deals 3 points of damage, as chosen by the caffa. Once an opponent is knocked down, caffas attempt to bite, usually in tender spots. They bite as if they were 1 level higher but inflict only 2 points of damage.

Caffas are immune to wind, push-backs, and all other air-based attacks.

Interaction: Caffas can't be reasoned or communicated with.

Use: A few caffas are somewhat dangerous, but a swarm can threaten a whole community. Locals often pay well to have someone deal with an infestation. Sometimes hunters go looking for the creatures to harvest their goldgleam.

Loot: Goldgleam wings can be rolled up, carried, and sold at good prices to interested parties for decorating houses, armor, and other items. Alternatively, PCs can use goldgleam on their own items. Although it's a resilient material to carry and store, it's hard to work with; typically, eight or ten wings are required to decorate one small item.

GM intrusion: *The wing attack knocks a foe down and inflicts 3 points of damage.*

CAFFA (LARVA) 1 (3)

Caffa adults plant the seeds of their larvae with a special type of wing flap. The larvae crawl along the ground or dig into it, feasting on any flesh they find, whether living or dead. After feasting, they burrow into the ground and spin themselves into cocoons. They remain in this state for anywhere from a few hours to a few days before emerging as adult caffas.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Caffa larvae go wherever the adults plant them, usually in swarms of up to a dozen.

Health: 3

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Movement: Immediate

Modification: Defends as level 2 due to size

Combat: Caffa larvae attach to the limbs of their prey, using their large mouths to literally suck the flesh from their victims. Their saliva injects a numbing chemical that makes the bites painless, but a victim might feel sluggish in that particular limb. Once the larvae are pulled off the limb, there is no lasting effect.

Interaction: Caffas can't be reasoned or communicated with.

Use: Caffa larvae can be used on their own or as a secondary element in a fight with caffa adults. The larvae typically exist anywhere that adult caffas do and come up from their underground burrows to feed.

Loot: If caffa larvae are fed well and allowed to burrow, PCs who wait patiently will be rewarded with a tiny, sproutlike eruption in the soil. This is a sign that the larvae have cocooned and can be tugged out of the ground. The PCs can boil the cocoons, which will kill the larvae inside and result in a small spool of strong golden thread called silster.

GM intrusion: *The larva's bite paralyzes one of the PC's limbs, making it useless for ten minutes.*



CALLERAIL 7 (21)

A callerail is a creature of fused organic and inorganic substances. Flesh mingles with wood, steel, and stone, as the callerail possesses the ability to absorb inorganic matter and add the material to its body. The creature is a lumbering giant—15 feet (5 m) tall—that walks using its forelimbs as well as its shorter rear legs. Its body is a conglomeration of materials.

A callerail's organic portions remain cohesive so that its circulatory system reaches all areas of its body. It still requires food—in fact, it requires even more food than an ordinary creature of its size. Callerails are not particularly bright and act on animal instinct in most situations. They reproduce asexually.

While a callerail can be found in many places, the Ba-Adenu Forest (page 184) is known for large numbers of them.

Motive: Hungers for flesh
Environment: Anywhere
Health: 30
Damage Inflicted: 7 points
Armor: 3
Movement: Short
Modifications: Speed defense as level 6 due to size. Breaks objects as level 9. Reacts to deception and trickery as level 5.
Combat: A callerail smashes foes with its powerful limbs, and its ability to absorb matter gives it some interesting options. For example, it can heal itself by absorbing matter, particularly large chunks of very sturdy material such as metal or stone. Using this as its action, a callerail heals a number of points equal to the level of the material—around 5 or 6 points for a large piece of metal or stone.

In addition, a callerail can hold its action until a foe attacks with a weapon. The foe must make a Speed defense roll to avoid having the weapon absorbed into the creature. Absorbing a weapon heals the callerail for a few points of damage and also negates the attack regardless of whether the Speed defense roll is successful. An absorbed weapon is destroyed.

Interaction: Reasoning with a hungry callerail is impossible, and they're always hungry. However, a smart character can fool them by setting a trap, creating a diversion, or using a similar type of tactic.
Use: These predators move into an area and threaten the entire region. Two callerails in the same locale pose a danger to every living thing. The monsters fight to the death, each attempting to absorb the inorganic portions of the other and destroying everything that gets in their way.
Loot: Sometimes a piece of rare material or even a cypher or an artifact can be found in the wreckage of a callerail corpse.

GM intrusion: *The callerail strikes the character and attempts to immediately absorb a large possession—armor, a weapon, a backpack, and so on.*

LOOKING FOR
Understanding the Listings, page 222

CHIROG 4 (12)

Chirogs are vaguely reptilian abhumans with thick armor plates covering much of their bodies. They live to hunt and kill, but despite their savage nature, they are craftier and more intelligent than most abhumans. They understand the numenera—and despise it. Even more than killing humans, they enjoy destroying the relics of the past. (Perhaps it is racial resentment for wrongs done to them long ago.)

Chirogs live in small packs with a clear leader who is usually a female. In fact, she is likely the mother of many members of the pack. The creatures have a tangled, incestuous relationship, and mature females eventually leave to form a new pack, sometimes taking a brother or two with them.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Chirogs dwell in small groups of three to six, usually in wooded areas or rocky, mountainous regions.

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Short

Modifications: Climbs as level 7

Combat: Chirogs do not use weapons or tools, usually attacking with a savage bite. However, they can also grapple a foe, which is just like a normal attack except that rather than inflicting damage, it holds the foe immobile. The foe can take only purely mental actions or struggle to get free (a difficulty 4 Might task). Both the grappling chirog and the grappled foe are easier targets for other combatants, so attacks against them are eased by two steps.

Interaction: About one in three chirogs speaks a human language, likely the Truth. (They all speak a language of their own, which is fairly simplistic.) Chirogs are hateful and angry, but not impossible to reason with.

Use: When the PCs finally reach the vault that holds the numenera device they seek, they find a band of chirogs already there, ready to destroy it.

Truth, page 133

GM intrusion: *A chirog bites a grappled foe, automatically hitting and ignoring Armor.*



CRAGWORM 6 (18)

A cragworm is a spined serpent that can grow up to 50 feet (15 m) long. Its mouth opens horizontally and has many rows of teeth. Dwelling in abandoned or isolated areas, it preys on whatever it can find. The creature has many red, glistening eyes and is known for its terrible, mournful howl. It has the intelligence of an animal and the outlook of a predator.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Dwells alone in rocky wastes, hills, and deserts

Health: 36

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short

Modifications: Hides in rocky terrain as level 7. Speed defense as level 5 due to size. Perception as level 4. Resists trickery as level 3.

Combat: A cragworm hides amid rocks and ruins. While hiding, it howls, and the subsonic nature of the sound paralyzes anyone within long range. Victims who fail Intellect defense rolls are paralyzed for two rounds.

When the cragworm emerges from its hiding place to attack, its envenomed bite inflicts terrible damage. Victims who fail Might defense rolls move one step down the damage track.

Once a cragworm enters combat, it fights to the death.

Interaction: Cragworms can't be reasoned with. They can be intimidated or tricked, but the latter is far easier than the former. They are particularly easy to fool if food is involved.

Use: Cragworm attacks are seemingly random wilderness encounters that usually befall unsuspecting travelers. In many ways, they are the archetypal wasteland beasts of the Ninth World, giving rise to sayings such as "fierce as a cragworm," "temperamental as a cragworm," and so on.

GM intrusion: *While biting a PC, the cragworm grabs the character in its mouth. The PC must make a Might-based roll to avoid being swallowed. Swallowed PCs can attack the beast from the inside, but they suffer 6 points of damage each round they remain there.*



LOOKING FOR
Abykos, page 224



CULOVA 4 (12)

Culovas are spidery humanoids with eight spindly legs, a bulbous midsection, and a pair of humanlike arms with three fingers. Eight eyes adorn their heads like colored beads above disturbingly broad, toothy mouths. They move with astonishing quickness.

Culovas are usually peaceful creatures that live in small groups deep within a forest, hunting for food and caring for their young. They lead simple lives.

Motive: Defense

Environment: Culovas live in bands in forests, particularly in the Westwood.

Westwood, page 137

Health: 20

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Long

Modifications: Moves with stealth and climbs as level 6

Combat: Culovas can spray venom from their mouths. When they do, their heads turn almost 360 degrees, so all creatures within 10 feet (3 m) get the poison in their eyes, nose, and mouth. A victim must make a Might defense roll; those who fail suffer 4 points of Speed damage (ignoring Armor). Otherwise, culovas attack using weapons, usually javelins or spiked clubs.

Culovas enjoy laying ambushes for foes or sneaking around to flank or surprise from the rear. If things reach a point where a culova is engaged in combat, it fights to the death.

Interaction: Culovas avoid contact with other intelligent creatures unless they or their territories are threatened. They do not leave familiar ground except in extraordinary circumstances, so they are always on the defensive, even when they launch an attack. However, an attacking culova can be reasoned with. If you can convince the creature that you're not a threat or that you'll cease being a threat—which usually involves leaving the area—you might get through the encounter unscathed.

Use: Culovas live primarily in the Westwood and defend it against the encroachment of humans. The local nobles have put a bounty on their heads for disrupting the important logging trade in the forest. PCs who hunt the creatures will earn 10 shins per culova head they bring back.

Loot: Culovas usually have 1d6 javelins and a spiked club, and very rarely one might have a cypher. They never have shins or other things a human might find valuable.

GM intrusion: *The culova sprays venom without warning—even on the same turn in which it attacked with a weapon.*

LOOKING FOR

Aneen, page 225



DARK FATHOM 8 (24)

This creature looks like a darkly armored humanoid with a swirling black hole in its chest—or perhaps the black hole *is* its chest. The rest of the creature is obscured by its armor and helmet. Part mechanical, part biological, a dark fathom is an engine of war and destruction from aeons past.

Motive: Destruction

Environment: Always solitary, found anywhere

Health: 40

Damage Inflicted: 8 points

Armor: 4

Movement: Short

Modifications: Perception as level 6. Sees through deception as level 6.

Combat: At its heart, the dark fathom has a construct like a singularity, driving it as an eternal source of power as well as a terrible weapon. The singularity draws in all ranged attacks—matter and energy—and consumes them so the creature suffers no harm. The only ranged attacks that affect it are those that are mental, magnetic, or extradimensional. Further, characters who stand close enough to the dark fathom to touch it or make melee attacks against it must make a Might defense roll each round. Those who fail are drawn into the singularity (at least partially) and sustain 30 points of damage. Characters who die from this damage are consumed and utterly destroyed within the singularity.

As an action, a dark fathom can draw all creatures and objects within short range toward it so that they end up next to it. A Might defense action resists this as well. However, if the dark fathom draws too much, it can be overwhelmed and lose its next action (or more, if the GM feels it is appropriate).

Last, using the force of its singularity, a dark fathom can attempt to grab nearby matter or energy and consume it. It can consume anything smaller than itself.

A dark fathom is immune to poison, disease, and other attacks relying on physiology.

Interaction: A dark fathom is difficult to interact with. Although very intelligent, it doesn't seem to understand any language spoken in the Ninth World. However, a character can use mental communication to attempt to reason with the creature. A dark fathom can be bribed to move on instead of fighting, but it is interested only in exotic matter and energies (or information about where those things can be found). Some dark fathoms have their own agendas or interests as well.

Use: An encounter with a dark fathom is a terrible experience that is likely to kill characters. GMs might want to use the creature more as a threat than as a direct encounter unless the PCs are extremely powerful and resourceful.

Loot: A dark fathom has mechanical and biomechanical parts that produce 1d6 + 4 cyphers.

GM intrusion: *As matter and energy are drawn into the dark fathom's chest, characters topple over, lose important belongings, and lose turns while they simply try to keep to their feet.*

LOOKING FOR

Blood barm, page 226
Broken hound, page 226

DISASSEMBLER 5 (15)

A disassembler is a strange-looking artificial creature of glass and steel with six spindly metallic arms arranged around its circular midsection. Its upper half is all glaring green lights and mechanical protrusions, some of which might be sensory mechanisms. Its lower half is a broad engine that allows it to hover 3 feet (1 m) off the ground. If it landed, the disassembler would be about 8 feet (2.5 m) tall.

Disassemblers are artificially intelligent automatons that seem to have gone mad at some point. Now they act erratically—sometimes attacking creatures, sometimes ignoring them, sometimes destroying what they come across, sometimes wandering aimlessly.

Motive: Unpredictable

Environment: Disassemblers travel alone or in pairs and can be found anywhere.

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 4

Movement: Short

Combat: A disassembler's arms end in tools that allow it to take apart inorganic matter on a molecular level, turning solids into liquid and gas. Obviously, this ability makes it an effective combatant against automatons and the like. A disassembler inflicts 10 points of damage against inorganic foes. In addition, a disassembler can destroy a foe's weapons or armor by touch, which is usually its initial strategy against organic opponents that are armored or armed. The creature's disassembling tools cannot affect organic matter, but this limitation might have been programmed into it—perhaps as a safety mechanism—rather than an inability. A disassembler with this prohibition removed would be a true terror.

Interaction: Disassemblers are intelligent but erratic to the point of insanity. They understand speech and, after listening to a language for a time, can often speak it in a very basic way. It is possible to converse with a disassembler, but the creature is just as likely to attack without provocation, perhaps in the middle of a conversation. Still, a well-spoken, intelligent, and quick-witted character might be able to figure out what a disassembler wants (at the moment) and convince it not to attack or perhaps to do something to aid him.

Use: In old ruins or amid ancient complexes, disassemblers make for excellent encounters with unpredictable outcomes.

Loot: The remains of a destroyed disassembler might hold 1d100 shins, 1d6 + 1 cyphers, an oddity, and perhaps a salvageable artifact.

GM intrusion: *A friendly or ambivalent disassembler suddenly attacks without provocation.*

LOOKING FOR

Caffa, page 227



DREAD DESTROYER 10 (30)

"If there's a more horrific sight in the Ninth World than seeing a dread destroyer coming at you, I don't know what it is. Heavy, metallic, and monstrous, these unstoppable things are like giant insects outfitted to go to war with the entire world at once."
—Jennis Falon, explorer

Called dread destroyers by the few folk that are aware of them, these giant war machines have organic brains and internal organs protected by a self-repairing metal shell. With their twelve legs, they lumber over any surface—even clinging to a vertical surface like an insect if need be—but if they enter the water, their raised abdomen lowers and a propeller engine moves them along efficiently. Although a single dread destroyer could launch an attack on an entire city, it is far more likely that you'll find one defending an important, ancient site.

Motive: Defense

Environment: Only one of these automatons has been seen at a time, but holographic images have shown scenes from the distant past when hundreds of dread destroyers crawled across a battlefield together. They can be encountered on land or underwater.

Health: 100

Damage Inflicted: Usually 10 points; see Combat

Armor: 5

Movement: Short

Modifications: Speed defense as level 8 due to size and speed

Combat: Dread destroyers can attack foes up to 1 mile (1.5 km) away—and possibly much farther—with missiles that can kill hundreds of people at once, inflicting 20 points of damage on all targets within long range of the detonation. If targets caught in the blast make a successful Speed defense roll, they suffer 8 points of damage instead.

Up close, dread destroyers can make melee attacks with their limbs or their "mandibles," which can drag a struck creature into the war machine's interior. There, it is held immobile and jolted with electricity until dead (each round, it takes 6 points of damage that ignore Armor). A Might task allows a trapped creature to break free.

More likely, however, a dread destroyer emits a jolt of electricity that deals 10 points of damage to everyone within immediate range. Dread destroyers fight to the death.

A dread destroyer repairs 1d6 points of damage each round.

Interaction: If communication can be established with the organic brain, a PC can reason with a dread destroyer, but convincing it to do something is very difficult.

Use: A dread destroyer is likely the most horrific thing on a Ninth World battlefield. Unless you have an army on your side and are willing to lose a large portion of your forces, battle is unwise. Still, the greatest guardians often protect the greatest treasures.

Loot: The remains of a dread destroyer are a scavenger's dream, yielding at least 1d100 + 1,000 shins, 1d20 oddities, 1d20 cyphers, and 1d6 artifacts.

GM intrusion: *The dread destroyer activates an energy surge that repairs 1d6 + 4 points of its own damage and makes an electrical attack that inflicts 20 points of damage on a single target.*



LOOKING FOR
Callerail, page 228

ERYNTH GRASK 6 (18)

"Originating in some other dimension, erynth grask are horrific creatures of hunger and hatred. They have a command over matter that grants them psychokinetic control over small objects, manipulating things with their many tiny hands as a musical conductor directs an orchestra.

"Wormlike, with four tentacles surrounding its toothy maw, an erynth grask has two long, spindly arms and six smaller arms. The long arms can hold and grasp objects, but the smaller ones do not. Its tentacles have something in their nature that is antithetical to life in our world, disrupting the nerves of a creature they touch.

"It has been postulated that there is only one erynth grask, and the various encounters that have been documented are in fact just projections into our reality of that singular entity."
–The Ultraterrestrial Threat *by Vibor Bondanth*

Motive: Hungers for flesh
Environment: Anywhere, including underground. An erynth grask is usually found alone.
Health: 28
Damage Inflicted: 8 points
Armor: 1
Movement: Short
Combat: An erynth grask burrows through the ground at the same movement rate at which it moves across the surface. When it attacks prey from beneath, it can use its claws or bite, or it can use its tentacles, which do not inflict damage but instead disrupt a creature's nervous system, causing the victim to lose their next turn if they fail a Might defense roll.

At the same time, the erynth grask uses its telekinetic abilities to grab small objects (weighing 10 pounds [4.5 kg] or less) that are nearby. It uses these objects in several ways. First, the erynth grask uses them as shields, with each object hindering the attacker's ability to strike them; no more than two objects can be used in this way. Second, the creature can hurl the objects as projectiles (long range, 6 points of damage). Third, the erynth grask can harass a foe by grabbing an object in their hand or on their person, which hinders all of the foe's actions; it can do this only once per foe.

An erynth grask can manipulate six objects at once: two shields, two projectiles, and two harassments; six projectiles; two shields and four harassments; or any other combination, although no more than two shields at once, and no more than one harassment per foe.

An erynth grask flees if it takes damage equal to half its health.

Interaction: These ultraterrestrial creatures are incredibly intelligent but very alien. They have their own language and often mark their bodies with symbols that mean something only to them.
Use: As a surprise encounter, nothing works better than an erynth grask. It's a deadly foe that can take on a whole group at once.
Loot: The brain of one of these ultraterrestrials contains 1d6 liquid cyphers (which can be imbibed, injected, and so on).

PCs are limited to one action per round (except in special cases), but many types of creatures, such as the erynth grask, can take multiple actions at once.

GM intrusion: *The erynth grask tunnels up directly beneath the PC, giving it an automatic hit with its bite and tentacles and knocking the character prone.*

LOOKING FOR
Chirog, page 229



GHOST CRAB 5 (15)

Although creatures called ghost crabs exist in today's world, the Ninth World version is not related to them in any way. In fact, the unique abilities of the Ninth World ghost crabs suggest they might have been bioengineered, although for what purpose is anyone's guess.

Ghost crabs live on the ocean floor, typically in places that are at least 1 mile (1.5 km) deep. They can grow as large as 5 feet (1.5 m) across but average about 3 1/2 feet (1 m). Nimble hunters and intricate weavers, ghost crabs can build their silica webs along any jagged or uneven surface, including coral reefs, sunken ships, and ancient ruins. If no surface is available, they make one, killing large animals so they can build webs across the shells and bones.

Not true crabs, they are spiderlike creatures that spin hard shells from the same silica they use to build their webs. Ghost crabs appear and disappear in the depths as though shifting realms. Their webs, too, are often invisible unless one knows to look for the glinting, off-white strings.

Although ghost crabs are blind, their finely honed sense of touch allows them to hunt and devour anything that gets caught in their webs.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Ghost crabs live alone or in pairs on the ocean floor.

Health: 20

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 6

Movement: Short

Combat: Ghost crabs wait patiently until a PC is tangled in the near-invisible strands of silica in their web. As soon as the character is caught, the web begins its work, dehydrating the shell around the PC's DNA (dealing 3 points of damage per round for as long as they are caught). While a victim is trapped, a ghost crab uses its giant front claws to tear the flesh from the living prey (6 points of damage). If one of a crab's front claws is smashed or removed, it can spin another as a replacement, a process that takes two rounds.

Ghost crabs are immune to visual-based effects, such as illusions.

Use: The PCs are deep-diving in the ocean on a mission to recover treasure from a long-sunken construction site. While there, they notice ghostly creatures out of the corners of their eyes, scuttling through light and shadow. The characters might also find long, shining strands woven between the rotting underwater fixtures.

Loot: Silica webs and shells can be made into tools, rope, shields, and other useful items that usually have two to ten times the strength of a mundane item.

GM intrusion: *A PC damages or removes one of the ghost crab's front claws, causing the creature to quickly spin a new one. The new claw is nearly twice as large as the first, increasing the damage to 8 points.*



LOOKING FOR
Cragworm, page 230

ITHSYN 4 (12)

Loud and horrible, the things called ithsyns appear to be the result of a genetic experiment gone awry. Possessing distinctive qualities of avians, reptiles, mammals, and fish, they seem difficult to categorize. In the end, however, they are unique in their own right.

Ithsyns are egg layers that live in large communal nests and fiercely defend them—even unto death. These carnivores hunt in packs, looking for prey of any size. Ithsyns do not see or hear particularly well and rely on their long, snakelike tongues for much of their sensing.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Ithsyns live in groups of three to six in any warm climate.

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Modifications: Perception as level 3. Resists mental attack as level 3.

Combat: When it attacks, an ithsyn charges forward in a burst of speed. In the same action, it can move up to a long distance and attack with either a savage kick or its weird, trifurcated mouth.

If struck in combat, an ithsyn releases a dark greenish gas from orifices throughout its body. Creatures within immediate range must make a Might defense roll right away, and those that fail are addled for one round. Releasing the gas is not an action on the ithsyn's part—just an immediate reaction to being hit.

Addled victims behave randomly on their next action. Roll d100 and consult the table below.

d100	Victim's Action
01–20	Run off in a random direction for a short distance
21–30	Attack the nearest creature with whatever means is closest at hand
31–60	Do nothing but cough and shout
61–80	Fall down and roll on the ground
81–90	Drop whatever is held and cover eyes and face with hands
91–00	Activate most powerful available ability, cypher, or artifact that is not an attack (if none, roll again)

Interaction: Ithsyns are animals. They cannot be reasoned with, although in theory one could be tamed and trained. They react with fear to a show of overwhelming force, fleeing unless defending their nest.

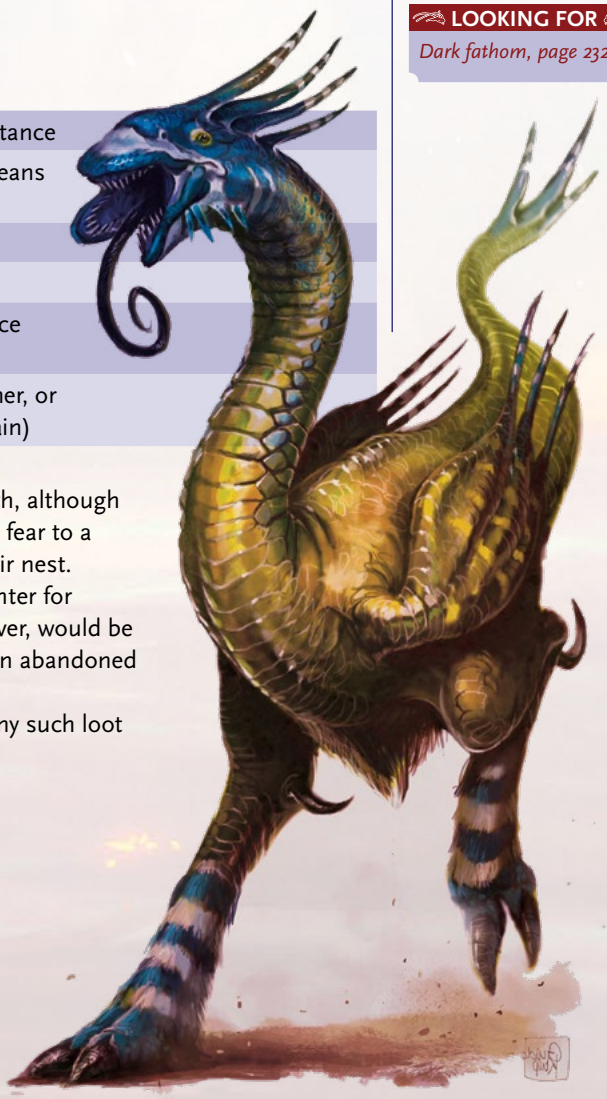
Use: A pack of hunting ithsyns could be an interesting encounter for characters traveling through the wilderness. Worse, however, would be a pack that has a nest atop or in front of the entrance to an abandoned facility that the PCs must enter.

Loot: An ithsyn nest might have a cypher or 1d10 shins, but any such loot would be the coincidental leftovers of a prior victim.

GM intrusion: *The effects of the ithsyn gas last for 1d6 + 1 rounds (rather than one round) for an unfortunate victim.*

LOOKING FOR

Dark fathom, page 232





JIRASKAR 7 (21)

Terror doesn't even begin to describe it. The woods seem still. Quiet. At the risk of being cliché, too quiet. Then there is a tremor. A rumbling. Then, far more quickly than you might expect (if you were smart enough to realize that the rumbling was the approach of a large beast), a terrible but beautiful shape emerges from the tall trees, a creature as colorful as a jungle flower but burgeoning with teeth and hunger and death. Your doom charges at you as though destiny guided its feet. The only mercy is that it ends as quickly as it began.

Jiraskars are fierce, apex predator reptiles. Their colorful bodies have fleshy frills and only two functioning limbs: powerful legs that carry them at prey with great speed. They have terrible (practically nonexistent) natural senses but can use their brains to tap into the datasphere, which guides them to where they need to go. The huge beasts live only to hunt because most of their prey is small, so they must kill continually to survive.

Datasphere, page 355

Cloudcrystal Skyfields, page 169

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Jiraskars hunt alone or in pairs in any wet or wooded area. They are also drawn to large crystals, such as those found beneath the Cloudcrystal Skyfields.

Health: 40

Damage Inflicted: 10 points

Movement: Long

Modifications: Perception as level 10. Speed defense as level 5 due to size. Intellect defense as level 4. Climbs as level 2.

Combat: Jiraskars are extremely fast. They charge in with a savage bite and don't stop biting until the prey is dead or they are. Things like invisibility, illusions, disguises, camouflage, and crafty hiding places mean nothing to them.

Interaction: Jiraskars are animals and act as such.

Use: Because jiraskars are so fast, an encounter with one can arise very quickly. And because they are so powerful, an encounter can also end very quickly.

GM intrusion: *The jiraskar's tail knocks the character prone. In addition to taking damage from the creature's bite attack, the PC is also trampled under its clawed feet for 7 points of damage.*

LOOKING FOR
Disassembler, page 233

LAAK 1 (3)

Laaks are small, green-skinned, poisonous reptiles that attack larger prey in small groups. They can leap with surprising speed and strength. Found almost everywhere, from desolate wastelands to ancient ruins to the back alleys of large cities, laaks are a scourge. However, they avoid cold regions. Because they are immune to all known venoms, their blood is useful in various antitoxins.

Motive: Hungers for flesh
Environment: Almost anywhere except cold areas
Health: 3
Damage Inflicted: 2 points
Movement: Short
Modifications: Speed defense as level 2 due to size. Climbs as level 4.
Combat: Laaks leap onto a foe and use their poisonous bite to bring it down. Victims must make a Might defense roll; those who fail take 2 additional points of damage that ignore Armor. Laaks are immune to poison.
Interaction: Sometimes laaks are captured young and trained as vicious pets and guardians. They can be frightened off by displays of power (such as fire, noise, and the like).
Use: Although laaks are ubiquitous and annoying, they are generally not a huge threat to PCs. However, an encounter with a powerful NPC foe who keeps a few laaks as pets could be more interesting and more dangerous.

Certain scents seem to draw laak attacks. For example, the scent of most hair dyes seems to enrage them, while the smell of smoke can drive them away.

GM intrusion: *The laak is tougher and more tenacious than others of its kind. It has 4 extra health and inflicts 1 additional point of damage.*



LOOKING FOR
Dread destroyer, page 234

MARGR 2 (6)

Margr might be the most numerous of all abhumans. This is certainly true in the Steadfast and the southern portions of the Beyond.

Margr are variform abhumans. While no two look alike, most have some aspect of goat—a goat head, goat horns, goat legs, goat hooves, or some combination or varying degrees thereof. Margr live lives of terrible violence, killing each other (or really, anything they find) out of rage, sport, or lust. They breed and mature quickly, however, so their numbers never seem to diminish. They travel in small bands led by the strongest and most savage.

Margr wear trophies of their dead opponents but are poor crafters, so these displays are crude at best—severed heads on hooks, ears or fingers threaded on cords as necklaces, and so forth. This means that, on top of everything else, margr stink of rotting meat at all times.

Motive: Kills and destroys for pleasure and dominance

Environment: Margr live in nomadic tribes that scour dry wastelands.

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Short

Margr chieftains can reach terrifying size. Some report the rare individual at 8 or 9 feet in height. These monstrous giants are level 5 or higher, inflict 9 or more points of damage, and have at least 30 health.

Modifications: Resists trickery and lies as level 3. Makes Might defense rolls as level 3. Runs, jumps, and climbs as level 3.

Combat: Margr tend to wield spears or long-hafted axe weapons. They wear leather, hide, or scraps of other types of armor. At range, they throw stones or whatever is handy for 2 points of damage.

Margr leaders are always default level 3 (9). They inflict 5 points of damage, have 16 health, and have 2 Armor. If the leader is killed, the rest of the group generally panics and flees.

Interaction: Margr are vicious and bloodthirsty. They are not smart, but they are crafty, making them difficult to fool. Killing their leader sends them into a frenzy of confusion and fear. In this situation, PCs could easily escape, but they could also intimidate the remaining margr into doing as they command. A very powerful and forceful character could become the new leader, but such a position would be challenged so frequently that it would make the margr poor followers overall.

Use: Margr harass civilized people on a regular basis, raiding villages or trade caravans. Some communities put bounties on their heads, hoping that mercenaries will eliminate the threat, but most people think of margr as creatures of almost supernatural evil—demons or devils—and do their best to hide from them. Thankfully, the nomadic margr usually move on after a few raids.

GM intrusion: *There are more margr! 1d6 reinforcements arrive.*

Loot: A group of margr carries its loot together rather than individually. It's usually in the form of stolen goods, but most groups have 4d6 shins as well. One margr of a group—typically the leader—will also have 1d6 cyphers and oddities.



LOOKING FOR
Erynth grask, page 235



MASTIGOPHORE 4 (12)

Mastigophores are automatons that look human but can instantly transform their hands into long, barbed whips whenever they wish. When first encountered, they appear to be average, uniformed humans with a military stance. Quiet and excellent stalkers, they are encountered in one of two modes: on guard or hunting.

Mastigophores guard certain ancient ruins, complexes, or machines. They usually warn trespassers away once with unintelligible words (but obvious intentions), and if their warning is not heeded, they attack and fight without regard for their safety. They are almost always in groups of two or more.

The automatons need to consume organic material to function and create their weapons. Although they can subsist on plant matter, whoever created mastigophores designed them to enjoy hunting and killing animal prey. In this endeavor, they are very aggressive, and they act alone, leaving their "partners" behind to guard whatever it is they're protecting.

Motive: Standing vigil, consuming organic matter
Environment: Anywhere
Health: 15
Damage Inflicted: 5 points
Armor: 3
Movement: Long
Modifications: Defends as level 5 when on guard. Attacks as level 5 when hunting. Perception as level 5. Hides, moves stealthily, and climbs as level 6.
Combat: With a thought, mastigophores can extrude organic matter from their wrists in the form of long, barbed whips. These whips stun foes for one round, causing the victims to lose a turn.

While on guard, mastigophores fight until destroyed. When hunting, they retreat if they suffer more than 5 points of damage.

Interaction: Mastigophores speak, but not in any language known today. Stern and focused, they cannot be convinced to shirk their duties. However, if they are not hunting, and if the PCs don't try to get past them while they are standing guard, mastigophores are not hostile.
Use: The PCs find the entrance to an ancient complex in the side of a forested mountain. However, it is guarded by a pair of mastigophores that defend it until they are destroyed.
Loot: The inner workings of a mastigophore can provide 1d6 shins and 1d6 cyphers to someone trained in scavenging them.

GM intrusion: *The damaged mastigophore explodes, inflicting 5 points of damage on all creatures in immediate range.*

LOOKING FOR

Ghost crab, page 236
Ithsyn, page 237

MESOMEME 5 (15)



When first encountered, a mesomeme often appears to be a number of individual creatures—people and animals—perhaps swimming or wading in shallow water. Each person is speaking, and the animals are making noises as well. It's a strange choir of babble. Only on closer inspection does it become clear that the creatures are just severed heads mounted on slender, grey tendrils that are almost translucent. These tendrils sprout from holes in the chitinous shell of a massive crustacean with eight legs, two of which end in massive pincers.

Despite the fact that the severed heads on the tendrils speak, the mesomeme cannot do so, nor can it understand speech. It is not very intelligent and acts on instinct. The mesomeme feeds on the mental activity of its victims, stimulating the brains in their severed heads, which remain preserved for weeks on its tendrils. This stimulation causes the heads to speak or otherwise babble, growl, or squawk.

At any given time, the mesomeme has 1d6 + 4 heads. If it dwells near civilization, half of the heads will be human, and the other half will be nonhuman creatures, such as abhumans, large mammals or reptiles, or large birds.

Motive: Hungers for brain stimulation

Environment: These creatures dwell alone in shallow, fresh water, usually among reeds or other plants.

Health: 20

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Short

Modifications: Moves with stealth in the water as level 6. Detects those sneaking in the water as level 7.

GM intrusion: *One of the severed heads says something so startling (perhaps coincidentally meaningful or relevant to one of the characters) that the PC affected loses their turn.*

Combat: When a mesomeme rises out of the water, its true nature revealed, it attacks with its two pincers. Each of these razor-sharp weapons can attack a separate foe in a single action, or the mesomeme can direct both pincers to the same foe, with one claw holding the prey steady and the other slicing deep into the victim's neck. When the crustacean attacks one foe in this manner, the victim can make one Speed defense roll (not two), and the mesomeme deals 5 points of damage if it hits. However, a victim hit by both claws in this way also moves one step down the damage track.

A creature slain by the mesomeme has its head severed and placed on a new tendril that rises up to impale it. This occurs as part of the same action that killed the creature.

The severed heads have no specific connection to the mesomeme. Attacking them accomplishes nothing more than robbing the crustacean of long-term sustenance.

Interaction: Although some of the severed heads speak, the PCs cannot interact with them. The things they say are just snippets of memory-related speech.

Use: The PCs arrive in a small town and discover that the nearby lake is being terrorized by a creature the locals call "the babbling thing." However, some people instead claim that the lake is haunted by the recently dead, whose voices can still be heard echoing across the water. Either way, the residents will be eternally grateful to anyone who can rid them of the menace that makes it too dangerous to fish or get fresh water.

Loot: Very, very rarely, one of the severed heads might bear a cypher.

LOOKING FOR
Jiraskar, page 238

MURDEN 3 (9)

Murdens are abhumans. They walk upright but would never be mistaken for humans. Backs hunched dramatically forward, skin covered in shiny black down, huge black eyes perched above a sharp, dirty yellow beak—these things seem almost like enormous ravens with spindly arms rather than wings. Tattered leather cloaks cover their backs, and many carry a leather bag or wear one on a strap to hold the various objects they have collected.

Murdens don't speak. They communicate with one another telepathically. However, their telepathy annoys other intelligent creatures. The presence of a living murden fills the minds of nearby creatures with a sort of mental static. Add this irritation to their paranoid mindset, their cruelty, their selfishness, and their duplicitous, scheming nature, and there is little to like about a murden.

In some places, murden are called "raven-men." In others, "mud-birds." In still others, "dulsein," which reportedly means "sickening birds" in some obscure tongue.

Motive: Greed and theft

Environment: These abhumans live in small bands in wooded regions, in mountains, and on the shores of large bodies of water.

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Perception as level 5

Combat: Typically, murdens bear slings and long, wicked blades. When possible, they attack from the shadows with ambushes and hit-and-run tactics. They normally flee in the face of real danger.

Although it is inadvertent, their inherent telepathic powers are irritating and harmful to nearby creatures, who perceive it as an annoying static that scrambles thought. Creatures within immediate range of a murden must make an Intellect defense roll; if they fail, all of their actions are hindered. This hindrance lasts until they leave the area of static influence.

Those who have experienced a murden's static firsthand report that strange voices and long-forgotten memories sometimes arise in the mental interference in haunting and disturbing ways.

Murdens are immune to mental effects or Intellect damage.

Interaction: Communicating with murdens is very difficult, but they seem to understand at least a little of the human languages and can convey information through gestures or drawings in the sand. Trusting them, however, is a fool's mistake, for they delight in lies and trickery for its own sake.

Use: Thieves and murderers living on the edge of human society, murdens are despicable creatures. They make excellent foes that even the most altruistic PC won't hesitate to slay.

Loot: Aside from weapons, each murden carries a collection of objects that it values. Although many of these items are bones, stones, sticks, and other bits of worthless trash, a collection usually includes 1d6 shins.

GM intrusion: *The murden poisoned his blade. If struck, the PC must make a Might defense roll or immediately move down one step on the damage track.*



LOOKING FOR
Laak, page 239

NEVAJIN 4 (12)

The nevajin is not a single creature, but two. It looks like a stocky humanoid with a misshapen, almost skull-like head, but the head is actually a separate creature that adheres to the main body by means of powerful suction. When joined, the two portions infuse each other with filaments that allow an exchange of information and nutrients. Separation is a painful process that the nevajin does not undertake lightly.

Both portions of the nevajin have their own brains, sensory organs, and digestive systems. The "head" portion can float by psychic gravity negation.

The origin of this joint creature is unknown. Nevajin do not appear to age, and their method of reproduction is a mystery. Some people speculate that nevajin might be asexual, with each portion budding at the same time to create a new joined creature.

Motive: Curiosity

Beyond, page 169

Environment: Anywhere, but particularly in isolated areas of the Beyond

Health: 10 (head) and 15 (body)

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Understands the numenera and performs crafting tasks as level 6

Combat: A nevajin is not a proficient physical combatant. It usually defends itself with cyphers or an artifact. Barring other ideas, assume that a nevajin has something that gives it 3 Armor for ten minutes and gives it a long-ranged attack that inflicts 4 points of damage.

If threatened, a nevajin's head detaches and floats into the air. In this situation, the head and body can each make attacks that inflict 4 points of damage. Also, both the head and the body can flee if need be.

A nevajin can transfer health between the head and the body when the two portions are touching.

GM intrusion: *The nevajin has a hidden cypher that allows it to become invisible or teleport away.*

Interaction: Nevajin are fairly intelligent and speak many languages in their harsh, whispery voices. They can provide a great deal of information about the numenera or the Ninth World, but they expect to be paid for their secrets, usually in the form of items (never shins).

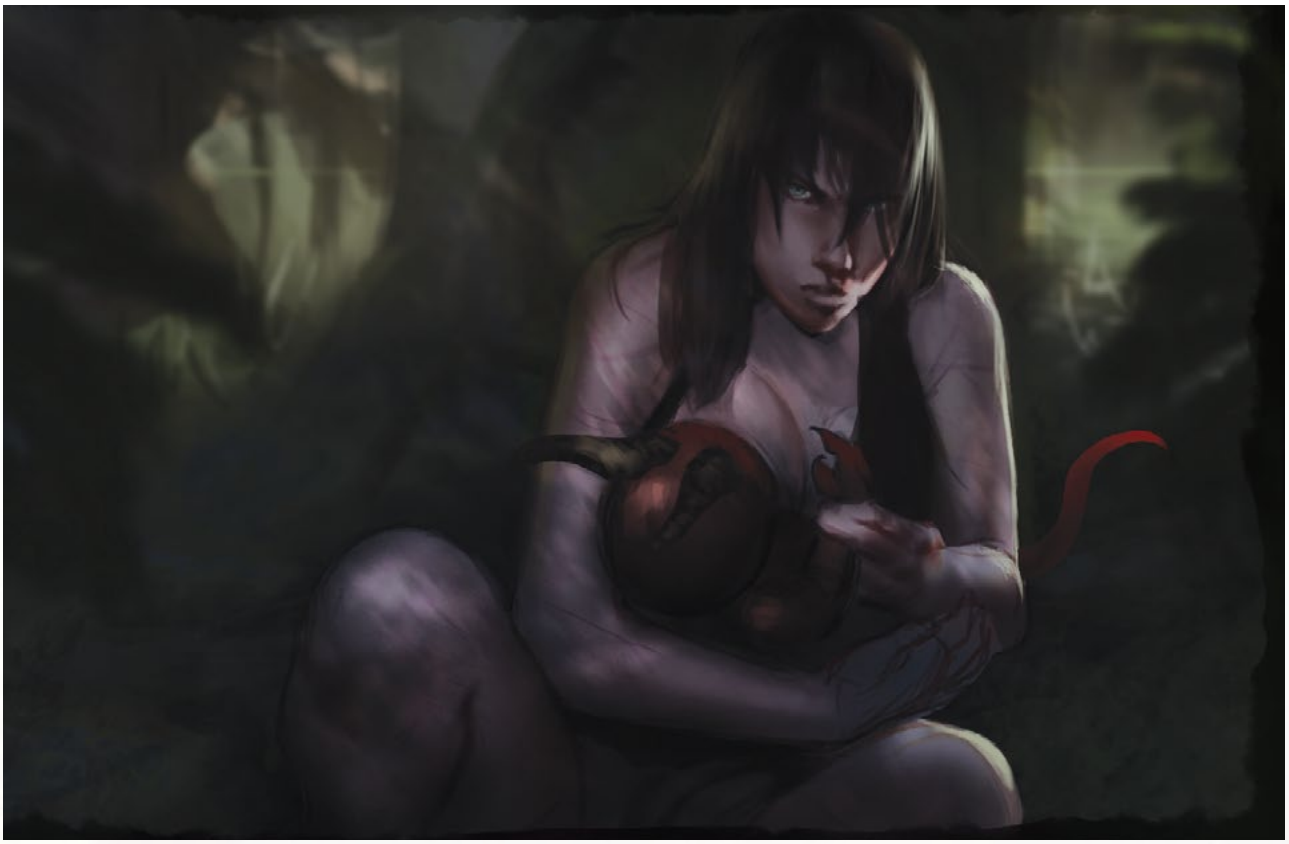
Use: Nevajin are sources of information and interesting artifacts of the past. When a secret bit of knowledge is needed, the PCs must travel deep into the wilderness to find the nevajin that possesses it.

LOOKING FOR

Margr, page 240

Loot: Nevajin always have at least 1d6 cyphers and 1d6 oddities, and they often carry an artifact as well. They usually carry tools and books but rarely use weapons or armor. They do not wear clothing.





NIBOVIAN WIFE 3 (9)

These biological constructs appear to be beautiful female humans. Their only function, however, is to seduce male humans so they can get pregnant. Pregnancy in a Nibovian wife opens a transdimensional rift inside its womb, giving an ultraterrestrial (such as an abykos, an erynth grask, or any ultraterrestrial creature the GM wishes) access to this level of existence. The time required for "gestation," which is actually the aligning of phase changes to create the rift, ranges from ten minutes to nine months. When the ultraterrestrial creature is "born," the Nibovian wife nurtures it as if it were a child, even though it clearly is not. During this time, the construct defends the "child" fiercely, using incredible strength and resilience. The young creature develops quickly, and its first and only compulsion is to hunt down and kill its "father." Once it does so, it is free to do as it pleases in the world.

Nibovian wives are likely the cause of many ultraterrestrials currently in the Ninth World.

Motive: Seduction for reproduction, defense of its "offspring"
Environment: Anywhere
Health: 9
Damage Inflicted: 5 points
Armor: 2
Movement: Short
Modifications: Resists mental effects as level 4
Combat: Nibovian wives attack with their fists, which pummel with a strength that betrays their inhuman nature. Their flesh is as resilient as armor.
Interaction: As long as you give Nibovian wives what they want, they are kind and eager to please. They can never be convinced to abandon their imperative (reproducing and nurturing their terrible child), but on other issues, they can be perfectly reasonable.
Use: A strange encounter with Nibovian wives can introduce the concept of other-dimensional beings in a horrific way. The ancients explored other dimensions and interacted with ultraterrestrials, but in the Ninth World, such beings are thought of as demons.
Loot: The inner workings of a Nibovian wife can provide 1d6 cyphers to someone trained in scavenging them.

Abykos, page 224

Erynth grask, page 235

One of the largest gatherings of Nibovian wives is in Hidden Naresh (page 172), a city in the Black Riage.

GM intrusion: *The strange nature of this particular Nibovian wife allows it to teleport to a predetermined lair, enacting an effective escape.*

LOOKING FOR

Mastigophore, page 241

OORGOLIAN SOLDIER 4 (12)

Created in aeons past (perhaps on an entirely different world), the mechanical men known as Oorgolian soldiers patrol isolated areas of the Ninth World, particularly the Plains of Kataru and Scorpion's Reach. They are almost always found in groups of 1d6 + 2. Lanky and alien in their movements, these quasi-humanoid automatons stand almost 8 feet (2.5 m) tall. In their three-fingered hands, they wield a variety of weapons.

Plains of Kataru, page 179

Scorpion's Reach, page 163

No one knows the origin of the word "Oorgolian." It is thought to be a term from a tongue that is now long dead.

Motive: Incomprehensible

Environment: Anywhere, usually in groups of three or more

Health: 15

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 3

Movement: Short

Modifications: Perception as level 5. Leaps, runs, and balances as level 6

Among those who had the bad luck to encounter Oorgolian soldiers (but the good luck to survive), most believe that the creatures were not created by human hands.

Combat: Oorgolians attack in groups using well-organized tactics. Although they can speak, they transmit information to one another silently and instantly within a 100-mile (160 km) range via radio transmissions. Originally they were almost certainly outfitted with numenera weaponry, but about half have lost their armaments and now wield Ninth World weapons, such as spears, crossbows, or axes. The Oorgolians still armed with the numenera typically carry a weapon that can fire multiple rapid shots without reloading. The soldiers use these to fire at up to three targets (all next to one another) at once. For each target after the first, defense rolls are eased.



In addition to a ranged projectile weapon, one in four Oorgolians carries a back-mounted device that hurls detonations at long range with deadly accuracy. They explode in immediate range for 4 points of damage. Each device holds 1d6 detonations.

Detonations, page 277

People who have experience fighting these automatons have discovered that certain frequencies of sound confuse them. Some frequencies cause Oorgolians to function at 2 levels lower than normal, and others prevent them from acting at all for 1d6 + 1 rounds.

Interaction: On their own, Oorgolians act on prior orders that literally may be a million years old or more, so their actions and motives don't always make sense. Sometimes they completely ignore creatures they find. Sometimes they communicate. Sometimes they ambush and attack.

GM intrusion: *The destroyed soldier explodes, inflicting 6 points of damage to all within immediate range.*

Use: At least one human warlord, with the help of skilled scholars and Nanos, has captured and repurposed a number of Oorgolian soldiers, probably using sound. These soldiers remember nothing of their former duties and work for their new human masters.

Loot: Half of all Oorgolian soldiers carry artifact weapons, such as a slug thrower—a two-handed weapon that inflicts 6 points of damage and has a range of 200 feet (60 m). The projectile ammo regenerates within the weapon until it runs out of power (depletion 1 in 1d100). In addition, each Oorgolian body contains 1d6 cyphers.

LOOKING FOR
Mesomeme, page 242

PHILETHIS 5 (15)

No one knows where the tall, mysterious philethis come from. Some people think they might be the remaining inhabitants of a prior world, as they seem to have a far greater mastery of numenera than do most creatures alive today. No human has seen the entire body of a philethis and reported what they saw, but the glimpses noted to date suggest a biomechanical hybrid form. Typically what is seen is a metal and glass "face" surrounded by voluminous cloaks.

Other speculation about the philethis includes claims that they are entirely robotic, they are ultraterrestrial extrusions into this world, and their "face" is actually a viewport for a creature beyond space and time. Most theories about their nature don't even guess at what their goals or motivations might be. They appear when and where they want to, and they usually seem to observe events from a distance (although another theory suggests that they influence the events somehow).

Motive: Unknown
Environment: Anywhere
Health: 30
Damage Inflicted: 5 points
Armor: 4
Movement: Short
Modifications: Defends as level 6. Defends against mental attack as level 8
Combat: Philethis seldom engage in combat. When they do, they are likely to produce a mysterious numenera weapon—perhaps some kind of energy emitter, or maybe something of a more psychic nature that disrupts thought processes. However, because a philethis can teleport any distance, it usually just teleports away when threatened.

Although unlikely to do so in combat, a philethis can also modify probability in small ways, such as making a rope break, causing a gust of wind to close a door, and so forth. They do this to manipulate events in their favor. If the manipulation affects a PC, the GM can force the character to reroll a die at any time. (It also begs for frequent GM intrusions.)

Interaction: Philethis are not automatically hostile. If engaged in conversation, they might respond in their strange, machinelike voices, speaking in the native language of whomever they talk to. However, such interchanges usually make a philethis more enigmatic rather than less. Their explanations for things rarely make sense, and the questions they ask seem unrelated to anything going on around them.

A typical philethis interaction might go as follows.

Human: Who are you and what are you doing here?
Philethis: The moon is full, and the roses will bloom in 437 hours.
Human: What are you talking about?
Philethis: When you were eleven years old and playing with that ball, why did you bounce it three times against the wall but four times against the ground?
Human: How do you know anything about when I was a child?
Philethis: The galaxies will collide soon. We must prepare.

Use: Philethis are meant to be an enigma. Players should never fully understand the creatures, and if they believe that they do, something should happen to show that they are wrong. Moreover, the PCs should find out at odd times and in odd ways that the philethis are involved—or at least appear to be involved—in surprising situations. Are they just observing, or are they manipulating events somehow? And if so, why? The quest for this knowledge could be the basis for an entire campaign.

Loot: Philethis always have 1d6 cyphers and an artifact of some kind.

GM intrusion: *Something unexpected and unpredictable happens when the philethis is near. The event is small, but it results in a significant change. For example, the PC slips and falls into a pit, suffering damage, but then finds something of great interest in the pit.*

LOOKING FOR
Murden, page 243



RASTER 4 (12)

Rasters are biomechanical creatures that use antigravity suspensors and large, bat-like wings to carry themselves aloft at great speed despite their size. A typical raster has a 30-foot (9 m) wingspan. They are native to the land of Ancuan in the southern region of the Steadfast.

Ancuan, page 160

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Rasters dwell in clutches of three to five, usually not far from a large body of water.

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 4 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Long while flying; short while on the ground

Modifications: Perception within long range as level 5, but beyond that, as level 2

Combat: Rasters avoid danger and combat if possible. If they must fight, they prefer to use a long-range energy generator in their head that fires bursts of invisible energy (long range, 6 points of damage). They never fight to the death, as it is usually easy for them to escape by flying away.

Many people have seen epic battles between rastriders and xi-drake-mounted Angulan Knights in the skies over the lands of the southern Steadfast.

Interaction: Sometimes rasters are encountered in the wild, nesting on rocky islands along the coast. More often, however, they are tamed, trained, and used as aerial mounts. Riders use sonic prods to control them.

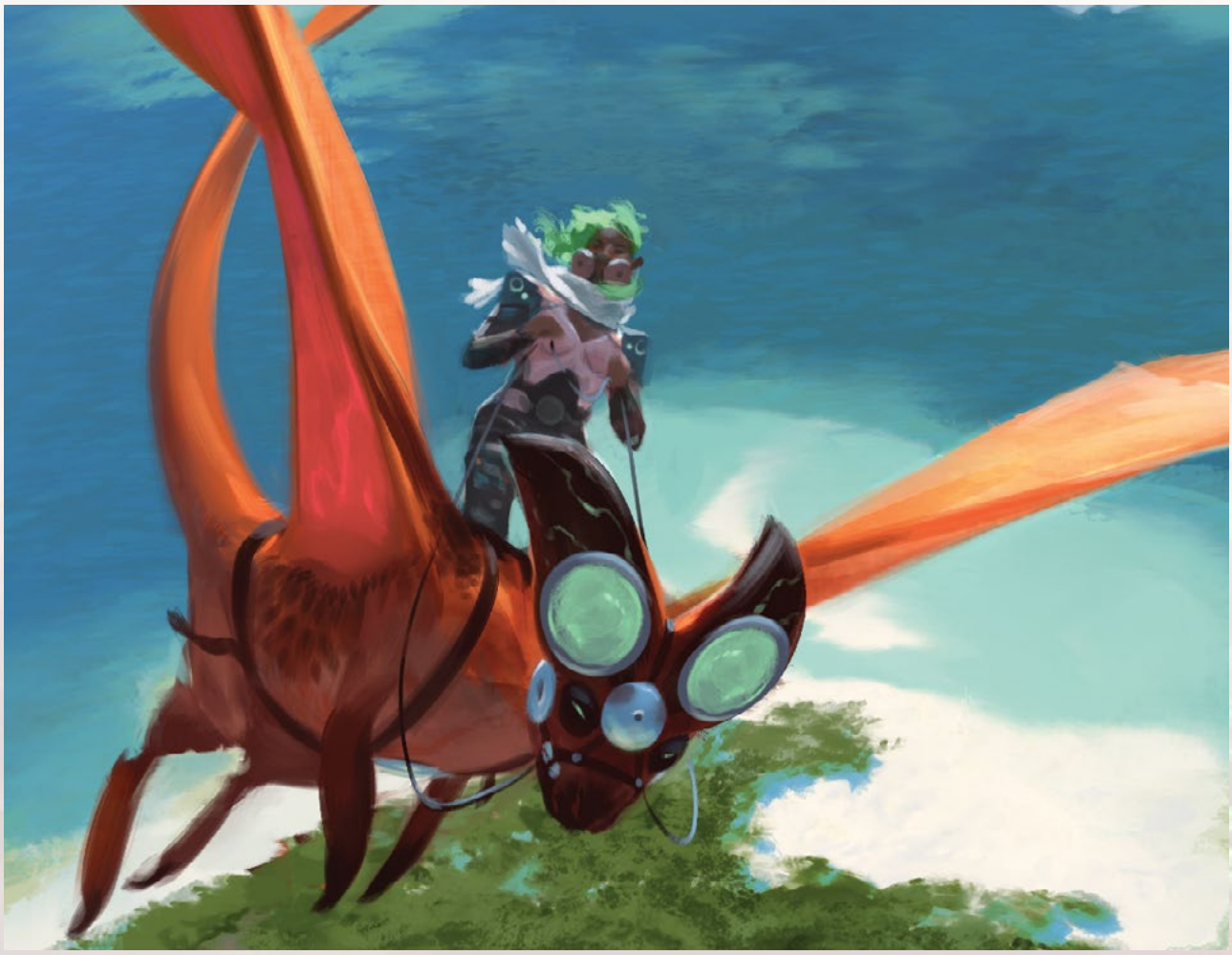
GM intrusion: *A loud sound scrambles the senses of the raster and it goes berserk, making an extra attack on its turn.*

Use: A small clutch of rasters has moved into a ruined keep not far from a small town. The mayor, who wants to refurbish and use the keep, seeks mercenaries to clear out the rasters. Meanwhile, local raiders have put the word out that they would pay well for any young rasters brought to them alive.

Loot: The biomechanical nature of a raster means that its body contains 1d6 – 2 cyphers (which also means that some bodies have none).

LOOKING FOR

Nevajin, page 244





RAVAGE BEAR 4 (12)

A ravage bear is a hideous mammalian predator that hunts entirely by sense of smell. It is blind and nearly deaf, but it still tracks and senses prey easily. It is very protective of its young, and if hungry, it is extremely dangerous. Otherwise, it gives most creatures a wide berth.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Ravage bears dwell alone or in pairs (usually with a few cubs) in wooded, rocky, or mountainous areas, typically in cold or temperate climes.

Health: 20

Damage Inflicted: 7 points

Armor: 1

Movement: Long

Modifications: Makes Might defense rolls as level 6. Runs, climbs, and jumps as level 7.

Combat: The ravage bear grabs foes with its powerful arms, holds them fast, and then squeezes and tears at them until they are dead. It can hold only one creature at a time. While a ravage bear is holding a creature, it can attack only the held creature. In each round that a held creature does not escape, it suffers 4 points of damage in addition to damage from attacks made against it.

A ravage bear can move very quickly in short sprints. In combat, it can go into an insane fury and will fight to the death. If it takes 10 or more points of damage, its defenses are hindered, but its attacks are eased. Ravage bears are immune to visual effects, such as illusions. However, olfactory effects can confuse and "blind" them temporarily.

Interaction: Ravage bears are animals and act like animals.

Use: Ravage bears are likely chance encounters in the wilderness for unlucky travelers.

GM intrusion: *In its rage, the beast makes an extra attack that deals 2 additional points of damage.*

LOOKING FOR
Nibovian wife, page 245



SARRAK 5 (15)

A sarrak is a fearsome predator in the Ninth World, although it might originally hail from elsewhere. It has the body of a massive predatory cat, about 8 feet (2.5 m) long, with sleek muscles and black flesh. Its head, however, appears to be a 3-foot (1 m) wide ball of swirling energy, surrounded by dozens of metallic plates that move as if in orbit around the energy. Despite looking somewhat like an animal, a sarrak is extraordinarily intelligent. It is biomechanical in nature and taps into the minds of other creatures or the controls of electrical devices to its own ends.

Motive: Seeks power
Environment: Anywhere
Health: 23
Damage Inflicted: 5 points
Armor: 1
Movement: Long
Modifications: Resists deception as level 8

Combat: In direct combat, a sarrak can use its claws to slash at foes. Far more effective, however, is its ability to control the actions of other creatures within short range who fail at an Intellect defense task. Once the sarrak establishes control, the victim can attempt a new Intellect defense task every 28 hours. Control lasts only while the creature is within short range of the sarrak.

Likewise, a sarrak can use an action to control almost any electrical device within short range as if it held the item. It can cause the device to activate or operate. No roll is required for this control, so bringing any sort of device close to a sarrak is dangerous.

Sarraks heal very quickly, regaining 2 points per round when damaged. This regeneration stops when they are dead.

Interaction: A sarrak is wise and ingenious. It sees other creatures as tools to be used for its own ends, but sometimes it is willing to hear what a tool has to say. It is most interested in offers of power or advantage but doesn't seek wealth for its own sake. Sarraks respond poorly to threats or intimidation and are very difficult to trick or deceive.

Use: Most likely, a sarrak lair is filled with controlled creatures and devices it can activate for defense or assistance. It might have complex plans in motion and could be the secret power behind a scheme involving many creatures, people, or machines (or all three). A sarrak would love nothing more than to take control of a whole community—such as a village, a tribe of abhumans, or a cluster of Stratharian war moths—to serve its ends.

Loot: In its lair, a sarrak has 1d6 + 2 cyphers and one or two artifacts.

Stratharian war moth, page 255

GM intrusion: *The sarrak, acting out of turn, takes control of a device that the character is about to use against it. The sarrak deactivates the device or perhaps turns it against its owner.*

LOOKING FOR
Oorgolian soldier, page 246

SATHOSH 3 (9)

Sathosh are gaunt abhumans that have a long tentacle writhing from where their face should be. They are silent, and they see and communicate via subsonic pulses they emit almost constantly. It is perhaps easier to think of them as having hyper-acute hearing and a sort of sonar.

Sathosh are communal creatures, thriving on the presence of others of their kind and living without any type of hierarchy. They are kind and loving to one another but hateful and cruel to all other life.

Motive: Hungers for blood

Environment: Sathosh dwell in packs of at least six—and usually closer to twelve—anywhere but the coldest climes.

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Climbs as level 5. Resists mental attacks as level 6.

Combat: A swarm of four sathosh can attack a single foe in melee, making one level 5 attack that inflicts 6 points of damage. Further, two sathosh next to each other can join their minds in communion and launch a mental attack on one target at short range; it inflicts 6 points of Intellect damage and ignores Armor.

Sathosh feed on the blood of creatures they slay, absorbing it through their tentacle.

Interaction: Without some kind of subsonic device or mental powers, it is impossible to speak to or understand sathosh.

Use: A local farmer reports that a strange creature has invaded his hay barn.

Loot: Each sathosh is likely to have a light or medium weapon—a knife, a sword, a spear, a dart thrower, and so on. A sathosh lair has 1d100 shins, other miscellaneous gear or goods, and probably an oddity or two.

GM intrusion: *The sathosh's tentacle trips the character, who falls prone and loses a turn.*



SESKII 2 (6)

Resembling large dogs in stature and movement, these four-footed creatures are covered in hard, overlapping scales. The intricate patterns on the scales range from greenish-brown to black-and-white spotted to the reddish hue of embered coals. From their backs grow a mass of organic crystals. Standing about knee-high to most humans, seskii have large teeth, pointed ears, and sharp, pointed tails.

Motive: Hunger or loyalty

Environment: Anywhere, even urban areas

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Long

Modifications: Attacks as level 3 if wearing any type of manufactured armor, including a spiked collar, daggered tail cover, or synthclaws. Defends against piercing weapons as level 3.

Combat: Seskii typically attack with their teeth and the sharp tips of their tails, although they might also claw or pounce. While the crystals provide armor, their scales provide them with additional protection against piercing weapons.

Interaction: Seskii engage in combat for one of two reasons: hunger or loyalty.

When hungry, they often attack anything that seems edible, including other seskii. When they attack humans, it is typically to snatch any food being carried and race off with it, rather than to eat human flesh.

In terms of loyalty, seskii may become particularly devoted to anything and anyone, including other seskii, humans, statues that seem like creatures, and places they call home. They will fight to the death to defend a place or person they deem as their own.

If a seskii in the wild is wearing manufactured armor, it means the creature was once someone's favored companion. There is a good chance that the person is now long dead, as a seskii would not willingly leave their person's side while they were still alive.

Use: Intelligent and loyal companions, seskii can be trained in various methods of hunting, stealth, and attack by those who have skills with animals. Many humans outfit their seskii with special types of weapons and armor—spiked collars are a favorite.

Nanos and numenera crafters value seskii crystals as useful components in information storage devices. Occasionally, seskii shed the crystals naturally, but more often, they must be cut from the creatures. Crystal poaching is common.

GM intrusion: *The seskii is so tenacious that it continues to fight even after its health is gone; treat the creature as if it had 10 more health than normal. Further, in this state, it inflicts 1 additional point of damage.*



LOOKING FOR
Philethis, page 247

SNOW LOPER 3 (9)

Tall and thin-legged, a snow loper is a fast-moving omnivore. It has a very short neck and a large head with a wide, toothy mouth. Long hair covers its roundish, muscular body. Below its mouth are two thin arms with two-fingered hands that it uses mainly for grasping food or navigating treacherous climbs. Since it lacks thumbs, it doesn't really use tools.

Most people speculate that the snow loper is a genetically engineered creature intended to be used as a mount in steep, rocky environments. In the Ninth World, however, many snow lopers roam wild.

Motive: Self-defense

Environment: Snow lopers live in small packs in cold climes or high altitudes.

Health: 12

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Movement: Long

Combat: A snow loper can defend itself with a vicious bite, but more likely, it flees from danger. On an intuitive level, a snow loper can sense creatures within short range that mean it harm.

Interaction: Snow lopers make excellent mounts. They can bear a rider and hundreds of pounds of gear and still climb precarious heights. They travel at great speed, seemingly without getting tired.

If a wild snow loper is caught, it can be tamed and trained relatively quickly, becoming cooperative and docile. The creatures are slightly more intelligent than typical animals, and some can even be trained to use cyphers and other simple devices.

Use: Most likely, characters encounter a snow loper as a mount, probably in the service of a scout, a trader, or an explorer.

Loot: A snow loper has only what its rider gives it.

Rumors say that in the vast, warm lands to the north dwell tan, hairless lopers identical in all other ways to snow lopers.

GM intrusion: *The snow loper gains an immediate extra action, which it uses to bolt away.*

LOOKING FOR

Raster, page 248



STEEL SPIDER 3 (9)

Steel spiders are creatures of living metal that spin incredibly thin webs also made of metal. When Yvaras the Jack and her companions explored the Callostrin, an ancient machine-complex buried beneath the sands of the Cold Desert, she encountered a nest of steel spiders and had this to say:

Cold Desert, page 202

"We had a glowglobe to light our way. Suddenly someone says they see something sparkling right in front of me. In the light, right? I stopped right off, and if I hadn't, I wouldn't be telling you this now—I'd be in three or four pieces on that floor. See, I reached out with my dagger to touch what it was. Just a few strands of spider web stretched across the walkway. That's all, right? Except touching it with my dagger cut into the blade a half inch. A good iron blade, ruined! That's how sharp and strong those things are. I turned around to tell Naeris, but then he says, 'It's shaking!' I turned back to see a spider glistening like silver in our light. It was the size of a dinner platter, moving along two of them thin little strands right toward us! Good thing we had that heat-cutter that Julran found. We used it like a weapon on the spider as it approached. One blast with that drove it off, and we got outta there. Naeris said that as we left, he saw more of 'em. A whole network of their webs strung everywhere. I don't want to go back there anytime soon."

GM intrusion: *The character brushes up against a web strand they did not see, suffering 4 points of damage.*



Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment: Living in small nests of three or four, steel spiders spin their webs in dark ruins, subterranean locales, and wilderness areas of any climate.

Health: 9

Damage Inflicted: 3 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Short

Modifications: Balances and climbs as level 6

Combat: Steel spiders attempt to catch prey in their webs. However, the webs are not sticky—they are razor sharp and easily cut through any material (including flesh) lower than level 5, inflicting 4 points of damage. The strands are so thin that it's easy to walk into them by accident. An Intellect task (level 3) is needed to see them in time. Severing a web requires at least 2 points of damage from an energy attack or from a blade higher than level 5.

If the webs don't kill prey immediately, the steel spider moves in to attack with its bite. The creature's spinnerets are in its mouth, and a bite injects a victim with the metallic strands. Victims who fail a Might defense roll take 4 points of Speed damage that ignore Armor as their muscles and tendons are torn apart by the invasive injection. This damage is in addition to the normal 3 points of damage from the bite.

Interaction: Interaction with steel spiders is nearly impossible because they think only of eating. Although they are organic creatures, they operate almost like automatons.

Use: While wandering through an ancient complex, the PCs find a hatch in the floor, which leads to a shaft going down. But canny eyes might see that the shaft is criss-crossed with thin, silvery filaments. The explorers will have to figure out how to get down the shaft without being cut to ribbons.

Loot: If very carefully cut and stored, a steel spider's web strands can be used as deadly garrotes or cutting tools.

LOOKING FOR
Ravage bear, page 249

STRATHARIAN WAR MOTH 2 (6)

Bred for battle in a prior world, these creatures are gigantic moths with pale yellow wings and bodies the color of skulls. Most have a wingspan of at least 5 feet (1.5 m). When they open their wings wide, they shed a brilliance that withers flesh without harming nonliving objects.

Motive: Hungers for battle

Environment: Any

Health: 6

Damage Inflicted: 2 points

Movement: Long while flying; immediate while on the ground

Combat: Stratharian war moths can swoop in to attack with a bite, but their major offensive power is the flesh-withering light from their wings. The light manifests as a short-range cone of energy that inflicts 4 points of damage to living creatures. Creating this light requires an action, and a moth can use the ability once every other round. If a moth is reduced to 3 health or less, it flies away.

A Stratharian war moth is immune to mind-influencing effects.

Interaction: The war moths think only in terms of battle.

Use: Stratharian war moths make for a dangerous encounter, usually in the wild. However, a wandering pack could come upon a village and terrorize it, keeping people trapped in their homes until help arrives—perhaps in the form of traveling PCs.

"Stratharians" did not create the war moths, but they were the first to find and make use of the creatures in the early days of the Ninth World. The Stratharians are gone now, destroyed by the very creatures they sought to unleash on their enemies.

No one knows the origin or meaning of the word "Stratharian."

GM intrusion: *The light from the moth's wings causes the PC to move one step down the damage track.*

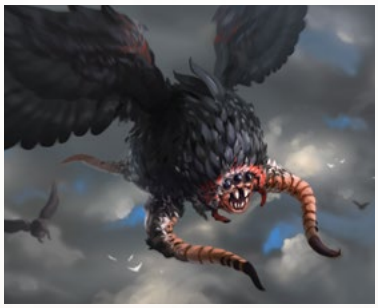


TETRAHYDRA 3 (9)

"The tetrahydra is clearly a creature of bizarre standing, as it has no feet. Perhaps it stays aloft eternally or lands upon its great beaks to rest."

—Carl Linnal, *naturalist*

These large creatures, approximately 6 feet (2 m) tall, look like black-feathered tetrahedrons with beaks and big wings. Based on reports from an early Ninth World naturalist, they were believed to be legless. However, tetrahydras have four tentacles that they keep coiled along their lower half. The tentacles uncoil and can be used as feet and weapons.



Motive: Protecting their eggs
Environment: Anywhere
Health: 15
Damage Inflicted: 4 points
Armor: 2
Movement: Long while flying; immediate while on the ground
Combat: Tetrahydras attack from the air, coming down at perceived enemies quickly, their wings folded back for maximum speed. They attack first with one of their four beaks and then with their tentacles, which grip and squeeze prey. Sometimes they attack alone, but more often they attack in groups of three or more.
Tetrahydras fight to protect their eggs, which take two years to hatch and are situated in large nests as high up as the creatures can build them.
Interaction: Tetrahydras are animals and act as such.
Use: PCs are likely to run afoul of tetrahydras only if they disturb a nest. However, a foe skilled in animal training could have a covey of them that serve as attack beasts.

GM intrusion: *More tetrahydras swoop into the fight! 1d6 more of them join the fray.*

THUMAN 2 (6)

A thuman looks much like a large hound, although it has a face that is almost human. Its tough, leathery flesh is covered in short hair except for a longer tuft at the top of its head that resembles a crest.



Motive: Loyalty
Environment: Any (usually in civilized areas)
Health: 6
Damage Inflicted: 2 points
Movement: Short
Modification: Perception as level 5
Combat: A thuman attacks with a bite. It fights to the death in defense of its master, but otherwise it usually attempts to avoid combat.
Interaction: Thumans are intelligent and affable companions, extremely loyal to their masters. They don't speak, but they understand language well and can be trained to follow a vast number of commands. There is an unwritten code among thuman masters to treat their companions extremely well—more like a friend or ally than a pet. The loss of a thuman companion is like the loss of a close family member.
Use: Thumans are almost never encountered in the wild; they actively seek the company of humans. The PCs likely encounter a thuman at the side of its master. A character who wants a thuman pet should visit a breeder in a village or town, most of whom will entrust a pup only to particularly reliable masters.

GM intrusion: *The thuman's defense action foils an attack against its master.*

LOOKING FOR
Sathosh, page 251

TRAVONIS UL 6 (18)

A writhing mass of tendrils 15 feet (5 m) across and 12 feet (4 m) high, a travonis ul is a creature from another world that hunts for cellular material to consume. Three to five tendrils are particularly long, with bulbous yellow eyes at approximately their midpoint. One broad tentacle has a mouth with several mandibles.

A travonis ul is an intelligent creature, but it's utterly alien to almost everything that dwells in the Ninth World. It doesn't seem to speak, read, or use tools of any kind, but it clearly understands and respects the numenera.

Is it an extraterrestrial or an ultraterrestrial? No one knows for certain.

Motive: Hungers for flesh or plant material
Environment: Anywhere
Health: 36
Damage Inflicted: 6 points
Armor: 3
Movement: Short
Modifications: Speed defense as level 5 due to size and speed. If using its mouth, attacks as level 5, inflicting 8 points of damage.
Combat: This creature lopes forward to attack in an ungainly fashion, using some of its tendrils as pseudopods for locomotion. It flails and grabs at prey, and it also attempts to bite with its terrible mouth (attacking as a level 5 creature and inflicting 8 points of damage). The travonis ul can attack up to ten foes at once (no more than one attack each), as long as they are within short range.

In addition to the damage it inflicts, the touch of a travonis ul causes great pain and disrupts nervous systems. Anyone who is struck by the creature must make a Might defense roll; those who fail are stunned and lose their next turn.

Interaction: A travonis ul looks upon all other creatures as food or enemies (or both).
Use: Travonis ul are some of the most dangerous predators that hunt in the wilderness or in ancient ruins. The alien creatures eat constantly, so when one moves into an area, it quickly depletes the region of flora and fauna. Intelligent inhabitants usually organize resistance or just flee.
Loot: If a travonis ul is slain in an area that has intelligent residents, sometimes corpses with valuables can be found in its mass—perhaps 1d100 shins' worth of goods and 1d6 – 1 cyphers.

In the Caecilian Jungle, there is a massive travonis ul twice the size of any other. It is level 10, with 60 health and 4 Armor, and it inflicts 13 points of damage (17 points with its bite, attacking as level 9).

Caecilian Jungle, page 176

GM intrusion: *The travonis ul's foe is overwhelmed by the flurry of tendrils and becomes lost in the crushing mass of the creature's body. The victim automatically suffers 10 points of damage each round unless it can free itself (a Might task).*



VARAKITH 5 (15)



A varakith is a vaguely insectlike creature, 10 feet (3 m) long, with multiple legs that end in tips like spears. It uses these lances to skewer enemies and drain them of blood, after which the creature adds them to its own body to serve as armor.

It came as a great surprise when the scholar Niomedes discovered that the strange noises the varakith make are actually songs and have meaning. Until that point, they were assumed to be near-mindless beasts. Varakith "speak" (or rather, "sing") by rubbing two of their legs together, which produces a trilling sound. The song that Niomedes translated went as follows:

We fight and crush
Gnash and drink
The foe at our heels will be our bread
The foe at our heels feeds victories yet to come
Stronger today, stronger tomorrow
We fight
We crush
We gnash

The discovery that the varakith are intelligent warmed no one's heart, for the creatures have a dark and bloodthirsty spirit with little respect for others.

Motive: Hungers for blood; lusts after combat

Environment: Varakith dwell alone or in pairs in any temperate or warmer region. They make nests underground.

Health: 25

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Armor: 4

Movement: Short

Modifications: Resists poisons or disease as level 6

Combat: In combat, a varakith attacks with its spearlike legs. Those struck by a leg must make a Speed defense roll or be knocked prone and held immobile. Only creatures that are smaller than the varakith can be held immobile in this way. A varakith can hold up to three such creatures immobile at once. Immobilized victims lose their next turn. On the varakith's next turn, it can automatically bite the held creature, dealing 4 points of damage and draining its blood—and in addition to this bite, the varakith still takes its normal action for that turn. This action could be to attack the immobilized victim with another spear-leg (the victim's defense roll is hindered by two steps: one step because the victim is prone and another because they are held down).

Once they can act, victims can try to free themselves by making a Might-based roll. Failure means that the varakith gets another automatic bite.

A slain creature is tossed on the varakith's back, where the body is caught on spines and hooks. Each corpse adds 1 to the varakith's Armor for 28 hours.

Interaction: Varakith have no respect for other creatures, although one that proves itself in combat might be worth speaking to if communication can be established. Varakith see the world as one big gladiatorial arena in which they must constantly prove themselves. Even a respected combatant is still a foe to be overcome eventually—long-term alliance is not possible. However, varakith are not particularly devious or duplicitous about their mindset. They make their feelings known.

Use: Varakith are excellent foes for PCs exploring subterranean areas, and having these monstrous things turn out to be fairly intelligent is a nice twist. Consider a scenario in which a young man hires the PCs to find his brother—a tough and skilled Glaive—who disappeared while exploring a cave in the hills. Only after long searches do the characters discover that the brother's corpse now adorns the back of a vicious varakith.

Loot: The bodies that varakith wear as armor usually have some useful equipment and probably a cypher.

Varakith war against subterranean communities of humans, such as those in Deep Vormask (page 170) and Vebar (page 195).

GM intrusion: *A varakith throws a not-yet-dead foe onto its back. The victim suffers additional points of damage from the spines and is caught until they can get free by making a hindered Might-based task.*

LOOKING FOR
Seskii, page 252



XI-DRAKE 5 (15)

The largest thing to darken the Ninth World sky is the xi-drake, a massive, white-skinned reptile with broad wings, a long tail, and a large armored crest on its head. The creature is light for its size, and the crest has a unique organ that helps it to fly (though no one knows precisely how it works).

Xi-drakes have keen senses, but more impressively, they can read the mind of any intelligent living creature at long range and thus are almost impossible to deceive. They breed rarely but are extremely long-lived.

Motive: Obligation and honor

Environment: Xi-drakes nest in mated pairs; otherwise, they travel the world alone or with a single rider/companion.

Health: 22

Damage Inflicted: 5 points

Armor: 2

Movement: Long while flying; short while on the ground

Modifications: Perception as level 6. All combat tasks against a living opponent as level 6.

Combat: Xi-drakes are straightforward combatants, attacking with a bite or claws, but since they read minds so easily, they use this information to aid in their attacks and defense.

Interaction: Xi-drakes are intelligent creatures. They cannot speak (telepathically or otherwise), but their ability to read minds allows a sort of communication. They are not so much tamed and trained as they are befriended.

Due to a pact made more than a hundred years ago, xi-drakes serve as mounts for Angulan Knights. Once a xi-drake is bound to a rider/companion, the two work in concert until death (usually the death of the rider, since xi-drakes live for hundreds of years).

Use: Although they can be encountered on their own, xi-drakes are perhaps most interesting when used as the companions of Angulan Knights.

Loot: Rarely, a xi-drake is outfitted with one or two cyphers or an artifact, but only if it can use the devices.

Angulan Knights, page 217

GM intrusion: *The xi-drake uses its mind-reading ability to anticipate and negate an opponent's attack(s) for one round.*

LOOKING FOR
Snow loper, page 253



YELLOW SWARM 5 (15)

Yellow swarms are groups of weird ultradimensional insects. They must stay in close proximity to one another, or they lose their ability to remain in this reality. They look like a small cloud of yellow locusts until you get close enough to see that they are transparent and oddly configured, with asymmetrical bodies that have seven legs and five wings.

Yellow swarms feed on various chemicals in the brains and spines of many creatures in the Ninth World.

Motive: Hungers for various organic compounds
Environment: Anywhere
Health: 18
Damage Inflicted: 5 points
Movement: Short
Modifications: Speed defense as level 6
Combat: A yellow swarm moves in and attacks with hundreds of tiny bites and stings. The trick of fighting a swarm is that it fades in and out of reality, so every round, the GM rolls a d6 (yes, the GM rolls a die!). If the result is 1–3, no attacks or special abilities will affect the swarm in that round, but the players don't learn this until after they have declared their actions. However, the swarm always attacks just before or after fading, so it is always able to affect creatures in this world.
Interaction: It's not possible to communicate with a yellow swarm.
Use: Yellow swarms often linger near interdimensional gates or other access points, so the presence of a swarm is a good indicator that a gate is nearby.

The people of the Ninth World often refer to extradimensional entities such as the yellow swarm or the erynth grask as "demons." They think of them as supernatural, otherworldly beings of pure evil. The truth is often more complex, but the dangers that these creatures pose make people's perceptions understandable.

GM intrusion: *The swarm overwhelms the character, engulfing them. Any actions they take while engulfed are hindered by two steps.*

LOOKING FOR
Steel spider, page 254

YOVOK 3 (9)

The horrid yovoki are short, squat abhumans with jaundiced skin draped loosely over their flabby, hairless bodies. They hunt and kill for pleasure, although they happily eat whatever they kill as well. In fact, they eat constantly and seem able to digest almost anything.

Yovoki are too disordered to have a strict group hierarchy. Instead, they all just yell and snort and squeal until one of them gets their way. There are two yovoki genders, but sometimes even they cannot tell the difference between their males and females.

Motive: Kills for pleasure, food, and displays of strength
Environment: Yovoki wander in small groups of three to six in the mountains and hills.
Health: 12
Damage Inflicted: 3 points
Armor: 2
Movement: Short
Modifications: Defends as level 4. Jumps as level 5.
Combat: Although yovoki wield simple melee weapons like knives, clubs, and short spears in their chubby hands, they love to attack with the poisonous barbs they produce under their tongue and spit out within short range. Those struck by a barb must make a Might defense roll; a failed roll means that for one round, all of a victim's tasks are hindered by two steps. After that, for the next four rounds, the victim is completely paralyzed and can take no physical actions (and all mental actions remain hindered by two steps). Finally, as the paralysis wears off, the victim suffers another round like the first before they can act normally again.

After paralyzing a foe, a yovok bounds forward with surprising agility to finish off the victim up close.

Interaction: Fast-talking characters might be able to reason with yovoki, but doing so is difficult due to their bloodlust. It might be easier for the PCs to intimidate or frighten them into compliance.

Use: These abhumans are slightly smarter than others and might use numenera devices or hatch simple plots to get what they want—poisoning wells, kidnapping important people, and so on.

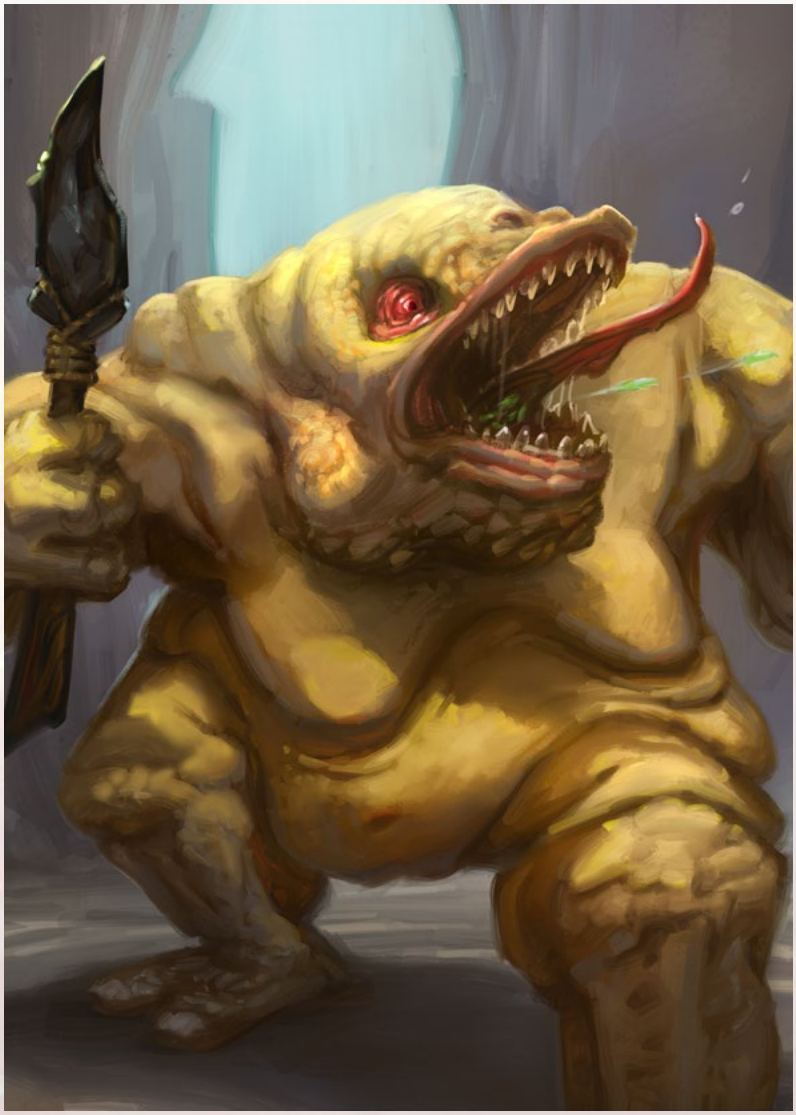
Loot: Each yovok has a knife, club, or other melee weapon. A group of yovoki has at least one cypher and 1d6 + 10 shins.

One of the places you can encounter yovoki is the underground cavern known as Deep Vormask, page 170.

GM intrusion: *The yovok spits two poisonous barbs at once, making an additional attack at another (or the same) target.*

LOOKING FOR

Stratharian war moth, page 255



ZHEV 5 (15)

"Scared of Zhev? Not hardly. You just hit them right between their eyes."
—Jennis Falon, explorer

Qi, page 144

The Zhev make up the elite peacekeeping force in the city of Qi. They are cylinders 6 feet (2 m) high and 3 feet (1 m) in diameter, and they typically hover 3 feet (1 m) off the ground.

The Zhev have three triangular eyes that appear to be organic. The eyes usually stay together in a larger triangle formation, moving inside the cylinder, peering through a slit near the top that goes all the way around. The eyes can also separate, each looking in a different direction, but they do this rarely.

While the Zhev serve human masters in Qi, many people worry that they secretly have their own agenda.

Although the Zhev are essentially automatons, they have organic interior components as well as mechanical parts. They were said to be created by the original Amber Pope, but many people believe that he simply found and reactivated them.

The Zhev patrol Qi, usually in pairs but sometimes alone, preventing infractions of the law and acting to keep order, keep the peace, and protect the lives of innocents. When forced to choose between options, they always make the choice that saves the most people from the greatest harm. Protecting innocents takes priority over enforcing laws.



Their human superiors perform administrative work and never go out on patrols or calls in the city.

Motive: Keeps order
Environment: The city of Qi
Health: 20
Damage Inflicted: 6 points
Armor: 4
Movement: Long
Modifications: Attacks as level 6. Perception as level 7.

Combat: The Zhev usually begin a fight by firing stun gas canisters at long range that explode and impede actions for creatures within immediate range of the blast. Affected targets can take no actions for 1d6 rounds unless they make a Might defense roll to resist the gas. The Zhev also project nets within short range that immobilize a struck target unless they can break or wriggle free (a Might or Speed action). If the gas and nets fail, Zhev attack with their metallic arms that are 10 feet (3 m) long and jointed more like tentacles. The Zhev have three such arms and can attack three different foes as a single action if they are all within reach. Unlike many automatons, the Zhev retreat if faced with a more powerful foe (unless they have been commanded to stay and fight). They usually try to get reinforcements and then return to engage the enemy.

Interaction: The Zhev obey the orders given to them by their human superiors. They also follow the commands of an Aeon Priest as long as those commands don't conflict with an order they've already been given. Other people cannot reason or negotiate with the Zhev. They are relentless and merciless, although they are ordered to capture criminals rather than use violent or lethal force if at all possible.

Use: The Zhev are the dangerous, capable law enforcers and protectors of Qi. They are well respected but not always well liked. PCs who run afoul of them have likely done something very wrong.

Loot: The body of a Zhev can be scavenged for 2d6 shins, 1d6 + 1 cyphers, and perhaps an artifact.

GM intrusion: *The Zhev grabs a character with its metallic arms and holds them fast, immobilizing them.*

LOOKING FOR
Tetrahydra, page 256
Thuman, page 256

CHAPTER 15

NONPLAYER CHARACTERS

Nonplayer characters (NPCs) in Numenera don't follow the same rules as PCs. Although there are NPC Jacks, Glaives, and Nanos, not everyone falls into those categories, and they don't necessarily have the same abilities as the player characters. For example, an NPC Nano might have different esoteries that aren't available to PCs. An NPC Jack could have an odd mutant ability.

This topic is covered in more detail in Chapter 8: Rules of the Game, but in short, with the wide variety of weirdness in the Ninth World, NPCs can have whatever abilities the GM thinks will make for an interesting encounter.

This section provides basic stats for six common NPCs: Aeon Priest, bandit, explorer, Nano, town guard, and warlord. However, when running a game on the fly, it's easiest to give an NPC a level and use that level and its target number to derive the mechanics for everything the NPC does.

For a detailed guide to the stats, please see Understanding the Listings.

NPCs BY LEVEL
Bandit: 2
Town guard: 2
Nano: 3
Explorer: 4
Aeon Priest: 5
Warlord: 5

Chapter 8: Rules of the Game, page 100

Understanding the Listings, page 222

LOOKING FOR

Travonis ul, page 257



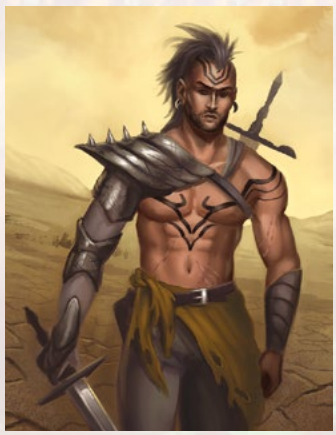
AEON PRIEST 5 (15)



Aeon Priests of all genders typically wear hooded robes and a heavy medallion bearing their eyelike symbol.
Motive: Understanding the lore of the past
Health: 15
Damage Inflicted: 3 points
Movement: Short
Modifications: Defends as level 6. Resists mental effects as level 6.
Combat: Aeon Priests often have technological enhancements and devices that aid in defense, if not offense. They rarely attack with conventional weapons but instead use ray emitters, detonations, and so forth. Like Nanos, many have esoteric abilities.
An Aeon Priest can do one of the following: levitate 20 feet (6 m) per round via an antigravity esotery or device, turn invisible for one minute via a distortion field, or gain 4 Armor for ten minutes via a force field.
Interaction: Much of the time, Aeon Priests are preoccupied with their studies and work. Most people consider them aloof to the point of rudeness. However, the priests are usually willing to share some of their knowledge either for a price (usually in exchange for the completion of a task) or because the question at hand is so intriguing.
Use: Aeon Priests are fonts of numenera knowledge. They are interested not in the details of past culture or history but in science. They can identify cyphers and artifacts and will purchase unwanted items from explorers. If the PCs are going to encounter an Aeon Priest as an adversary, randomly determine at least one useful artifact and add it to the priest's abilities. Devices that allow the priest the special abilities described above are not necessarily part of their loot or usable by anyone else.
Loot: An Aeon Priest typically has 3d6 shins, 1d6 cyphers, an oddity, an artifact, and a wide variety of tools. They might also have other normal gear.

GM intrusion: *The Aeon Priest produces a cypher that, for the rest of the day, lets them take all actions as if they were 2 levels higher.*

BANDIT 2 (6)



Bandits are usually rough, crude, and harsh individuals who live on (and prey on) the fringes of society.
Motive: Taking what they want
Health: 6
Damage Inflicted: 4 points
Armor: 1
Movement: Short
Modifications: Speed defense as level 3 due to shield
Combat: Bandits typically arm themselves with axes, swords, and shields as well as bows. They attack in large numbers and prefer ambushes, making ranged attacks from hiding. Sometimes they spoil the ambush to issue an ultimatum before attacking: your money or your life. If faced with a real threat, such as a situation in which they lose a third of their numbers, they usually retreat.
Interaction: Bandits are interested in money and power, which means that they almost always accept bribes. They aren't fighting for a cause, however, so they rarely risk their lives.
Use: Bandits are everywhere—in a way, they are the archetypal human foe. Since bandits are not very tough individually, you can throw large numbers of them at PCs. If you want a smaller group of tougher individuals, use the warlord stats.
Loot: Any given bandit has 1d6 shins in addition to weapons, shields, light armor, and miscellaneous gear. One bandit in a group might have a cypher or an oddity.

Warlord, page 266

GM intrusion: *Another bandit, hidden until just the right moment, appears and takes a shot with their bow. Then they join the fray.*

LOOKING FOR
Varakith, page 258

EXPLORER 4 (12)

Explorers roam the wilderness and delve into ancient ruins, seeking knowledge, discovery, and loot. They typically carry a wide variety of survival gear, weapons, and interesting bits of things.

Motive: Curiosity and finding loot
Health: 18
Damage Inflicted: 4 points
Armor: 2
Movement: Short
Combat: Explorers know their way around a fight but are not necessarily eager for one. They use ranged weapons if possible, and they flee if seriously threatened.
Interaction: Explorers are understandably leery and sometimes standoffish, but deep down, they're almost always grateful to find a new ally.
Use: Sometimes when the PCs need a little support, an explorer can accompany them. Explorers also make excellent guides or scouts. If the characters encounter another human in the course of their travels in a remote region, chances are it might be an explorer.
Loot: Explorers have at least three weapons, medium armor, an explorer's pack, 1d20 shins, 1d6 cyphers, 1d6 oddities, and possibly an artifact.

GM intrusion: *The explorer pulls out a trick via a cypher or an ability that proves to be the perfect tool for the situation at hand.*



NANO 3 (9)

Nanos use the numenera to shape the world around them. They understand the ways of prior aeons better than most people do and thus seem like "wizards" to the majority of Ninth Worlders.

Motive: Varies, but it usually involves finding or understanding the numenera
Health: 15
Damage Inflicted: 3 points
Movement: Short
Modifications: Resists mental effects as level 4
Combat: Nanos use force blasts, bursts of flame, bolts of electricity, and other esotery-derived attacks with long range.
A Nano can do one of the following: levitate 20 feet (6 m) per round via an antigravity esotery or device, turn invisible for one minute via a distortion field, or gain 4 Armor for ten minutes via a force field.
Interaction: Nanos are usually busy individuals, with a number of different agendas involving research, experimentation, exploration, and investigation.
Use: NPC Nanos don't have to (and frankly don't) follow the same rules as PC Nanos. Their esoteries can have different effects. Nanos are uncommon but can be encountered anywhere. The PCs might meet a Nano who is helping a group of bandits, exploring on their own, or working as part of the town guard.
Loot: A Nano typically has 1d6 shins, a weapon, 1d6 cyphers, an oddity, and other miscellaneous gear. One Nano in six might have an artifact.

GM intrusion: *The Nano performs an esotery that is the perfect tool for the current situation.*

LOOKING FOR
Xi-drake, page 259



TOWN GUARD 2 (6)



The Ninth World is a deadly place, and innocents need protection. The town guard stands watch for dangers from the outside but also keeps the peace amid the community. Town guards deal with drunks, thieves, and other troublemakers, but they're not true law enforcement, and they're certainly not detectives. Ultimately, they do what they are ordered to do by their superiors, regardless of legality.

Motive: Keeping the peace; following orders
Health: 8
Damage Inflicted: 3 points
Armor: 2
Movement: Short
Modifications: Perception as level 3
Combat: Typically armed with spears and crossbows, town guards are straightforward combatants. They appreciate strength in numbers, and they always call for help, if possible.
Interaction: Although town guards range from minor, self-satisfied tyrants to genuinely helpful sentinels, interacting with them typically involves one issue: does the PC want to do something that the guard has been told to prevent? If so, the PC will have a difficult time. Of course, some guards accept bribes or can be persuaded or tricked, but unless the guard is new at the job, they've probably heard most excuses or cons before.
Use: Every village in the Beyond has at least one town guard, and probably many, to defend the community from outside threats. Villages and towns throughout the more settled lands have guards, too, but they're likely more focused on keeping the residents in line than on defending them. To the PCs, town guards can be allies, obstacles, or both. The important thing to remember is that if the characters happen upon a crime or a threat to the community, the town guards aren't just a way to pass along the responsibility. They have their own duties and aren't interested in doing the PCs' work for them.
Loot: Any given guard has 2d6 shins in addition to weapons, medium armor, and basic gear.

GM intrusion: *1d6 local citizens intervene on the guard's behalf, calling for more guards or even fighting the guard's foes.*

WARLORD 5 (15)



Warlords are battlefield commanders, petty tyrants, bandit captains, or any other martial leaders. They are rarely encountered without soldiers or lackeys that fight for them and serve them.

Motive: Winning in battle
Health: 25
Damage Inflicted: 5 points
Armor: 3
Movement: Short
Modifications: Defends as level 6 due to shield
Combat: Warlords wield swords and shields and often fight mounted. The typical warlord leads their troops directly into battle, fighting at the forefront but also issuing orders. All underlings and followers add a +1 damage bonus when the warlord can see them and issue commands.
Interaction: Warlords are committed to their cause, whatever it might be. Some warlords defend, and others attack. Most have lackeys and lieutenants that interact with people so the warlords don't have to.
Use: Warlords can be powerful warriors or Glaives, leading a large group of bandits or soldiers (use town guard stats for their troops). You can also use the warlord stats to create a single mighty opponent.
Loot: A warlord has 4d6 shins in addition to weapons, a shield, heavy armor, and miscellaneous gear. They also have a cypher or an oddity.

GM intrusion: *By using a martial maneuver the PCs have never seen, the warlord blocks all incoming attacks in a given round of combat.*

LOOKING FOR
Yellow swarm, page 260

FRIENDS AND FOES

These NPCs can be found wherever the GM wants to use them. They work well for encounters on the road, in a town, or anywhere else.

ORANNIUS

Appearance: Orannius is very tall and muscular, and he typically wears an unusual breastplate, along with a cypher belt and bracers.

About: Orannius was once considered a hero in parts of the world for his brute strength and his ability to best any opponent. But all heroes have their downfall, and his was that he was too good. Without a worthy opponent, Orannius began to chase storms—sand storms, glass winds, the iron wind, or any storm that might present a new challenge.

Stats: Level 8; health 30; Armor 3

NARISS HORGES

Appearance: Nariss is petite, with a round face and short, dark hair. She wears a rough, sturdy cloak over expensive, fashionable clothes that have seen a little wear.

About: Daughter of Naranial Horges of Castle Sarrat, Nariss fled her family's home after a mysterious event in the strange castle that she refuses to discuss. However, she believes Castle Sarrat to be haunted and fears that the spirits of the distant past have followed her. On her own, she is strong minded but ill prepared for the dangers of the Ninth World, and her funds are quickly dwindling.

Stats: Level 2, Intellect defense and social interactions as level 3

TYRIAL AMAKON

Appearance: Tyrial is an attractive male with a slight build who is just over 6 feet (2 m) in height. He dresses well with a bit of a flair for the dramatic. His most intriguing and unusual feature is his sharp violet eyes.

About: Tyrial works as a confidence man. His natural charm and stealth help him get out of hairy situations, and he usually ends up much better off than when he went in. He is not above lifting a cypher or an artifact, posing as an Aeon Priest, or even attempting to defy gravity—as long as you can convince him that it's worth his time.

Stats: Level 7; persuasion, picking pockets, and disguise as level 8

OSIN LUMAS

Appearance: He is always dressed in a white artifact suit with a silver mask covering his face to protect him from disease.

About: A man who seems saddened and driven by a great tragedy in his past, Osin Lumas roams the land, attempting to cure or stop the spread of disease and plague. He works tirelessly but often fails. Those he is unable to cure are cleansed of their disease by his powerful fire artifact.

Stats: Level 5, resisting disease as level 7

AL'DRAK

Appearance: A brawny human warrior with a quick wit and fiery rage, Al'Drak favors loose-fitting tunics and breeches for ease of motion. His eyes are crystal blue with a keenness that seems to stare into the soul. Some find this unsettling, while others find it alluring.

About: Al'Drak is a civilized, refined man who is quick to take on the cause of the downtrodden or the oppressed. Some consider his sense of honor and duty a weakness, but it gives him purpose. A talented swordsman (perhaps one of the best), his exploits are mythic in scope, which works against him in many cases because he is becoming outpaced by his own reputation.

Stats: Level 8, broadsword and Speed defense as level 9

VEREDUS

Appearance: He has dark, shoulder-length hair and green eyes, and his face is covered in birthmarks of unusual colors.

About: Veredus is a loner who wanders the world, sticking to the wilderness whenever possible. He is skilled in hunting, making his own clothes, scouting, and using bows, short blades, and daggers. Those who know of his talents seek him out, sometimes traveling a great distance to find him, but he rarely agrees to requests unless he senses that doing so will right an imbalance in the world.

Stats: Level 7, stealth in the wilderness as level 8; health 25

LOOKING FOR
Yovok, page 261

ILLIAN

Appearance: Tall and lithe, Illian has long, wavy hair and an ear that was damaged by a sword-blow long ago. She wears heavy armor and carries two swords that she wields as easily as most people wield one.

About: Illian is an Angulan Knight with a retributive demeanor. Her quick temper gets her into trouble all the time, but she has the skills to get herself out of those scrapes, so she continues to wander the Ninth World on her mission. She rides a xi-drake companion named Eager.

Stats: Level 6, bladed attacks as level 7, pleasant interactions as level 4; makes two attacks as a single action; health 22; Armor 3

KAIRAM AHMED

Appearance: A thin man with angular features, Kairam is entirely covered in a silver skin only a few molecules thick.

About: Once a great scholar experimenting with transdimensional technology, Kairam was drawn into a higher level of reality. Now he can control his phase, becoming insubstantial or solid as desired. Rumor has it that he can restore life to the dead and has other powers that are almost godlike. Virtually anything that can be imagined has been attributed to him. With his multidimensional existence, it is also possible for Kairam to be in several places at once.

Stats: Level 9

NAEVRO AND BURRIM

Appearance: Naevro is a tall man with long, straight, dark hair. Often unshaven, his looks are rough and carefree. Burrim is a huge carp at least 3 feet (1 m) long, with brilliant orange and yellow scales. He "swims" through the air thanks to a high-tech antigravity device attached to his sides. It also attaches to his face to form a breather mask that allows him to remain out of the water.

About: These two inseparable companions are a unique pair. Naevro is a reticent but good-natured fellow. Burrim is intelligent, witty, inquisitive, and wry. They wander from place to place, performing odd jobs (or going to great lengths to avoid work) and making friends as well as the occasional enemy. They're always interested in more traveling companions but not in "adventures." However, adventures often seem to find them.

Stats (Naevro): Level 4

Stats (Burrim): Level 4, history and geography as level 6, all other Intellect-based actions as level 5; Armor 1



LOOKING FOR
Zhev, page 262

PART 6:
THE NUMENERA



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CHAPTER 16

TECHNOLOGY

In the Ninth World, "the numenera" is a term that refers to anything that seems supernatural and that comes from the prior ages of the Earth. From a 21st-century point of view, this means devices, machines, vehicles, robots, computers, weapons, satellites, drugs, and so on. But it also means bioengineered creatures, cybernetic beings, and creatures brought here from alien worlds and dimensions. It also includes things that have been indirectly created by the science of the past—mutants and genetic accidents, the descendants of experiments, and so on. Last, it means ways in which Ninth World people have figured out how to use, manipulate, or master the products of the past, such as the Nano's use of esoteries and the so-called "nano spirits."

In this chapter, we'll examine the physical aspects of the numenera—specifically, cyphers, artifacts, oddities, and other devices.

Mutant, page 397

Nano, page 36

Esoteries, page 40

Nano spirits, page 355

Cyphers, Chapter 17, page 272

Artifacts, Chapter 18, page 289

Oddities & Discoveries, Chapter 19, page 304

NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF NUMENERA ITEMS

As a reminder, item effects that negatively affect characters (harming them, hindering them, changing them, controlling them, deceiving them, and so on) require a roll. If the character being affected is a PC, the player makes a defense roll that the GM feels is appropriate and logical. Things that affect a character's health, such as poisons, are Might defense actions. Things a character can dodge are Speed defense actions. Things that affect a character's mind are Intellect defense actions.

If the character being affected is an NPC, the player makes a roll based on whatever stat the GM feels is appropriate and logical. Most effects from items are Intellect based, but something that clearly makes a melee attack is usually Might, and something that makes a ranged attack is usually Speed.

Defense roll, page 119

Might, page 22

Speed, page 22

Intellect, page 22

Aeon Priest, page 264

LOOKING FOR

Bandit, page 264

PEOPLE AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NUMENERA

Although the comparison between "magic" and the numenera is worthwhile, taking it too far is likely a mistake. For example, you can imagine someone disbelieving in magic even in a world where it exists. No one in the Ninth World "disbelieves" in the numenera. It's all around them. It cannot be denied. It's also more common than magic would be in most fantasy settings. And yet it's still just as mysterious and strange, mostly because the numenera is varied and unpredictable to those who don't understand it.

There are people, however, who do understand it—at least to some degree. Not everyone merely scavenges numenera from ruins. Some study it, comprehend a bit of it, and then create their own. Results are mixed, but in certain villages, the local tinkerer or clave of Aeon Priests has made a fabulous discovery not just of technology, but of understanding. Now, with the right resources, the tinkerer or priest can make the device, concoct the drug, or develop the process. A whole community might have access to advancements that are far beyond anything else they possess—a group of farmers using automatons to pull their plows, a village whose thatched roofs are coated in fire-retardant spray, or a band of soldiers with chainmail, spears, and short-wave communicators in their iron helms.

It's important to remember that the player characters don't look at the numenera the way that 21st-century people look at technology. In the Ninth World, a force field projector and a two-way radio would seem not only like magic, but magic of the same level of power. In fact, the radio might seem more potent because its use is more broad and its effects are "invisible." Ninth Worlders have no perspective on what sorts of technology are more advanced than others, and they take none of it for granted.

THE APPEARANCE OF NUMENERA DEVICES

Technology in the Ninth World can be categorized as cyphers, artifacts, oddities, and discoveries. These categories show how the PCs interact with the numenera—how it is (or isn't) useful to them. When thinking about technology, the GM can also consider origin and appearance. This approach looks at devices not from a game-mechanic standpoint, but from the point of view of people living in the Ninth World.

When it comes to devices that characters are likely to carry and use, there are four types: scavenged, cobbled, bonded, and fashioned.

SCAVENGED

The most basic type of device is one pulled out of an ancient ruin. It was either a complete device found intact or a portion of another device, removed by a learned person, that can be used for a function all its own. The former might be a bracer-like device with touch-sensitive controls that the wearer can manipulate to create a powerful magnetic field around them. The latter might be a viewscreen, taken from a vast machine, that by itself allows the user to see through an inch of normal matter.

COBBLED

The second most common type of device, a cobbled item, consists of at least two parts joined together to make a function possible. Let's say a knowledgeable tinkerer takes a lens mechanism from one device and a control mechanism from a larger console and wires them together. Then the tinkerer connects an old power supply that still functions and binds it all together with cord. In the end, they have created a high-powered nightvision telescope and range finder, assuming that the user—through a bit of practice and trial and error—can decipher the symbols to understand the distances shown in the readout.

BONDED

With bonded devices, the setting starts to intrude on the items. Realistically, people in the Ninth World will take existing devices and make them their own. For example, a scavenger might find a device that fires a beam of high-powered energy, but when they sell it to a member of the Jagged Dream, the buyer gets a smith to fashion an intimidating housing around the device, complete with an easy-to-use hand grip, a trigger mechanism, and a spiked blade on the front in case the wielder enters close combat. Then one of their artisans etches the cult's unique iconography into the housing, blade, and grip. In the end, the item becomes a stylish (albeit strange) and likely intimidating weapon.

In other words, bonded items no longer look like something found in a trash heap. They are turned into objects that are beautiful or terrifying or whatever the crafter wants. They are incorporated into other items. They are named. They might even come with written instructions on their use.

FASHIONED

The rarest of the devices, but in some ways perhaps the most intriguing, fashioned devices are based on ancient technology but created by people of the Ninth World. Imagine a clave of Aeon Priests who study in an ancient laboratory for years (perhaps generations) and finally recreate an "elixir" they discovered that speeds up wound closure and tissue knitting by an order of magnitude or more. The compounds needed are rare and difficult to attain, but with them in hand, the priests begin to manufacture small amounts of the concoction on their own. Years later, they open houses of healing that come to be known and respected by all in the region.

Jagged Dream, page 218

Cyphers, artifacts, and oddities cannot be identified as such just by looking. They almost all look like "devices" (the exceptions being something like a pill or an injection). You can't distinguish a cypher from an artifact by appearance. The difference is how much use a character can get out of it.

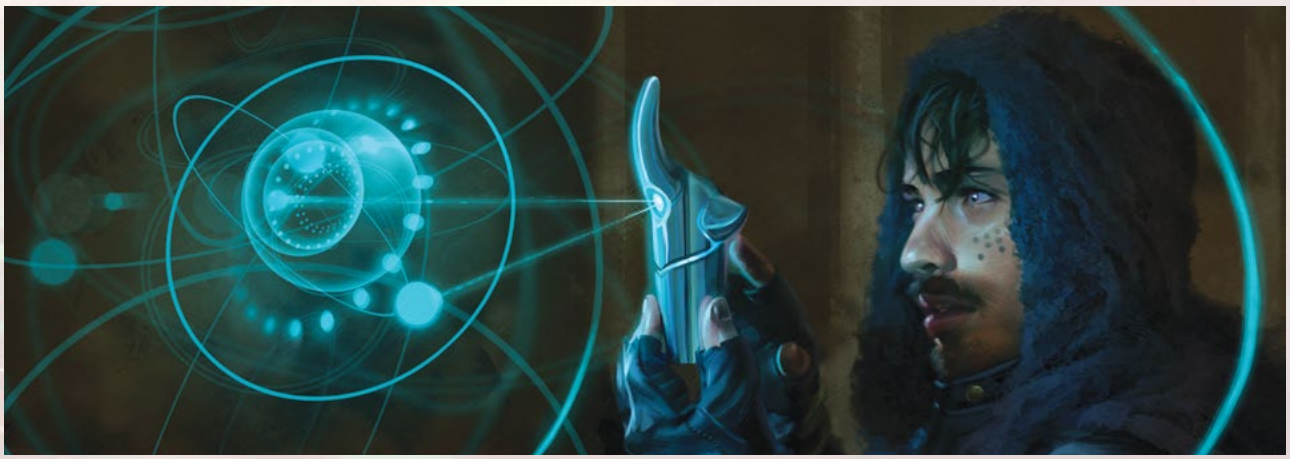
Clave, page 12

Raiders in Scorpion's Reach who ride rasters use fashioned sonic prods to keep their beasts in line.

Raster, page 248

LOOKING FOR

Explorer, page 265
Nano, page 265



CHAPTER 17

CYPHERS

In previous Numenera products, cyphers were categorized as anoetic (simple to use) or occultic (difficult and dangerous, and counting as two cyphers). Those classifications aren't being used any more, and you may ignore any references to them.

Cyphers are one-use, cobbled-together bits of technology that characters frequently discover and use. Any time PCs come upon an old device, defeat an artificially enhanced or designed creature, or simply sift through the ruins of the past, they might scavenge a handful of new cyphers. Remember that in the Ninth World, cyphers are rarely used for their original, intended function, which is now unknowable. Something a character uses as a bomb might have been a power source for another device that has been rejiggered with some crossed wires. A vial of liquid might have been a nutrient solution for a biological experiment. For PCs, cyphers are the most important aspect of the numenera.

Because the technology of the past is mysterious, cyphers are often determined randomly. However, the GM can place them intentionally as well. They have cool powers that can heal, make attacks, or produce effects such as nullifying gravity or turning something invisible. Cyphers are single-use items and are always consumed when used.

Cyphers don't have to be used in order to make room for new ones. It's perfectly acceptable for players to stash an extra cypher elsewhere for later use. Of course, that doesn't mean the cypher will still be there when they return.

Cyphers are found with such regularity that the PCs can use them freely. There will always be more, and they'll have different benefits. This means that in gameplay, cyphers are less like gear or treasure and more like character abilities that the players don't choose. This leads to fun game moments where a player can say, "Well, I've got an X that might help in this situation," and X is always different. X might be an explosive device, a short-range teleporter, or a force field. It might be a powerful magnet or an injection that will cure disease. It could be anything. Cyphers keep the game fresh and interesting. Over time, characters can learn how to safely carry more and more cyphers, so the devices really do end up seeming more like abilities and less like gear.

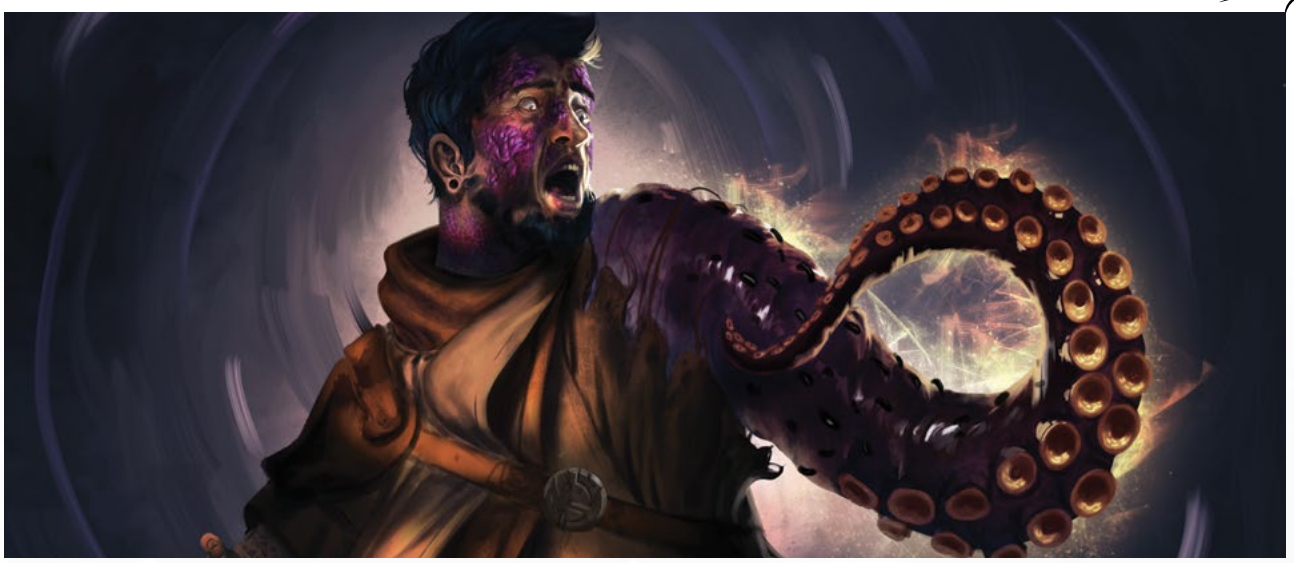
CYPHER DANGERS

Each character has a limit on the number of cyphers that they can carry at any given time. The idea is that cyphers can be dangerous when gathered together. But this idea is just Ninth World common sense, some of which might be based on incorrect observations. Although most cyphers are inherently unstable, will there be a terrible explosion if a first-tier Glaive gathers three cyphers in their fist at the same time? Probably not. Can a character tuck six pills into a pouch without dying of radiation poisoning? Almost certainly.

The limit on cyphers is more of a gameplay mechanism than a setting or flavor issue. Basically, it's bad for the game if PCs hoard cyphers because they're meant to be used. Hoarding cyphers means there will be long stretches of the game without cypher use, and at some point there probably will be a moment with far too much cypher use.

So, imposing a bit of logic on the game mechanics, what happens if a character has too many cyphers in their possession? Using the Cypher Danger table, roll d100 and then add 10 to the result for each cypher over the character's maximum limit. For cyphers that don't seem like they should be particularly volatile, such as pills, elixirs, or other simple or mundane items, add nothing—or, if you prefer, *subtract* 10 from the result. If the result is nonsensical, move up one result. If it is still nonsensical, move down one result from the original. Continue until a logical result occurs. Roll on the table each day that the cyphers are gathered together.





CYPHER DANGER

d100	Effect
01–60	Nothing happens.
61–70	There's an odd smell, tingling sensation, or aura around the cyphers. This is merely ominous and not inherently dangerous. If this result occurs on two consecutive days, use the 71–80 result instead.
71–80	One of the cyphers is destroyed/no longer functions/loses all potency.
81–90	The character feels a bit off. All their tasks are hindered for 28 hours. If this result occurs on two consecutive days, use the 96–100 result instead.
91–95	Two of the cyphers involved are destroyed/no longer function/lose all potency.
96–100	The character falls ill as a result of minor chemical or radiation interaction of the cyphers. All their actions are hindered for 1d6 days. If this result occurs on two consecutive days, use the 111–120 result instead.
101–110	All of the cyphers involved are destroyed/no longer function/lose all potency.
111–120	The character is terribly ill as a result of minor chemical or radiation interaction of the cyphers. All their actions are hindered by two steps for 2d6 days. If this result occurs on two consecutive days, use the 141–199 result instead.
121–130	Two or more of the cyphers in proximity react chemically, either through small leakage, emissions, or direct contact. The cyphers are destroyed and a mass of acid is produced, burning the character for 6 points of damage.
131–140	The energy radiating from two or more of the cyphers reacts poorly. The cyphers are destroyed and an explosion occurs, burning the character for 10 points of damage and all within immediate range for 3 points of damage.
141–199	The character is permanently harmed. Reduce all stat Pool maximums by 5. All cyphers are destroyed.
200	A sentience arises in the cyphers. All cyphers are consumed, forming a device with powers related to the cyphers and a personality that is likely hostile to the PC. (The GM determines the powers and personality.)
201+	A tiny singularity is created that lasts for only a nanosecond, consuming the character and all their equipment, including the cyphers.

ALTERNATIVE CYPHER RULES

Here are some alternative ideas on how to limit cyphers and keep the same spirit of gameplay.

- Give an expiration date to each cypher, citing their instability. However, that requires a lot of bookkeeping.
- Characters who bear more than their cypher limit always act at a disadvantage. All of their tasks are hindered. This method is certainly simple.
- The perils of having too many cyphers could be handled entirely through roleplaying, with characters acting out of caution and outright fear of something they know to be dangerous.

FINDING AND IDENTIFYING CYPHERS

Cyphers are almost always scavenged from appropriate sources, such as out of old machines and machine scrap, functioning or dead installations, integrated machines, workbench supplies of people skilled in crafting numenera, crashed or working vehicles, automatons, or caches of chemicals or other materials. When the PCs come upon an area where scavenging might be possible, they can search (an Intellect action). It's ideal if they can devote at least ten minutes to an hour to exploring and poring over a suitable source with light tools in hand. Typically, being skilled in salvaging numenera eases the search.

Clave, page 12

Intellect, page 22

Cyphers are often found in groups of one to six (the GM can roll 1d6 to determine the number found). You can prepare a list ahead of time of what successful searchers find. Sometimes this list is random, and sometimes there is some logic behind it. For example, the PCs might find four different pills in the same location, which once may have stored pharmaceuticals. The GM sets the difficulty of this task, usually 3 or 4, and scavenging can take ten minutes to an hour. The process often includes manipulating what is found to cobble together something that works. For example, the PCs' search might entail not just finding a device but also figuring out that if they hook it up to a nearby power cell, open a small panel, and fiddle with the workings, they produce the cypher's effect (which might not be the device's original use at all).

Mechanical creatures, such as the disassembler (page 233), are often good sources for cyphers.

Scavenging is not the only way to obtain cyphers. They can also be found amid the belongings of fallen foes, given as gifts, or sometimes even sold in a town by Aeon Priests or explorers.

Aeon Priest, page 264

Once the PCs find a cypher, identifying it is a separate task, also based on Intellect and modified by numenera knowledge.

The random levels for cyphers in this chapter are meant for cyphers the PCs find, buy, or trade for. PCs creating cyphers using the crafting rules decide what level they want their crafted cypher to be.



Crafting, page 117

The GM sets the difficulty of the task, but it is usually 1 or 2. Thus, even the smallest amount of knowledge (such as being trained or specialized in understanding numenera) means that cypher identification is automatic. The process takes one to ten minutes. If the PCs can't identify a cypher, they can bring it to an Aeon Priest clave for identification and perhaps trade, if desired.

A character can attempt to use a cypher that is not identified; this is usually an Intellect task using the cypher's level. Failure might mean that the PC can't figure out how to use the cypher or that they use it incorrectly (GM's discretion). Of course, even if the PC uses the unidentified cypher correctly, they have no idea what its effect will be.

Identified cyphers can be used automatically. Once a cypher is activated, if it has an ongoing effect, that effect applies only to the character who activated the cypher. A PC can't activate a cypher and then hand it to another character to reap the benefits.

USING CYPHERS

If a character uses a cypher, the action to use it is Intellect based unless otherwise described or logic suggests otherwise. For example, throwing a detonation might be Speed based because the device is physical and not really technical, but using a ray emitter is Intellect based.

Speed, page 22

Spray, page 33

Arc Spray, page 34

Glaive, page 28

Jack, page 44

Since cyphers are single-use items, cyphers used to make attacks can never be used with the Spray or Arc Spray abilities that some Glaives and Jacks have. They are never "rapid-fire weapons."

CYPHER FORMS

All cyphers have a level. They have different forms based on three types: internal, wearable, and usable. Internal cyphers are things you ingest or inject. Wearable cyphers are articles of clothing, jewelry, or other things you wear on your physical body. Usable cyphers are basically anything else.

Most cyphers can exist in more than one form, but all forms work the same way. For example, an antivenom can be found in the form of a pill, an ingestible liquid, or an injector. GMs can choose a form for flavor or roll randomly. If a cypher form is not listed, the cypher only rarely comes in that form. However, nothing is impossible. If the GM wants a pill that allows anyone swallowing it to teleport, then it exists.

CYPHER LIST

When giving cyphers to characters, either choose from this table or roll d100 for random cyphers.

01	Adhesion clamps
02	Antivenom
03	Attractor
04	Banishing nodule
05	Blinking nodule
06	Catholicon
07	Catseye
08	Chemical factory
09	Comprehension graft
10	Controlled blinking nodule
11	Datasphere siphon
12	Density nodule
13	Detonation
14	Detonation (desiccating)
15	Detonation (flash)
16	Detonation (gravity)
17	Detonation (massive)
18	Detonation (matter disruption)
19	Detonation (pressure)
20	Detonation (singularity)
21	Detonation (sonic)
22	Detonation (spawn)
23	Detonation (web)
24	Disrupting nodule
25	Eagleseye
26	Fireproofing spray
27	Flame-retardant wall
28	Force cube projector
29	Force nodule
30	Force screen projector
31	Force shield projector
32	Friction-reducing gel
33	Frigid wall projector
34	Gas bomb
35	Gravity nullifier
36	Gravity-nullifying spray
37	Heat nodule
38	Hunter/seeker
39	Image projector
40	Inferno wall projector
41	Infiltrator
42	Instant servant
43	Instant shelter
44	Intellect enhancement
45	Invisibility nodule
46	Knowledge enhancement
47	Lightning wall projector
48	Living solvent
49	Machine control implant
50	Magnetic attack drill
51	Magnetic master
52	Magnetic shield
53	Memory lenses
54	Mental scrambler
55	Metal death
56	Monoblade
57	Motion sensor
58	Personal environment field
59	Phase changer
60	Phase disruptor
61	Poison (emotion)
62	Poison (explosive)
63	Poison (mind-controlling)
64	Poison (mind-disrupting)
65	Psychic communique
66	Ray emitter
67	Ray emitter (numbing)
68	Ray emitter (paralysis)
69	Reality spike
70–71	Rejuvenator
72	Remote viewer
73	Repair unit
74	Retaliation nodule
75	Sheen
76	Shock nodule
77	Shocker
78	Skill boost
79	Sleep inducer
80	Sonic hole
81	Sound dampener
82	Spatial warp
83	Speed boost
84–85	Stim
86	Strength boost
87	Subdual field
88	Telepathy implant
89	Teleporter (bounder)
90	Teleporter (traveler)
91	Temporal viewer
92	Time dilation nodule (defensive)
93	Time dilation nodule (offensive)
94	Tracer
95	Visage changer
96	Visual displacement device
97	Vocal translator
98	Warmth projector
99	Water breather
00	X-ray viewer

GMs should not be afraid to generate cyphers randomly. Sometimes giving a character something no one expected leads to the most interesting situations.

Cyphers are meant to be used regularly and often. If you find players are hoarding or saving their cyphers, feel free to give them reason to pull the devices out and put them into play.



Defense, page 119

A SELECTION OF NINTH WORLD CYPHERS

ADHESION CLAMPS
Level: 1d6
Wearable: Gloves
Usable: Handles with powerful suction cups
Effect: Allows for automatic climbing of any surface, even horizontal ones. Lasts for ten minutes per cypher level.

Every great while, cyphers produce additional effects that develop later. For instance, certain detonations explode, but also seed oases.

ANTIVENOM
Level: 1d6 + 2
Internal: Pill, ingestible liquid
Usable: Injector
Effect: Renders user immune to poisons of the same level or lower for one hour per cypher level and ends any such ongoing effects, if any, already in the user's system.

ATTRACTOR
Level: 1d6 + 4
Wearable: Glove of synth
Usable: Small handheld device
Effect: One unanchored item your size or smaller within long range (very long range if the cypher is level 8 or higher) is drawn immediately to the device. This takes one round. The item has no momentum when it arrives.

The aldeia of Wraval was plagued by something the residents called a vampire, murdering people and draining their blood. But when Terra managed to cut it, she saw that it was actually a being of metal and synth. It has not been seen since.

BANISHING NODULE
Level: 1d6
Usable: Crystal nodule affixed to a melee weapon
Effect: For the next 28 hours, each time the weapon the nodule is attached to strikes a solid creature or object, it generates a burst of energy that teleports the creature or object struck an immediate distance in a random direction (not up or down). The teleported creature's actions (including defense) are hindered on its next turn (hindered by two steps if the cypher is level 5 or higher).

BLINKING NODULE
Level: 1d6
Usable: Crystal nodule affixed to armor
Effect: For the next 28 hours, each time (but not more than once per round) the wearer of the armor the nodule is attached to is struck hard enough to inflict damage, they teleport an immediate distance in a random direction (not up or down). Since the wearer is prepared for this effect and their foe is not, the wearer's defenses are eased for one round after they teleport (eased by two steps if the cypher is level 5 or higher).

CATHOLICON
Level: 1d6 + 2
Internal: Pill, ingestible liquid
Usable: Injector
Effect: Cures any disease of the cypher level or lower.

CATSEYE
Level: 1d6
Internal: Pill, ingestible liquid
Usable: Injector
Effect: Grants the ability to see in the dark for five hours per cypher level.

CHEMICAL FACTORY
Level: 1d6
Internal: Pill, ingestible liquid
Usable: Injector
Effect: After one hour, the sweat of the user produces 1d6 doses of a valuable liquid (these doses are not considered cyphers). They must be used within one week. Effects vary:

01–04	Euphoric for 1d6 hours
05–08	Hallucinogenic for 1d6 hours
09–12	Stimulant for 1d6 hours
13–16	Depressant for 1d6 hours
17–20	Nutrient supplement
21–25	Antivenom
26–30	Cures disease
31–35	See in the dark for one hour
36–45	Restores a number of Might Pool points equal to cypher level
46–55	Restores a number of Speed Pool points equal to cypher level
56–65	Restores a number of Intellect Pool points equal to cypher level
66–75	Increases Might Edge by 1 for one hour
76–85	Increases Speed Edge by 1 for one hour
86–95	Increases Intellect Edge by 1 for one hour
96–00	Restores all Pools to full

COMPREHENSION GRAFT
Level: 1d6 + 1
Usable: Small metallic disk
Effect: When applied to a creature's head, the disk immediately unleashes microfilaments that enter the brain. Within five minutes, the creature can understand the words of a specific language keyed to the graft (two languages if the cypher is level 5 or higher). This is true even of creatures that do not normally have a language. If the creature could already understand the language, the cypher has no effect. Once the graft attaches, the effect is permanent, and this device no longer counts against the number of cyphers that a PC can bear.

CONTROLLED BLINKING NODULE
Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable: Crystal nodule affixed to armor
Effect: For the next 28 hours, each time the wearer of the armor the nodule is attached to is struck hard enough to inflict damage (but no more than once per round), they teleport to a spot they desire within immediate range. Since the wearer is prepared for this effect and their foe is not, the wearer's defenses are eased for one round after they teleport (eased by two steps if the cypher is level 6 or higher).

DATASPHERE SIPHON
Level: 1d6
Internal: Pill, ingestible liquid
Wearable: Temporary tattoo, amulet, headband, crystal worn on temple
Usable: Small handheld device, crystal
Effect: Tapping into the datasphere's knowledge, the user can learn the answer to one question (two questions if the cypher is level 4 or higher, three questions if the cypher is level 6 or higher).

DENSITY NODULE
Level: 1d6
Usable: Crystal nodule affixed to a melee weapon
Effect: For the next 28 hours, each time the weapon the nodule is attached to strikes a solid creature or object, the weapon suddenly increases dramatically in weight, causing the blow to inflict an additional 2 points of damage (3 points if the cypher is level 4 or higher).

DETONATION
Level: 1d6 + 2
Wearable: Wristband projector (long range)
Usable: Explosive device (thrown, short range) or handheld projector (long range)
Effect: Explodes in an immediate radius, inflicting damage equal to the cypher level. Roll for the type of damage:

01–10	Cell-disrupting (harms only flesh)
11–30	Corrosive
31–40	Electrical discharge
41–50	Heat drain (cold)
51–75	Fire
76–00	Shrapnel

DETONATION (DESICCATING)
Level: 1d6 + 2
Wearable: Wristband projector (long range)
Usable: Explosive device or ceramic sphere (thrown, short range) or handheld projector (long range)
Effect: Bursts in an immediate radius, draining moisture from everything within it. Living creatures take damage equal to the cypher level. Water in the area is vaporized.

DETONATION (FLASH)
Level: 1d6 + 2
Wearable: Wristband projector (long range)
Usable: Explosive device or ceramic sphere (thrown, short range) or handheld projector (long range)
Effect: Bursts in an immediate radius, blinding all within it for one minute (ten minutes if the cypher is level 4 or higher).

DETONATION (GRAVITY)
Level: 1d6 + 2
Wearable: Wristband projector (long range)
Usable: Explosive device or ceramic sphere (thrown, short range) or handheld projector (long range)
Effect: Bursts in an immediate radius, inflicting damage equal to the cypher level by increasing gravity tremendously for one second. All in the area are crushed to the ground for one round and cannot take physical actions.

Although comprehension grafts are useful for ambassadors, diplomats, and travelers, the cyphers are truly coveted by beast trainers all over the Ninth World.

Rumors speak of a fortress-city in the Beyond that has its own language and allows none other to be spoken. Those rare few allowed within its walls are forcibly given comprehension grafts produced in the city.

Immediate distance, page 106

All damaging detonations inflict a minimum of 2 points of damage to those in the radius, regardless of attack or defense rolls.

Datasphere, page 355



LOOKING FOR

Bonded, cobbled, fashioned, and scavenged device, page 271



The bark of a triangular tree at the top of the Black Riage leaks a viscous oil that erodes skin, but sometimes recharges cyphers.

The singularity detonation is a greatly feared device, sought by those interested in truly horrific destruction.

Rather than strands of sticky goo, some web detonations fill the area with a mass of quick-hardening foam that accomplishes the same thing.

DETONATION (MASSIVE)

Level: 1d6 + 2
Wearable: Wristband projector (very long range)
Usable: Handheld projector (very long range)
Effect: Explodes in a short-range radius, inflicting damage equal to the cypher level. Roll for the type of damage:

01–10	Cell-disrupting (harms only flesh)
11–30	Corrosive
31–40	Electrical discharge
41–50	Heat drain (cold)
51–75	Fire
76–00	Shrapnel

DETONATION (MATTER DISRUPTION)

Level: 1d6 + 4
Wearable: Wristband projector (long range)
Usable: Explosive device or ceramic sphere (thrown, short range) or handheld projector (long range)
Effect: Explodes in an immediate radius, releasing nanites that rearrange matter in random ways. Inflicts damage equal to the cypher level.

DETONATION (PRESSURE)

Level: 1d6 + 2
Wearable: Wristband projector (long range)
Usable: Explosive device (thrown, short range) or handheld projector (long range)
Effect: Explodes in an immediate radius, inflicting impact damage equal to the cypher level. Also moves unattended objects out of the area if they weigh less than 20 pounds (9 kg) per cypher level.

DETONATION (SINGULARITY)

Level: 10
Usable: Explosive device or ceramic sphere (thrown, short range) or handheld projector (long range)
Effect: Explodes and creates a momentary singularity that tears at the fabric of the universe. Inflicts 20 points of damage to all within short range, drawing them (or their remains) together to immediate range (if possible). Player characters in the radius move one step down the damage track if they fail a Might defense roll.

DETONATION (SONIC)

Level: 1d6 + 2
Wearable: Wristband projector (long range)
Usable: Explosive device or ceramic sphere (thrown, short range) or handheld projector (long range)
Effect: Explodes with terrifying sound, deafening all in an immediate radius for ten minutes per cypher level.

DETONATION (SPAWN)

Level: 1d6 + 2
Wearable: Wristband projector (long range)
Usable: Explosive device or ceramic sphere (thrown, short range) or handheld projector (long range)
Effect: Bursts in an immediate radius, blinding all within it for one minute and inflicting damage equal to the cypher level. The burst spawns 1d6 additional detonations; on the next round, each additional detonation flies to a random spot within short range and explodes in an immediate radius. Roll for the type of damage dealt by all detonations:

01–10	Cell-disrupting (harms only flesh)
11–30	Corrosive
31–40	Electrical discharge
41–50	Heat drain (cold)
51–75	Fire
76–00	Shrapnel

DETONATION (WEB)

Level: 1d6 + 2
Wearable: Wristband projector (long range)
Usable: Explosive device (thrown, short range) or handheld projector (long range)
Effect: Explodes in an immediate radius and creates sticky strands of goo that last 1 hour. PCs caught in the area must use a Might-based action to get out, with the difficulty determined by the cypher level. NPCs break free if their level is higher than the cypher level.



LOOKING FOR
Cypher, page 272

DISRUPTING NODULE
Level: 1d6
Usable: Crystal nodule affixed to a melee weapon
Effect: For the next 28 hours, each time the weapon the nodule is attached to strikes a solid creature or object, it generates a burst of nanites that directly attack organic cells. The affected target takes 1 additional point of damage (2 points if the cypher is level 4 or higher, 3 points if the cypher is level 6 or higher) and loses its next action.

EAGLESEYE
Level: 1d6
Internal: Pill, ingestible liquid
Usable: Injector
Effect: Grants the ability to see ten times as far as normal for one hour per cypher level.

FIREPROOFING SPRAY
Level: 1d6 + 4
Usable: Spray canister
Effect: An object sprayed by this cypher has Armor against fire damage equal to the cypher's level for 28 hours.

FLAME-RETARDANT WALL
Level: 1d6
Wearable: Belt, ring, bracelet
Usable: Handheld device
Effect: Creates an immobile plane of permeable energy up to 20 feet by 20 feet (6 m by 6 m) for one hour per cypher level. The plane conforms to the space available. Flames passing through the plane are extinguished.

FORCE CUBE PROJECTOR
Level: 1d6 + 3
Wearable: Belt, ring, bracelet
Usable: Handheld device
Effect: Creates an immobile cube composed of six planes of solid force, each 30 feet (9 m) to a side, for one hour. The planes conform to the space available.

FORCE NODULE
Level: 1d6
Usable: Crystal nodule affixed to armor
Effect: For the next 28 hours, the armor the nodule is attached to is bolstered by a powerful force field, adding 2 to the Armor it provides (adding 3 to the Armor if the cypher is level 5 or higher).



FORCE SCREEN PROJECTOR
Level: 1d6 + 3
Wearable: Belt, ring, bracelet
Usable: Handheld device
Effect: Creates an immobile plane of solid force up to 20 feet by 20 feet (6 m by 6 m) for one hour per cypher level. The plane conforms to the space available.

FORCE SHIELD PROJECTOR
Level: 1d6 + 3
Internal: Subdermal injection
Wearable: Belt, ring, bracelet
Usable: Handheld device
Effect: Creates a shimmering energy shield around the user for one hour, during which time they gain +3 Armor (+4 Armor if the cypher is level 5 or higher).

FRICTION-REDUCING GEL
Level: 1d6
Usable: Spray canister
Effect: Sprayed across an area up to 10 feet (3 m) square, this gel makes things extremely slippery. For one hour per cypher level, movement tasks in the area are hindered by three steps.

FRIGID WALL PROJECTOR
Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable: Complex device
Effect: Creates a wall of supercooled air up to 30 feet by 30 feet by 1 foot (9 m by 9 m by 30 cm) that inflicts damage equal to the cypher level on anything that passes through it. The wall conforms to the space available. It lasts for ten minutes.

Armor, page 109

Despite the fact that the walls are not gaseous permeable, there is likely enough air within the cube created by a force cube projector for trapped creatures to breathe for the hour it lasts.

Some force walls, shields, and cubes are transparent. Others are translucent. A few are opaque.

LOOKING FOR
Cypher danger, page 272

Gravity nullifiers are frequently called flight rings or belts, levitators, or invisible wings. There is an isolated town in the Beyond called Thenerah where they are produced in number (as back-mounted cylinders). The city is built with an extremely vertical mindset, with certain structures inaccessible to someone who cannot fly.

GAS BOMB

Level: 1d6 + 2
Wearable: Wristband projector (long range)
Usable: Explosive device or ceramic sphere (thrown, short range) or handheld projector (long range)
Effect: Bursts in a poisonous cloud within an immediate distance. The cloud lingers for 1d6 rounds unless conditions dictate otherwise. Effects vary:

01–10	Thick smoke: occludes sight while the cloud lasts.
11–20	Choking gas: living creatures that breathe lose their actions to choking and coughing for a number of rounds equal to the cypher level.
21–50	Poison gas: living creatures that breathe suffer damage equal to the cypher level.
51–60	Corrosive gas: everything suffers damage equal to the cypher level.
61–65	Hallucinogenic gas: living creatures that breathe lose their actions to hallucinations and visions for a number of rounds equal to the cypher level.
66–70	Nerve gas: living creatures that breathe suffer Speed damage equal to the cypher level.
71–80	Mind-numbing gas: living creatures that breathe suffer Intellect damage equal to the cypher level.
81–83	Fear gas: living creatures that breathe and think flee in a random direction in fear (or are paralyzed with fear) for a number of rounds equal to the cypher level.
84–86	Amnesia gas: living creatures that breathe and think permanently lose all memory of the last minute.
87–96	Sleep gas: living creatures that breathe fall asleep for a number of rounds equal to the cypher level or until awoken by a violent action or an extremely loud noise.
97–00	Rage gas: living creatures that breathe and think make a melee attack on the nearest creature and continue to do so for a number of rounds equal to the cypher level.

Speed damage, page 109

Intellect damage, page 109

Stunned creatures lose their turn that round.

GRAVITY NULLIFIER

Level: 1d6 + 3
Internal: Subdermal injection
Wearable: Belt, boots, ring, bracelet
Usable: Small platform on which the user must stand
Effect: For one hour, the user can float into the air, moving vertically (but not horizontally without some other action, such as pushing along the ceiling) up to a short distance per round. The user must weigh less than 50 pounds (22 kg) per level of the cypher.

GRAVITY-NULLIFYING SPRAY

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable: Spray canister
Effect: A nonliving object up to the size of a human (two humans if the cypher is level 6 or higher) sprayed by this cypher floats 1d20 feet in the air permanently and no longer has weight if carried, though it needs to be strapped down.

HEAT NODULE

Level: 1d6
Usable: Crystal nodule affixed to a melee weapon
Effect: For the next 28 hours, each time the weapon the nodule is attached to strikes a solid creature or object, it generates a burst of heat, inflicting an additional 2 points of damage (3 points if the cypher is level 4 or higher, 4 points if the cypher is level 6 or higher).

HUNTER/SEEKER

Level: 1d6
Wearable: Arm- or shoulder-mounted launcher
Usable: Complex device, handheld device
Effect: With long-range movement, this intelligent missile tracks and attacks a specified target (target must be within sight when selected). If it misses, it continues to attack one additional time per cypher level until it hits. For example, a level 4 hunter/seeker will attack a maximum of five times. Different hunter/seekers have different effects:

01–50	Inflicts 8 points of damage.
51–80	Bears a poisoned needle that inflicts 3 points of damage plus poison.
81–90	Explodes, inflicting 6 points of damage to all within immediate range.
91–95	Shocks for 4 points of electricity damage, and stuns for one round per cypher level.
96–00	Covers target in sticky goo that immediately hardens, holding them fast until they break out with a Might action (difficulty equal to the cypher level + 2).

IMAGE PROJECTOR

Level: 1d6
Wearable: Headband with device on forehead
Usable: Handheld device with glass panel
Effect: Projects one of the following immobile images in the area described for one hour. The image appears up to a close distance away (long distance if the cypher level is 4 or higher, very long distance if the cypher level is 6 or higher). Scenes include movement, sound, and smell.

01–20	Terrifying creature of an unknown species, perhaps no longer alive in the world (10-foot [3 m] cube)
21–40	Huge machine that obscures sight (30-foot [9 m] cube)
41–50	Beautiful pastoral scene (50-foot [15 m] cube)
51–60	Food that looks delicious but may not be familiar (10-foot [3 m] cube)
61–80	Solid color that obscures sight (50-foot [15 m] cube)
81–00	Incomprehensible scene that is disorienting and strange (20-foot [6 m] cube)

INFERNO WALL PROJECTOR

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable: Complex device
Effect: Creates a wall of extreme heat up to 30 feet by 30 feet by 1 foot (9 m by 9 m by 30 cm) that inflicts damage equal to the cypher level on anything that passes through it. The wall conforms to the space available. It lasts for ten minutes.

INFILTRATOR

Level: 1d6
Internal: Phases into eye, phases out when used
Wearable: Adheres to temple and launches projectile
Usable: Handheld device that launches projectile
Effect: Tiny capsule launches and moves at great speed, mapping and scanning an unknown area. It moves 500 feet (150 m) per level, scanning an area up to 50 feet (15 m) per level away from it. It identifies basic layout, creatures, and major energy sources. Its movement is blocked by any physical or energy barrier.

INSTANT SERVANT

Level: 1d6
Usable: Handheld device
Effect: Small device expands into a humanoid automaton that is roughly 2 feet (60 cm) tall. Its level is equal to the cypher level and it can understand the verbal commands of the character who activates it. Once the servant is activated, commanding it is not an action. It can make attacks or perform actions as ordered to the best of its abilities, but it cannot speak.
The automaton has short-range movement but never goes farther than long range away from the character who activated it. At the GM's discretion, the servant might have specialized knowledge, such as how to operate a particular device. Otherwise, it has no special knowledge. In any case, the servant is not artificially intelligent or capable of initiating action. It does only as commanded.
The servant operates for one hour per cypher level.

INSTANT SHELTER

Level: 1d6 + 3
Usable: Handheld device
Effect: With the addition of water and air, the small device expands into a simple one-room structure with a door and a transparent window (two rooms with an internal door if the cypher is level 7 or higher). The structure is 10 feet by 10 feet by 20 feet (3 m by 3 m by 6 m). It is made from a form of shapestone and is permanent and immobile once created.

INTELLECT ENHANCEMENT

Level: 1d6 + 2
Internal: Pill, ingestible liquid
Wearable: Adhesive patch that activates when slapped
Usable: Injector
Effect: Substance adds 1 to Intellect Edge for one hour (or adds 2 if the cypher is level 5 or higher).

INVISIBILITY NODULE

Level: 1d6
Usable: Crystal nodule affixed to armor
Effect: For the next ten hours per cypher level, the armor the nodule is attached to is invisible, making the wearer appear to be unarmored.

"You are not allowed to enter these woods," the automaton intones, pointing behind it. But there are never any woods to be seen.



Shapestone, page 93

Intellect Edge, page 23

LOOKING FOR
Cypher list, page 275

KNOWLEDGE ENHANCEMENT

Level: 1d6
Internal: Pill, ingestible liquid
Wearable: Adhesive patch that activates when slapped
Usable: Injector
Effect: For the next 28 hours, the character has training in a predetermined skill (or two skills if the cypher is level 5 or higher). Although the skill could be anything (including something specific to the operation of one device or something similar), common skills include:

01–10	Melee attacks
11–20	Ranged attacks
21–40	Understanding numenera (sometimes specific to one device)
41–50	Repairing (sometimes specific to one device)
51–60	Crafting (usually specific to one thing)
61–70	Persuasion
71–75	Healing
76–80	Speed defense
81–85	Intellect defense
86–90	Swimming
91–95	Riding
96–00	Sneaking

It's easy to get addicted to the quick hit of training that comes from knowledge enhancement cyphers. Characters who rely on them too often may find themselves at a disadvantage when they run out, presenting a great opportunity for GM intrusion.

LIGHTNING WALL PROJECTOR

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable: Complex device
Effect: Creates a wall of electric bolts up to 30 feet by 30 feet by 1 foot (9 m by 9 m by 30 cm) that inflicts damage equal to the cypher level on anything that passes through it. The wall conforms to the space available. It lasts for ten minutes.

"Did you know there are only three known monofilament repulsion fields that shimmer with blue energy? The rest are green."
~Sir Arthour

LIVING SOLVENT

Level: 1d10
Usable: Canister containing slime
Effect: Once released, this organic slime dissolves 1 cubic foot of material each round. After one round per cypher level, the slime dies and becomes inert.



LOOKING FOR
Catholicon, page 276

MACHINE CONTROL IMPLANT

Level: 1d6 + 2
Internal: Pill
Wearable: Disk that adheres to forehead, temporary tattoo
Usable: Injector
Effect: When activated, the cypher splits into two pieces. One is affixed to a numenera device and the other to a character. The character can then use their mind to control the device at long range, bidding it to do anything it could do normally. Thus, a device could be activated or deactivated, and a vehicle could be piloted. The control lasts for ten minutes per cypher level, and once the device is chosen, it cannot be changed.

MAGNETIC ATTACK DRILL

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable: Small sphere with a thick screw protrusion
Effect: The user throws this cypher at a target within short range, and it drills into the target for one round, inflicting damage equal to the cypher level. If the target is made of metal or wearing metal (such as armor), the attack is eased.

MAGNETIC MASTER

Level: 1d6 + 2
Wearable: Gloves with metal plates
Usable: Small pyramid-shaped metallic device
Effect: Establishes a connection with one metal object within short range that a human could hold in one hand. After this connection is established, the user can move or manipulate the object anywhere within short range (each movement or manipulation is an action). For example, the user could wield a weapon or drag a helm affixed to a foe's head to and fro. The connection lasts for ten rounds per cypher level.

MAGNETIC SHIELD

Level: 1d6 + 2
Wearable: Gloves with metal plates
Usable: Small pyramid-shaped metallic device
Effect: For ten minutes per cypher level, metal objects cannot come within immediate range of the activated device. Metal items already in the area when the device is activated are slowly pushed out.

MEMORY LENSES
Level: 1d6
Wearable: Contact lenses, eyeglasses, or goggles
Effect: Allows the wearer to mentally record everything they see for thirty seconds per cypher level and store the recording permanently in their long-term memory. This cypher is useful for watching someone pick a specific lock, enter a complex code, or do something else that happens quickly.

MENTAL SCRAMBLER
Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable: Complex metal and glass device
Effect: Two rounds after being activated, the device creates an invisible field that fills an area within short range and lasts for one minute. The field scrambles the mental processes of all thinking creatures. The effect lasts as long as they remain in the field and for 1d6 rounds after, although an Intellect defense roll is allowed each round to act normally (both in the field and after leaving it). Each mental scrambler is keyed to a specific effect. Roll for effect:

01–30	Victims cannot act.
31–40	Victims cannot speak.
41–50	Victims move slowly (immediate range) and clumsily.
51–60	Victims cannot see or hear.
61–70	Victims lose all sense of direction, depth, and proportion.
71–80	Victims do not recognize anyone they know.
81–88	Victims suffer partial amnesia.
89–94	Victims suffer total amnesia.
95–98	Victims lose all inhibitions, revealing secrets and performing surprising actions.
99–00	Victims' ethics are inverted.

METAL DEATH
Level: 1d6 + 2
Wearable: Wrist-mounted sprayer
Usable: Canister with hose
Effect: Produces a stream of foam that covers an area about 3 feet by 3 feet (1 m by 1 m), transforming any metal that it touches into a substance as brittle as thin glass. The foam affects metal to a depth of about 6 inches (15 cm).



MONOBLADE
Level: 1d6 + 2
Internal: Injection into fingertip
Wearable: Glove
Usable: Device similar to hilt
Effect: Produces a 6-inch (15 cm) blade that's the same level as the cypher. The blade cuts through any material of a level lower than its own. If used as a weapon, it is a light weapon that ignores Armor of a level lower than its own. The blade lasts for ten minutes.

In the Black Riage, there is an abhuman brute named Chorolus with a monoblade implant in his hand that he can call upon as often as he likes. It's theorized that the blade interacts with his personal physiology somehow, so that if it were ever removed, it would stop working.

MOTION SENSOR
Level: 1d6 + 2
Internal: Injection into spine
Wearable: Amulet
Usable: Disk that can be affixed to the floor or another surface
Effect: Indicates when any movement occurs within short range, or when large creatures or objects move within long range (the cypher distinguishes between the two). It also indicates the number and size of the creatures or objects in motion. Once activated, it operates for one hour per cypher level.

PERSONAL ENVIRONMENT FIELD
Level: 1d6 + 2
Wearable: Belt, medallion, ring
Usable: Handheld device
Effect: Creates an aura of temperature and atmosphere that will sustain a human safely for 28 hours. The aura extends to 1 foot (30 cm) around the user (double that radius if the cypher is level 7 or higher). It does not protect against sudden flashes of temperature change (such as from a heat ray). A small number of these cyphers (1%) accommodate the preferred environment of a nonhuman, nonterrestrial creature.

LOOKING FOR
Datasphere siphon, page 277



The assassin Bledsele specializes in rare numenera poisons that cause her victims to die in strange and spectacular ways, triggered by a word, a kiss, or the sight of a loved one, among other things.

PHASE CHANGER

Level: 1d6 + 1
Wearable: Belt, medallion, ring
Usable: Handheld device
Effect: Puts the user out of phase for one minute (two minutes if the cypher is level 6 or higher). During this time, the user can pass through solid objects as though they were entirely insubstantial, like a ghost. They cannot make physical attacks or be physically attacked.

PHASE DISRUPTOR

Level: 1d6 + 2
Usable: Complex device, plate that affixes to surface, elaborate spray atomizer
Effect: Puts a portion of a physical structure (like a wall or floor) out of phase for one hour. It affects an area equal to one 5-foot (1.5 m) cube per cypher level. While the area is out of phase, creatures and objects can pass freely through it as if it were not there, although one cannot see through it, and it blocks light.

Most poisons are not considered cyphers, but a few are unique enough to be considered such.

POISON (EMOTION)

Level: 1d6 + 2
Internal: Pill, ingestible or injectable liquid
Wearable: Lipstick, false fingertip, ring with needle
Usable: Injector
Effect: The victim feels a specific emotion for one hour.

01–20	Anger. Likely to attack anyone who disagrees with them. Very hard to interact with; all interaction tasks are hindered by two steps.
21–40	Fear. Flees in terror for one minute when threatened.
41–60	Lust. Cannot focus on any nonsexual activity.
61–75	Sadness. All tasks are hindered.
76–85	Complacency. Has no motivation. All tasks are hindered by two steps.
86–95	Joy. Easy to interact with in a pleasant manner; all pleasant interaction tasks are eased.
96–00	Love. Much easier to interact with; all interaction tasks are eased by two steps, but temporary attachment is likely.

LOOKING FOR

Detonation, flash detonation, heat drain detonation cypher, page 277

POISON (EXPLOSIVE)

Level: 1d6 + 1
Internal: Pill, ingestible or injectable liquid
Wearable: Lipstick, false fingertip, ring with needle
Usable: Injector
Effect: Once this substance enters the bloodstream, it travels to the brain and reorganizes into an explosive that detonates when activated, inflicting 10 points of damage (ignoring Armor). Roll to determine the means of detonation:

01–25	The detonator is activated (must be within long range).
26–40	A specified amount of time passes.
41–50	The victim takes a specific action.
51–55	A specific note is sung or played on an instrument within short range.
56–60	The victim smells a specific scent within immediate range.
61–80	The victim comes within long range of the detonator.
81–00	The victim is no longer within long range of the detonator.

POISON (MIND-CONTROLLING)

Level: 1d6 + 2
Internal: Pill, ingestible or injectable liquid
Wearable: Lipstick, false fingertip, ring with needle
Usable: Injector
Effect: The victim must carry out a specific action in response to a specific trigger.

01–20	Lies down for one minute with eyes closed when told to do so.
21–40	Flees in terror for one minute when threatened.
41–60	Answers questions truthfully for one minute.
61–75	Attacks close friend for one round when within immediate range.
76–85	Obeys next verbal command given (if it is understood).
86–95	For 28 hours, becomes sexually attracted to the next creature of its own species that it sees.
96–00	For one minute, moves toward the next red object seen in lieu of all other actions, even ignoring self-preservation.

POISON (MIND-DISRUPTING)

Level: 1d6 + 2
Internal: Pill, ingestible or injectable liquid
Wearable: Lipstick, false fingertip, ring with needle
Usable: Injector
Effect: The victim suffers Intellect damage equal to the cypher's level and cannot take actions for a number of rounds equal to the cypher's level.

PSYCHIC COMMUNIQUE

Level: 1d6 + 2
Internal: Pill
Wearable: Device that adheres to temple
Usable: Metallic disk
Effect: Allows the user to project a one-time, one-way telepathic message of up to ten words per cypher level, with an unlimited range, to anyone they know.

RAY EMITTER

Level: 1d6 + 2
Internal: Subdermal implant
Wearable: Contact lens, glove, ring, wristband, headband, belt buckle, shoulder-mounted device
Usable: Handheld device
Effect: Allows the user to project a ray of destructive energy up to very long range that inflicts damage equal to the cypher's level.

01–50	Heat/concentrated light
51–60	Cell-disrupting radiation
61–80	Force
81–87	Magnetic wave
88–93	Molecular bond disruption
94–00	Concentrated cold

RAY EMITTER (NUMBING)

Level: 1d6 + 2
Internal: Subdermal implant
Wearable: Contact lens, glove, ring, wristband, headband, belt buckle, shoulder-mounted device
Usable: Handheld device
Effect: Allows the user to project a ray of energy up to long range (very long range if the cypher is level 6 or higher) that numbs one limb of the target, making it useless for one minute. A small number of these devices (5%) induce numbing that lasts for one hour.

RAY EMITTER (PARALYSIS)

Level: 1d6 + 2
Internal: Subdermal implant
Wearable: Contact lens, glove, ring, wristband, headband, belt buckle, shoulder-mounted device
Usable: Handheld device
Effect: Allows the user to project a ray of energy up to very long range that paralyzes the target for one minute. A small number of these devices (5%) induce paralysis that lasts for one hour.

REALITY SPIKE

Level: 1d6 + 4
Usable: Metallic spike
Effect: Once activated, the spike does not move—ever—even if activated in midair. A Might action will dislodge the spike, but then it is ruined.

Even weirder ray emitters:

- *Turns target inside out*
- *Inflicts damage and turns flesh blue*
- *Renders target mute*
- *Only damages plants*
- *Only damages inorganic matter*
- *Turns flesh to dead, stone-like material*

LOOKING FOR

Detonation (spawn) and detonation (web) cypher, page 278
Disrupting nodule, page 279
Eagleseye, page 279
Singularity detonation, page 278



REJUVENATOR
Level: 1d6 + 2
Internal: Pill, ingestible liquid
Wearable: Adhesive patch that activates when slapped
Usable: Injector
Effect: Substance restores a number of points equal to the cypher's level to one random Pool. Roll 1d100:

01–50	Might Pool
51–75	Speed Pool
76–00	Intellect Pool

Recovery roll, page 111

Sometimes when a weapon-based nodule is found, it is already attached to a weapon or an object that can be used as a weapon. A metal rod with a shock nodule attached could be used as an effective club or mace with a shock capability.

REMOTE VIEWER
Level: 1d6
Usable: Device that splits into two parts when activated, one with a glass screen
Effect: For one hour per cypher level, the glass screen on one part shows everything going on in the vicinity of the other part, regardless of the distance between the two parts.

REPAIR UNIT
Level: 1d10
Wearable: Shoulder- or arm-mounted launcher, belt-mounted device
Usable: Handheld device
Effect: Device becomes a multiarmed sphere that floats. It repairs one designated numenera device (of a level equal to or less than its own) that has been damaged but not destroyed. The repair unit can even create spare parts, unless the GM rules that the parts are too specialized or rare (in which case, the unit repairs the device entirely except for the specialized part). Repair time is 1d100 + 20 minutes.

LOOKING FOR
Force shield projector, page 279
Friction-reducing gel, page 279
Frigid wall projector, page 279

RETALIATION NODULE
Level: 1d6
Usable: Crystal nodule affixed to armor
Effect: For the next 28 hours, anyone striking the armor the nodule is attached to triggers a small burst of electricity that inflicts 1 point of damage (2 points if the cypher is level 4 or higher, 3 points if the cypher is level 6 or higher). No action or roll is required by the armor's wearer.



SHEEN
Level: 1d6
Internal: Pill, ingestible liquid
Usable: Injector
Effect: For one week, the user's cells are coated with a protective veneer that resists damage (+1 to Armor, or +2 to Armor if the cypher is level 5 or higher) and eases Might defense rolls by two steps. However, healing is more difficult during this time; all recovery rolls suffer a –1 penalty.

SHOCK NODULE
Level: 1d6
Usable: Crystal nodule affixed to a melee weapon
Effect: For the next 28 hours, each time the weapon the nodule is attached to strikes a solid creature or object, it generates a burst of electricity, inflicting 1 additional point of damage (2 points if the cypher is level 4 or higher, 3 points if the cypher is level 6 or higher).

SHOCKER
Level: 1d6 + 4
Internal: Subdermal implant
Wearable: Ring, palm disk
Usable: Short rod
Effect: Delivers a powerful burst of electricity that shocks any creature touched, inflicting damage equal to the cypher's level.

SKILL BOOST
Level: 1d6
Internal: Pill, ingestible liquid
Usable: Injector
Effect: Dramatically but temporarily alters the user's mind and body so that one specific physical action they can perform is eased by three steps. Once activated, this boost can be used a number of times equal to the cypher's level, but only within a 28-hour period. The boost takes effect each time the action is performed, so a level 3 cypher boosts the first three times the action is attempted. The action can be one of a number of possibilities:

01–15	Melee attack
16–30	Ranged attack
31–40	Speed defense
41–50	Might defense
51–60	Intellect defense
61–68	Jumping
69–76	Climbing
77–84	Running
85–92	Swimming
93–94	Sneaking
95–96	Balancing
97–98	Perceiving
99	Carrying
00	Escaping

SLEEP INDUCER
Level: 1d6
Internal: Pill, ingestible liquid
Wearable: Fingertip cusp, ring, glove
Usable: Injector, gas sprayer
Effect: Touch or ingestion puts the victim to sleep for ten minutes or until awoken by a violent action or an extremely loud noise.

SONIC HOLE
Level: 1d6 + 2
Wearable: Wristband, ring, belt-mounted device
Usable: Small handheld device
Effect: Draws all sound within long range into the device for one round per cypher level. Within the affected area, no sound can be heard.

Sonic holes are much-loved by thieves everywhere but can also be used for less nefarious purposes, such as hunting prey and sneaking by enemies.

SOUND DAMPENER
Level: 1d6 + 2
Internal: Implant
Wearable: Wristband, ring, belt-mounted device, boots
Usable: Small handheld device
Effect: Dampens all sound within immediate range for one minute per cypher level, providing an asset for all creatures in the area to attempt stealthy actions.

SPATIAL WARP
Level: 5
Usable: Small metal ring
Effect: When affixed to another numenera device that affects a single target at range, that range is increased to 1 mile (1.5 km) with no penalties. Space is temporarily warped in terms of seeing and reaching the target. If direct line of sight is important to the device's effect, it remains important. Creating the spatial warp functions as one use of the device.

SPEED BOOST
Level: 1d6 + 2
Internal: Pill, ingestible liquid
Wearable: Adhesive patch that activates when slapped
Usable: Injector
Effect: Substance adds 1 to Speed Edge for one hour (or adds 2 if the cypher is level 5 or higher).

Speed Edge, page 23

STIM
Level: 6
Internal: Pill, ingestible liquid
Usable: Injector
Effect: Eases the next action taken by three steps.

STRENGTH BOOST
Level: 1d6 + 2
Internal: Pill, ingestible liquid
Wearable: Adhesive patch that activates when slapped
Usable: Injector
Effect: Substance adds 1 to Might Edge for one hour (or adds 2 if the cypher is level 5 or higher).

Might Edge, page 23

SUBDUAL FIELD
Level: 1d6 + 3
Usable: Complex device
Effect: Two rounds after being activated, the device creates an invisible field that fills a specified area (such as a cube of a certain size) within long range of the device. The field lasts for one minute. It affects the minds of thinking beings within the field, preventing them from taking hostile actions. The effect lasts as long as they remain in the field and for 1d6 rounds after, although an Intellect defense roll is allowed each round to act normally (both in the field and after leaving it).

Flocks of metallic spheres sometimes appear out of the east and take small bites from built structures, devices, and people.

TELEPATHY IMPLANT
Level: 1d6 + 2
Internal: Pill
Wearable: Disk that adheres to forehead, temporary tattoo
Usable: Injector
Effect: The user activates the device and targets one creature within close range. For one hour per cypher level, the device enables two-way long-range mental communication between the user and the target. This lasts for one hour per cypher level. Sometimes multiple cyphers of this type are found together and allow communication between all of them.

TELEPORTER (BOUNDER)
Level: 1d6 + 2
Wearable: Belt, wristband, ring, full bodysuit
Usable: Complex device, handheld device
Effect: User teleports up to 100 × the cypher level in feet (30 × cypher level in m) to a location they can see. They arrive safely with their possessions but cannot take anything else with them.

Very rare teleporters can send one or more characters thousands of miles, or even millions of miles.

LOOKING FOR

Gravity nullifier, page 280
Hunter/seeker, page 280



The people of Druissi bake small, flat, tasty treats using heat from ancient wreckage. Every now and then, a cypher results.

TELEPORTER (TRAVELER)
Level: 1d6 + 4
Wearable: Belt, wristband, ring, full bodysuit
Usable: Complex device, handheld device
Effect: User teleports up to 100 × the cypher level in miles (160 x the cypher level in km) to a location they have previously visited. They arrive safely with their possessions but cannot take anything else with them.

TEMPORAL VIEWER
Level: 1d6 + 4
Wearable: Wristband
Usable: Complex device, handheld device
Effect: Displays moving images and sound, up to ten minutes per cypher level in length, depicting events that occurred at the current location up to one year prior. The user specifies the time period shown by the viewer.

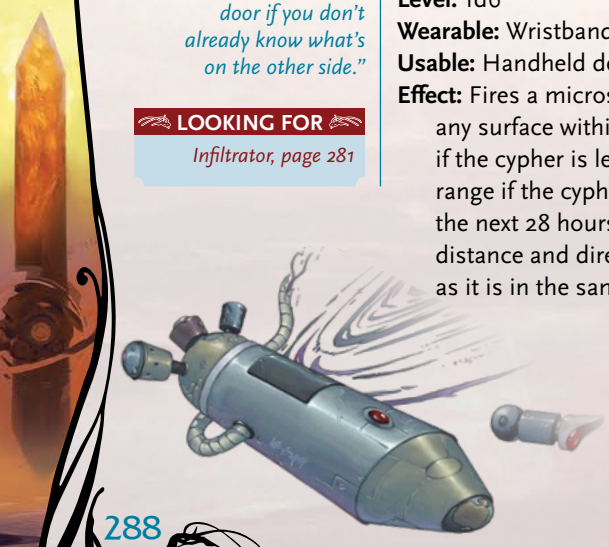
TIME DILATION NODULE (DEFENSIVE)
Level: 1d6
Usable: Crystal nodule affixed to armor
Effect: For the next 28 hours, the wearer of the armor moves in seemingly random, rapid jumps, a few inches to one side or the other, when attacked. This is an asset that eases attacks by two steps (three steps if the cypher is level 6 or higher).

TIME DILATION NODULE (OFFENSIVE)
Level: 1d6
Usable: Crystal nodule affixed to a melee weapon
Effect: For the next 28 hours, the attacker moves at almost instantaneous speeds when they swing the weapon, easing their attacks by two steps (three steps if the cypher is level 6 or higher).

Master thief Hadronus Rell likes to use x-ray viewers in his work. "Never open a locked door if you don't already know what's on the other side."

TRACER
Level: 1d6
Wearable: Wristband
Usable: Handheld device
Effect: Fires a microscopic tracer that clings to any surface within short range (long range if the cypher is level 4 or higher, very long range if the cypher is level 6 or higher). For the next 28 hours, the launcher shows the distance and direction to the tracer, as long as it is in the same dimension.

LOOKING FOR
Infiltrator, page 281



VISAGE CHANGER
Level: 1d6
Internal: Pill or injection that produces temporary subdermal, malleable implants
Usable: Tube of moldable paste
Effect: Changes the appearance of one human-sized creature, providing an asset to disguise tasks (easing them by two steps if the cypher is level 5 or higher). The change takes ten minutes to apply and lasts for 28 hours.

VISUAL DISPLACEMENT DEVICE
Level: 1d6
Wearable: Belt or bracelet
Usable: Handheld device
Effect: Projects holographic images of the wearer to confuse attackers. The images appear around the wearer. This gives the wearer an asset to Speed defense actions for ten minutes per cypher level.

VOCAL TRANSLATOR
Level: 1d6
Internal: Pill, ingestible liquid
Wearable: Headband
Usable: Disk that must be held to forehead
Effect: Translates everything said by the user into a language that anyone can understand for 28 hours per cypher level.

WARMTH PROJECTOR
Level: 1d6
Internal: Subdermal implant
Wearable: Bodysuit, belt
Usable: Injector
Effect: Keeps the user warm and comfortable in the harshest cold temperatures for 28 hours. During this time, the user has Armor equal to the cypher level that protects against cold damage.

WATER BREATHER
Level: 1d6
Internal: Pill, ingestible liquid
Usable: Injector
Effect: Allows an air breather to extract oxygen from water for five hours per cypher level so they can breathe underwater.

X-RAY VIEWER
Level: 1d6 + 4
Usable: Glass panel
Effect: When held up against a solid surface, this panel allows the user to see through up to 2 feet (60 cm) of material. The panel works only if the cypher's level is higher than the material's level. The effect lasts for one minute per cypher level.



CHAPTER 18

ARTIFACTS

Artifacts are the tech devices left over from the civilizations of the past. These are devices of a more permanent nature (unless they run out of power) with more straightforward applications—weapons, armor, utility items, and so on. Still, they are rarely straightforward in actual use. Rather than find a device that was meant to be used as a "gun," the PCs are far more likely to find an item that was originally intended for another purpose but that has been modified (as best as Ninth World understanding can manage) and now can be used as a ranged weapon. Given the right tools and parts, some characters will be able to construct such items on their own.

Remember that artifacts are incomprehensible devices, as likely as not powered by transdimensional siphons using nanotechnology to rewrite reality on an atomic or subatomic level. Even to someone who understands a great deal about technology, most artifacts appear to be more magic than machine.

All artifacts have a level. Unlike cyphers, each has a unique form. They also have a rate of power depletion. When an artifact is used or activated, the player rolls the designated die (1d6, 1d10, 1d20, or 1d100). If the die shows the depletion number(s), the item works, but that is its last use. A depletion entry of "—" means that the artifact never depletes, and an entry of "automatic" means that it can be used only once.

Depowered artifacts can sometimes be recharged using the repair rules. The focus Rides the Lightning and other special abilities can also repower an expended item, but probably for only one use.

FINDING, IDENTIFYING, AND USING ARTIFACTS

Artifacts are sometimes found in old ruins, either intact or in need of manipulation to get them working. They are usually found alone rather than in multiples. When the PCs come upon an area where scavenging might be possible, they can search (an Intellect action). Typically, being skilled in understanding numenera reduces the difficulty of this search. The GM sets the difficulty for the task, but it is usually 3 or 4, and scavenging can take ten minutes to an hour. The process often includes manipulating what is found to cobble together something that works. For example, the search might involve removing the artifact from a larger machine and modifying it to work on its own for the task. In this case, the artifact is already identified—finding it amid the workings of a larger device includes identification.

Scavenging is not the only way to get artifacts. They can also be granted as rewards or taken from fallen foes. Sometimes they can even be bought in towns, but this occurs more rarely than most PCs would probably like.

Once the characters find an artifact, identifying it is usually a separate task, also based on Intellect and modified by skill in understanding numenera. The GM sets the difficulty of the task, but it is usually equal to the level of the artifact. It takes fifteen minutes to three hours. If the PCs can't identify an artifact, they can bring it to an Aeon Priest clave to be identified or, if desired, traded.

A character can attempt to use an artifact that is not identified, but this is usually an Intellect task using the artifact's level + 2. Failure might mean that the PC can't figure out how to use the artifact or that they use it incorrectly (GM's discretion). Of course, even if the character uses the unidentified artifact correctly, they will have no idea what the effect will be.

Even if an artifact has been identified, using it still requires an Intellect action—at least for the first use. Using an artifact is generally far more complex than pushing a button. It can involve crossing wires, pulling at mechanisms, and manipulating touchscreens with symbols that mean little to a Ninth World character. The GM sets the difficulty of the task, but it is usually equal to the level of the artifact.

Most of the time, using an artifact is one action. Unless otherwise specified in the text or suggested by logic, the action is Intellect based.

Intellect, page 22

Skilled in understanding numenera, page 27

Cypher, page 272

Aeon Priest, page 264

Clave, page 12

Repair rules, page 120

Rides the Lightning, page 83

LOOKING FOR

Living solvent, page 282
Machine control implant, page 282

ARTIFACT QUIRKS

Artifacts often aren't entirely what they seem. An item that functions like a weapon in the PC's hands once might have been a part of a very different device with a very different purpose. Another artifact might be a cobbled-together mess of various parts, created by a less-than-perfect Nano or technician. Thus, sometimes artifacts don't do what is expected, or they do something in addition to their desired function. These are artifact quirks.

Quirks might be a requirement for activation. They could be side effects that happen all the time with the artifact, either continuously or each time it is activated. They might also be something that happens occasionally—for example, quirks could be a good use of GM intrusion.

GM intrusion, page 123

LIST OF ARTIFACT QUIRKS

01–06	Activated by sound (user must hum, whistle, sing, or speak in a specific way)
07–10	Activated only in complete darkness
11–14	Activated only in direct sunlight
15–17	Activated only when user is in correct frame of mind
18–20	Activated only in a certain temperature
21–23	Activated by application or insertion of special substance (water, saliva, sand, plant matter, ice, blood, flesh, paper, synth, metal)
24–27	Creates a terrible smell
28–32	Creates annoying black smoke
33–36	Produces an oily residue
37–39	Makes a strange sound
40–42	Makes a very loud sound
43–46	Creates a bright flash
47–48	Produces a strange hologram along with the effect
49–50	Produces strange telepathic sendings along with the effect
51–54	Creates a small electric shock (no damage)
55–56	Creates a major electric shock (2 points of damage)
57–60	Gets annoyingly warm
61–62	Gets dangerously warm (2 points of damage)
63–66	Drains heat around it
67–68	Drastically drains heat around it (2 points of damage within immediate range)
69–70	Drains mental energy (2 points of Intellect damage)
71–74	Causes animals to flee from it
75–77	Attracts animals to it
78–81	Once it functions, cannot be used again for an hour while it recharges
82–85	Produces a rash or lesions on the user's flesh
86–89	Sickens user (all tasks hindered for one minute)
90–94	Frequently breaks down (one time out of every six uses), requiring one minute of repair time
95–99	Creates any variety of strange effects due to a reality-warping nature (roll each time, taking only results that make sense)
00	Takes over user's mind for one round; user stands still and speaks gibberish

Some creatures, such as the abykos (page 224), can destroy an artifact with a single touch.

LOOKING FOR

Magnetic master, page 282
Magnetic shield, page 282



ARTIFACTS TABLE

When giving an artifact to a character, either choose from this table or roll d100 for a random artifact.

01	Amber casement
02	Amulet of safety
03	Analyzing shield
04	Armored flesh
05	Automated cook
06–07	Battle armor
08	Battlesuit
09	Bounding boots
10	Brain bud
11	Carryall
12–13	Cellular disruptor
14–15	Chameleon cloak
16	Chiurgeon sphere
17	Cohesion stabilizer
18–19	Cypher bag
20	Dimensional armor
21–22	Disruption blade
23	Drill spear
24	Ecstasy paralyzer
25–26	Exploding arrow
27	Fearmaker
28	Fiery hellmaker
29	Filtration straw
30	Food scanner
31–32	Food tube
33	Force dome
34	Healing sword
35	Hoop staff
36–37	Hover belt
38	Hover square
39–40	Imager
41	Instant bridge
42–43	Kinetic shield
44–45	Launcher
46–47	Light spike
48	Liquid armor
49	Liquid sword
50	Living armor sheath
51	Mephitic staff
52	Metabolism bud
53	Mind imager
54	Molecular bonder
55–56	Multidimensional blade
57	Murder globe
58	Nano-needler
59–60	Needler
61–62	Nightvision goggles
63	Phasing piton
64	Plant jar
65	Poison brain implant
66	Psychic helmet
67	Psychic whistle
68–69	Recorder headband
70–71	Redlight clip
72	Remote clamp
73	Repair sphere
74	Safe corridor
75	Second skin
76–77	Shatter wand
78–79	Shock manacles
80	Skill bud
81–82	Skull blaster
83–84	Slugspitter
85	Snipewand
86–87	Stunner
88	Suspensor belt
89	Telltale glass
90	Tendril graft
91–92	Thunder cannon
93	Transdimensional ray projector
94–95	Trigger trap
96	Vuechi
97	Weapon graft
98	Windrider
99–00	Windslice blade

This list of artifacts isn't comprehensive by any means. Who knows what technological treasures the Ninth World will provide? (For information on creating new artifacts, see page 307).

LOOKING FOR

Monoblade, page 283
Phase changer, page 284



A SELECTION OF NINTH WORLD ARTIFACTS



An amulet of safety is an excellent safeguard against a sarrak (page 250). Of course, if the sarrak takes control of the amulet, then you're still in deep trouble . . .

AMBER CASEMENT

Level: 1d6 + 4
Form: Series of short, rounded tubes and hoses about 12 inches (30 cm) long
Effect: When activated, it solidifies the air in a 10-foot (3 m) cube of space, the center of which must be within short range of the device. The air is turned into an amberlike substance, and those trapped in it will likely suffocate or starve.
Depletion: 1–4 in 1d6

AMULET OF SAFETY

Level: 1d6
Form: Plain metallic disk on a chain
Effect: Once the amulet is keyed to a specific numenera weapon, the weapon cannot activate to harm the wearer. The amulet's level must be at least as high as the weapon's level.
Depletion: —

ANALYZING SHIELD

Level: 1d6 + 1
Form: Transparent synth shield
Effect: The bearer can see through this shield, and it has a display that analyzes the best place to strike a foe viewed through it. The bearer can use points from their Intellect Pool (rather than the more typical Might or Speed) to increase the damage of their attacks by 3 additional points per level of Effort.
Depletion: —

Effort, page 23

ARMORED FLESH

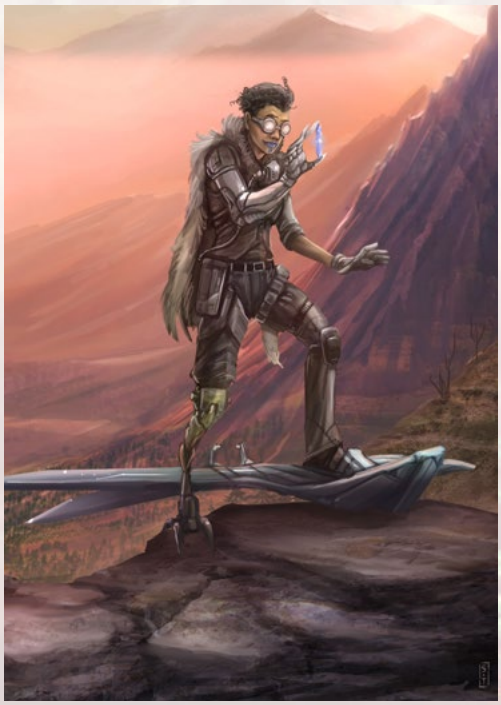
Level: 1d6 + 2
Form: Appears to be a collection of organic armored plates, like a carapace or very large fish scales
Effect: When placed on the wearer's flesh, the armor grafts on permanently. It provides Armor equal to half its level (round up) but does not hinder movement or tire the wearer in any way (no Speed cost increase for applying Effort). On the contrary, the wearer's maximum Might Pool is permanently increased by 2.
However, the benefits come at a cost. Fibrous tendrils extend into the wearer's flesh and eventually reach the spine and brain, inflicting damage in the form of 2 points of permanent maximum Intellect Pool reduction. This process takes one week. The lost points cannot be regained.
Depletion: —

AUTOMATED COOK

Level: 1d6
Form: Small metal and synth cube that has metallic arms and tools
Effect: This automaton prepares food on command. It must be given raw materials (water and organic compounds), but with those it can prepare and serve a hot, nutritious, delicious meal.
Depletion: 1 in 1d100

BATTLE ARMOR

Level: 1d6 + 4
Form: Full suit of synth and steel armor, covering the entirety of the wearer's body
Effect: This armor is far hardier yet somewhat lighter than Ninth World smithing techniques could ever manage with steel. It is heavy armor but grants an additional +2 Armor (+3 Armor if the artifact is level 9 or higher) in addition to the 3 Armor that heavy armor usually provides. Further, it is entirely sealed and has its own eternally renewed internal atmosphere, which completely protects against poison gases and allows the wearer to operate in an airless environment. The suit's Armor rating also applies to damage that often isn't reduced by typical armor, such as heat or cold damage (but not Intellect damage).
Depletion: — (At any time, the GM can rule that the armor has sustained enough damage that the atmosphere and environmental protections cease, but the suit still functions as armor.)



BATTLESUIT

Level: 1d6 + 4
Form: Full suit of synth and steel armor, covering the entirety of the wearer's body
Effect: This armor is far hardier yet somewhat lighter than Ninth World smithing techniques could ever manage with steel. It is heavy armor but grants an additional +3 to Armor in addition to the 3 Armor that heavy armor usually offers. Further, it is entirely sealed and has its own eternally renewed internal atmosphere, which completely protects against poison gases and allows the wearer to operate in an airless environment. The suit's Armor rating also applies to damage that often isn't reduced by typical armor, such as heat or cold damage (but not Intellect damage). In addition, the wearer gains +1 to their Might Edge and +5 to their Might Pool (+7 to their Might Pool if the artifact is level 9 or higher).
Depletion: — (At any time, the GM can rule that the armor has sustained enough damage that the atmosphere and environmental protections cease and the Might enhancements no longer function, but the suit still functions as armor.)

BOUNDING BOOTS

Level: 1d6 + 1
Form: Ninth World-made leather boots with small metal and synth devices worked into the sides
Effect: The boots negate gravity enough to make jumping and running easier. The boots are an asset for jumping and running (easing by two steps for one of these skills if the artifact is level 6 or higher).
Depletion: —

BRAIN BUD

Level: 1d6
Form: Organic pod, almost like a small, hemispherical bit of fruit. Once grafted to a host, it takes on the appearance of the host's flesh.
Effect: The pod grafts onto any living host (must be near the brain) and injects complex chemicals that greatly improve brain activity. This increases the host's maximum Intellect Pool by 5 (+7 if the artifact is level 6 or higher).
Depletion: —



CARRYALL

Level: 1d6
Form: Metallic chest with tracked wheels on either side
Effect: This device comes with a small module that can be worn on a belt. Rolling along on its wheels, the chest attempts to follow within immediate range of the module (though it can be directed to remain where it is). It moves a short distance each round. The chest can come to the module from a range of up to 10 miles (16 km) away (20 miles [32 km] if the artifact is level 6 or higher). The interior of the chest is mostly hollow and can hold up to 5,000 pounds (2,300 kg). The artifact must be newly activated each day.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

CELLULAR DISRUPTOR

Level: 1d6 + 4
Form: Small handheld device with a few simple controls
Effect: This device emits a faint short-range beam that affects only organic creatures and materials. Living targets hit by the beam move one step down the damage track. Nonliving organic targets are likely destroyed. This device is a rapid-fire weapon and thus can be used with the Spray or Arc Spray abilities that some characters have, but each "round of ammo" used or each additional target selected requires an additional depletion roll.
Depletion: 1 in 1d10

CHAMELEON CLOAK

Level: 1d6 + 4
Form: Very thin, lightweight, transparent cloth formed into a crude cloak
Effect: When activated, the device takes on the colors and textures of everything around the wearer for ten minutes (one hour if the artifact is level 9 or higher). This eases hiding and sneaking tasks by two steps.
Depletion: 1 in 1d100

Battle armor and battlesuits can be troublesome due to the high Armor totals that a PC can attain. GMs can rule, if they wish, that the Armor rating of these suits degrades over time after sustaining a great deal of damage. (The GM, in fact, can do that with any armor.) Doing so likely comes as part of a GM intrusion.

Spray, page 33

Arc Spray, page 34

LOOKING FOR

Ray emitter and magnetic ray emitter, page 285

Insects with shiny, irregular carapaces in the Aimless Lands sometimes meld to become a dangerous composite creature that talks.

CHIURGEON SPHERE

Level: 1d6 + 2
Form: Small, spherical automaton about 8 inches (20 cm) in diameter
Effect: This device comes with a small module that can be worn on a belt. Floating along, the automaton attempts to follow within immediate range of the module (though it can be directed to remain where it is). It moves a short distance each round. The sphere can come to the module from a range of up to 10 miles (16 km) away. If the module is worn by an organic creature and that creature takes damage, the automaton moves to repair the damage with cellular regenerating tools that restore 1d6 – 2 points per round (meaning that if a 1 or 2 is rolled, no damage is repaired that round). This requires no action on the part of the creature being healed. Each day, the automaton can attempt to render aid a number of times equal to its level. The artifact must be newly activated each day.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

COHESION STABILIZER

Level: 1d6 + 4
Form: Wristband-mounted device with a few simple controls
Effect: Any attempt to affect the integrity of the wearer's physical form by disintegrating it, encasing it, changing its phase, teleporting it, or otherwise disrupting it fails if the wearer wishes it to fail. Doing so is not an action on the wearer's part. The artifact's level must be equal to or higher than the effect's level.
Depletion: 1 in 1d10

CYPHER BAG

Level: 1d6
Form: Synth bag
Effect: This bag can contain up to one cypher per artifact level, as long as each is no larger than a typical handheld device. These cyphers do not count against a character's limit.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20 (check each time a cypher is added to the bag)

Cyphers in a cypher bag cannot be used while in the bag.

LOOKING FOR
Repair unit, page 286

DIMENSIONAL ARMOR

Level: 1d6 + 4
Form: Full suit of synth and steel armor, covering the entirety of the wearer's body
Effect: This armor is far hardier yet somewhat lighter than Ninth World smithing techniques could ever manage with steel. It is heavy armor but grants an additional +2 to Armor in addition to the 3 Armor that heavy armor usually provides. Further, when activated, it shifts the wearer's phase randomly for ten minutes (one hour if the artifact is level 9 or higher), which hinders attacks on the wearer by two steps. This shifting effect is negated by special multidimensional weapons or attacks.
Depletion: 1 in 1d10 (for the phase shifting ability, but after depletion, the suit still functions as armor)

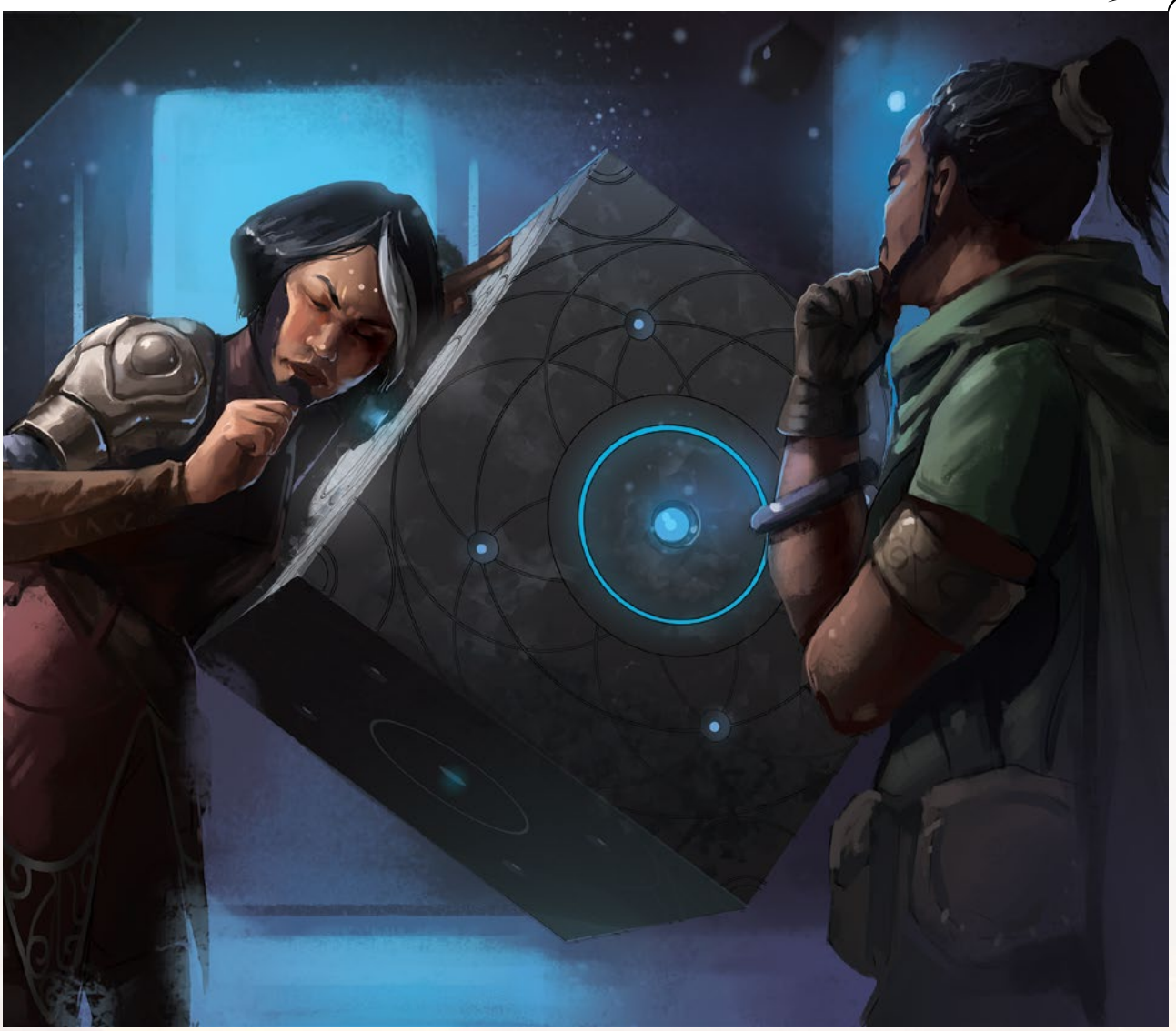
DISRUPTION BLADE

Level: 1d6 + 1
Form: Sword or similar bladed weapon with devices affixed to the blade and hilt
Effect: This weapon functions as a normal sword (or, rarely, an axe or a cleaver). However, if the wielder uses an action to activate it, the weapon radiates a field of molecular disrupting energy for one round. During that round, if it scores a hit, it inflicts an additional 10 points of damage. If the artifact is level 6 or higher, it is an asset on the attack roll.
Depletion: 1 in 1d6

DRILL SPEAR

Level: 1d6 + 1
Form: Wooden shaft with an affixed spearhead that appears to be a metallic drill
Effect: This spear functions as a normal spear. If the wielder uses it to attack a foe, upon a successful hit the wielder decides whether to activate the weapon. Upon activation, the wielder lets go of the spear and it drills into the foe, inflicting an additional 3 points of damage (5 points if the artifact is level 6 or higher). However, the wielder then is no longer holding the spear. The drilling function works only in melee combat because activation occurs after the foe is struck.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20





ECSTASY PARALYZER

Level: 1d6 + 2
Form: Handheld device with a few controls
Effect: This long-range weapon fires a beam of energy that inflicts no damage. Instead, it affects the target's mind, filling them with such pleasure that they lose their next turn.
This device is a rapid-fire weapon, and thus can be used with the Spray or Arc Spray abilities that some characters have, but each "round of ammo" used or each additional target selected requires an additional depletion roll.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

EXPLODING ARROW

Level: 1d6
Form: Arrow with a tiny metallic device attached to it
Effect: The arrow explodes when it strikes something, inflicting its level in damage to all within immediate range.
Depletion: Automatic

FEARMAKER

Level: 1d6 + 2
Form: 4-foot (1 m) tall collapsible tripod with a metal cone at the top
Effect: It takes two rounds to assemble and set up this device, and then it takes an action to activate. When activated, the fearmaker affects the minds of all thinking creatures within long range in a 45-degree arc. Those affected are instilled with terror, making them drop what they're holding and do one of the following:

Roll	Action
01–50	Flee for 1d6 rounds
51–90	Cower (losing their actions) for 1d6 rounds
91–00	Faint, remaining unconscious for one minute (or until roused by vigorous action)

Depletion: 1 in 1d6

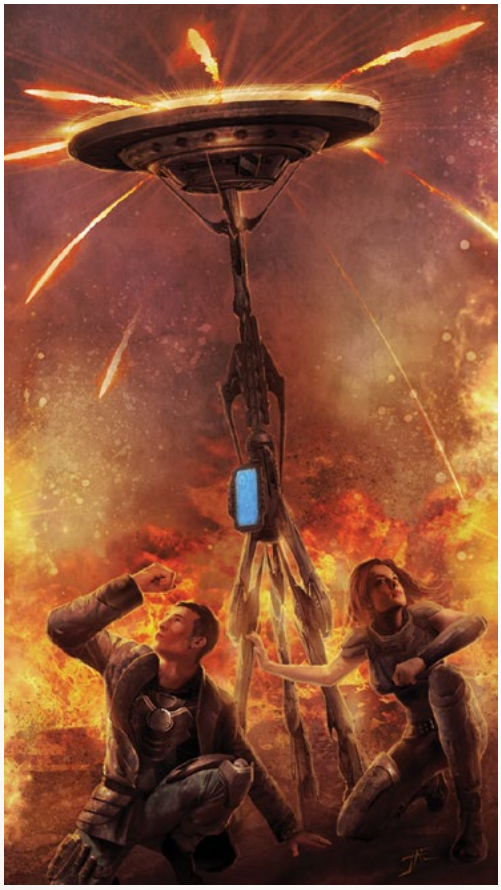
Spray, page 33

Arc Spray, page 34

One advantage of an exploding arrow over a detonation cypher is that the arrow doesn't count toward your cypher limit.

LOOKING FOR
Speed boost, page 287

Most people report that the paste from a food tube tastes quite awful.



FIERY HELLMAKER
Level: 1d6 + 4
Form: 7-foot (2 m) tall collapsible metal stand with a large metal disk at the top and a control box in the center
Effect: It takes two rounds to assemble and set up this device, and then it takes an action to activate. When activated, the disk fires a barrage of fiery long-range missiles in all directions. Everyone and everything within long range suffers damage equal to the artifact level, unless they are within 3 feet (1 m) of the device and keep their heads down.
Depletion: 1 in 1d6

FILTRATION STRAW
Level: 1d6
Form: Long, narrow synth tube
Effect: Water that passes through this tube is purified. Most liquids other than water drawn through the tube come out as water (or mostly water). It neutralizes poisons, diseases, and other contaminants up to the artifact's level.
Depletion: —

FOOD SCANNER
Level: 1d6
Form: Handheld device with a number of controls and a wide dish at one end
Effect: When activated and pointed at food, this device sounds an alarm if the food has any contaminants or poisonous substances.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

FOOD TUBE
Level: 1d6
Form: Synth tube
Effect: The device produces a grey paste that provides enough nutrition for one person for one day (two people per day if the artifact is level 5 or higher).
Depletion: 1 in 1d10

FORCE DOME
Level: 1d6 + 3
Form: 4-foot (1 m) tall collapsible tripod with a large glass globe at the top and a control box in the center
Effect: It takes two rounds to assemble and set up this device, and then it takes an action to activate. When activated, this device projects a powerful force field dome with a diameter of short range. The field is immobile, impermeable, and impenetrable until it is brought down by a force (such as a device or creature) of a higher level. Otherwise, it lasts for 28 hours, during which time it has enough air to support six humans.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

HEALING SWORD
Level: 1d6
Form: Typical sword with an odd-looking synth hilt
Effect: The broadsword blade is a Ninth World-forged addition to the numenera hilt (which likely was not a sword hilt originally). When squeezed properly, the hilt injects a healing substance into the wielder's body, restoring 1d6 points of any stat Pool they wish (1d6 + 2 points if the artifact is level 5 or higher). If the wielder is using the sword in battle, using the healing function does not require an action.
Depletion: 1 in 1d10 (for the healing ability, but after depletion, it still functions as a sword)

LOOKING FOR
Temporal viewer, page 288

HOOP STAFF
Level: 1d6 + 3
Form: Long wooden staff with a 6-inch (15 cm) bronze hoop attached to the tip. The staff is of recent creation, but the hoop is not.
Effect: Holographic images flicker to life in the hoop, warning of danger. The images are representative of the danger in some fashion. For example, approaching enemies look like threatening, amorphous creatures, and dangerous weather might look like lightning bolts coming from a cloud. At artifact level 8 and higher, the warnings come earlier and the images more accurately represent the threat. The GM decides when and how the staff warns of danger. For inexplicable reasons, sometimes it fails to deliver a warning. (Thus, it's all right if the GM forgets about the staff occasionally.)
Depletion: 1 in 1d100

HOVER BELT
Level: 1d6 + 1
Form: Odd-fitting metallic mesh belt that has a metal box attachment with dial controls
Effect: The wearer can float up into the air or back down again at a rate of 20 feet (6 m) per round. Using the complex controls, the wearer can move horizontally at a much slower pace (5 feet [1.5 m] per round) in a much less stable or controlled trajectory. At artifact level 6 or higher, the wearer floats twice as fast, vertically or horizontally. The belt works for ten minutes per use.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

HOVER SQUARE
Level: 1d6
Form: Folded synth square that is 1 foot by 1 foot (30 cm by 30 cm) and unfolds into a square that is 8 feet by 8 feet (2.5 m by 2.5 m)
Effect: When unfolded and activated, this piece of synth forms a platform that moves laterally as directed by someone atop it. The platform moves up to short range in a round. It can hold up to 5,000 pounds (2,300 kg), or 8,000 pounds (3,600 kg) if the artifact is level 5 or higher.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

IMAGER
Level: 1d6
Form: Small, rectangular handheld device with a clear synth panel
Effect: This device captures a perfect image of a nearby scene. It can store thousands of images, and any stored image can be shown on the synth panel. When the device is depleted, all stored images are lost.
Depletion: 1 in 1d100

INSTANT BRIDGE
Level: 1d6 + 1
Form: Handheld device with a few controls
Effect: This device fires a cable with a powerful magnet up to long range. When the magnet strikes a metal surface, it affixes itself, and the taut cable extends into a narrow bridge about 3 feet (1 m) wide. The device can then be affixed to another metallic surface to anchor the bridge. The bridge can support 1,000 pounds (450 kg), or 2,000 pounds (900 kg) if the artifact is level 6 or higher. When deactivated, the magnets let go and the cable retracts.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

An instant bridge could, in theory, be used to grab a metallic object and pull it toward the user. The object would need to weigh less than the user. The action would also be hindered by two steps because the device is not meant for such precision work.

KINETIC SHIELD
Level: 1d6 + 1
Form: Wristband or armband with a small metallic device attached
Effect: When a physical projectile such as an arrow, a thrown knife, or a bullet-like missile comes within 4 inches (10 cm) of the wearer's body, a powerful energy field activates automatically and attempts to slow down or deflect the projectile. The wearer's Speed defense against such attacks is eased (eased by two steps if the artifact is level 6 or higher). If the projectile still hits the wearer, the field adds 1 to Armor against the attack.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Dlurian the Jack threw a knife at a bandit on a road in Navarene and the knife froze in midair. It is still there.

LAUNCHER
Level: 1d6 + 3
Form: Metal tube with a set of winding synth tubes wrapped around it
Effect: This device launches anything about the size of a fist or smaller with great force to very long range. An inert object, such as a rock, inflicts the artifact's level in damage. A detonation cypher (or similar explosive) can also be launched to activate on impact.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Detonation cypher, page 277

LIGHT SPIKE
Level: 1d6 + 2
Form: Fingerless glove of semirigid synth
Effect: When the glove is activated, a spike of solid, red-hot energy is emitted from the back of the wearer's hand. This spike can be used as a melee weapon that inflicts damage equal to the artifact's level. It lasts for ten minutes. If the wielder increases the spike's power (which requires a separate action and an additional depletion roll), the damage increases by 1 point.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

LOOKING FOR
Visage changer, page 288
Warmth projector, page 288

Adamant silk, page 93

Liquid armor and the liquid sword are based on a technology called smart fluid. Conceivably, it could be found in many other applications. Somewhere in the Cold Desert lies a citadel made entirely of solid smart fluid.

A suit of glassteel armor sits on display in front of a wealthy noble's home. No force yet discovered can move it.

Abykos, page 224

LOOKING FOR
Artifacts, page 289

LIQUID ARMOR

Level: 1d6 + 3
Form: Adamant silk belt with two metallic cylinders attached to it
Effect: When activated, a watery liquid sprays out of the cylinders on the belt. An electric field shapes this smart fluid, causing it to form a protective shell around the wearer, not unlike full body armor. The fluid becomes immediately (but selectively) rigid when struck, providing +3 to Armor, but it has none of the penalties associated with armor. It can be used over the top of light armor, adding to its protection, but medium or heavy armor disrupts the electric field's shaping attempts. The liquid armor lasts for four hours (six hours if the artifact is level 8 or higher) or until deactivated.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

LIQUID SWORD

Level: 1d6 + 3
Form: Adamant silk wristband with a metallic cylinder attached to it
Effect: When activated, a watery liquid sprays out of the cylinder on the wristband. An electric field shapes this smart fluid, causing it to take the form of a broadsword. The fluid becomes immediately rigid and incredibly sharp, and it can be used as a normal sword that inflicts 1 additional point of damage. The sword lasts for four hours (six hours if the artifact is level 8 or higher) or until deactivated.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

LIVING ARMOR SHEATH

Level: 1d6 + 1
Form: When not affixed to a creature, this looks like a mass of heavy fabric. On a creature, it looks like heavy, leathery flesh.
Effect: When worn over normal skin, this organic material adheres and conforms to the creature's body shape. The artifact eases Might defense tasks to resist poison and disease (eases by two steps if the artifact is level 6 or higher). Further, the wearer has +2 to Armor, but the artifact has none of the penalties associated with armor. Armor can't be worn over the living sheath because it's too bulky.
Depletion: 1 in 1d100 (checked each day while the sheath is worn)

MEPHITIC STAFF

Level: 1d6
Form: Short metal-and-glass tube fitted onto a well-made wooden quarterstaff
Effect: When activated (which is not an action), the tip of the staff releases a concentrated, immediate-range blast of noxious fumes when it is struck against a solid creature or object. An affected creature loses its next turn to coughing and choking.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

METABOLISM BUD

Level: 1d6
Form: Organic pod, almost like a small, hemispherical bit of fruit. Once grafted to a host, it takes on the appearance of the host's flesh.
Effect: The pod grafts onto any living host (usually near the brain or spine) and injects chemicals that boost the creature's metabolism. This increases the host's maximum Speed Pool by 5 (by 7 if the artifact is level 5 or higher).
Depletion: —

MIND IMAGER

Level: 1d6 + 2
Form: Handheld device with a synth panel screen and wires that must be affixed to the head of a creature
Effect: This device shows a visual image of what a creature is thinking. The affected creature need not be conscious.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

MOLECULAR BONDER

Level: 1d6 + 2
Form: Handheld device with a number of controls and a pointed end
Effect: This device fuses two objects together with a bond strength equal to its level. If flesh bonded in this way (whether to an object or to other flesh) is torn apart, it suffers damage equal to the device's level.
Depletion: 1 in 1d6

MULTIDIMENSIONAL BLADE

Level: 1d6 + 2
Form: Short, straight bladed weapon with a large haft that has a few controls on it
Effect: When activated, the blade exists on many levels of reality at once. It inflicts damage equal to its level, and it harms creatures (such as an abykos) that can be affected only by transdimensional effects. Once activated, the blade is active for one minute.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

MURDER GLOBE
Level: 1d6 + 3
Form: 3-foot (1 m) tall collapsible metal tripod with a large metal globe at the top. The globe has a number of holes in it, but it is not hollow.
Effect: It takes two rounds to assemble and set up this device, and then it requires an action to activate. When activated, this device does nothing for five rounds. After that, if anything larger than a mouse comes within long range of it, the globe fires a powerful projectile at that target. The projectile inflicts damage equal to the artifact level. The device can attack up to ten times per round, but it never attacks the same target more than once per round. It remains on watch for 28 hours or until it has made one hundred attacks, whichever comes first.
Depletion: Automatic

NANO-NEEDLER
Level: 1d6
Form: Small handheld device with a tiny tube
Effect: This device projects a single needle—far smaller in width than a human hair—up to long range (very long range if the artifact is level 5 or higher). The needle inflicts no damage, but it can carry poison or disease, and the injection is so tiny that the victim doesn't feel it. The needle can also penetrate (ignore) up to 4 Armor.
This device is a rapid-fire weapon, and thus can be used with the Spray or Arc Spray abilities that some characters have, but each "round of ammo" used or each additional target selected requires an additional depletion roll.
Depletion: 1 in 1d10

NEEDLER
Level: 1d6
Form: Small handheld device with a tiny tube
Effect: This device projects a single needle (no damage), a spray of needles (1 point of damage), or a wide spray of needles (no damage, but it affects everyone within an immediate area)—user's choice. In each case, the needles can affect anyone within long range (very long range if the artifact is level 5 or higher). The needles can be poisoned, in which case even those who don't take damage must make Might defense rolls to avoid being poisoned.
This device is a rapid-fire weapon, and thus can be used with the Spray or Arc Spray abilities that some characters have, ignoring "rounds of ammo" costs and not requiring additional depletion rolls for using it as a rapid-fire weapon.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

NIGHTVISION GOGGLES
Level: 1d6
Form: Pair of synth goggles with dark, protruding lenses
Effect: Outside, the wearer can see at night as if it were daylight. Inside, the wearer can see in pitch darkness up to short range (long range if the artifact is level 5 or higher).
Depletion: —

PHASING PITON
Level: 1d6
Form: Metallic spike with a single toggle stud
Effect: When activated, the piton phases and can be inserted up to 6 inches (15 cm) into almost any material. When deactivated, the piton becomes solid again and remains embedded solidly in the material. If used as a weapon (requiring one action to activate and insert, and a second action to deactivate), the piton inflicts 6 points of damage.
Depletion: 1 in 1d100

PLANT JAR
Level: 1d6
Form: Large glass or clear synth canister
Effect: A living plant placed inside this device remains alive until removed regardless of light, water, or other conditions.
Depletion: —

POISON BRAIN IMPLANT
Level: 1d6 + 1
Form: Capsule
Effect: When swallowed, this implant travels to the brain and nests there. Henceforth, whenever a creature establishes contact with the user's mind (using mental attack, telepathic communication, mind control, and so on), the creature is attacked mentally. It is stunned for one round (losing its action) and takes Intellect damage equal to the artifact's level. This effect does not prevent the contact.
Depletion: —

PSYCHIC HELMET
Level: 1d6 + 2
Form: Lightweight synth helmet
Effect: The wearer gains 3 Armor that protects against Intellect damage only. Further, attempts to affect the wearer's mind are hindered (hindered by two steps if the artifact is level 7 or higher).
Depletion: —

The assassin Bledsele uses a nano-needler to poison her targets with her wide array of exotic numenera poisons.

Spray, page 33

Arc Spray, page 34

LOOKING FOR
Artifact quirks, page 290

There could easily be psychic whistles keyed to the brain patterns of creatures other than humans. A crafty specialist might even be able to fine-tune a psychic whistle so that it keys only to a few specific individuals' brain patterns.

The difficulty for a PC caught in a remote clamp to break free is equal to the artifact level + 2 because its grip is so strong.

Repairing objects, page 120

PSYCHIC WHISTLE

Level: 1d6 + 2
Form: Metal device 1 inch (2.5 cm) long with a single button
Effect: When the device is activated, a whistle-like sound is heard by humans within very long range. The device doesn't actually produce sound but instead stimulates the aural center of the human brain. It has no effect on nonhumans.
Depletion: 1 in 1d100

RECORDER HEADBAND

Level: 1d6 + 2
Form: Leather-like headband with a small device attached
Effect: This headband records everything the wearer sees as moving images that can be replayed and reviewed. It stores up to one hundred hours of images. When the device is depleted, all stored images are lost.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20 per hour of use

REDLIGHT CLIP

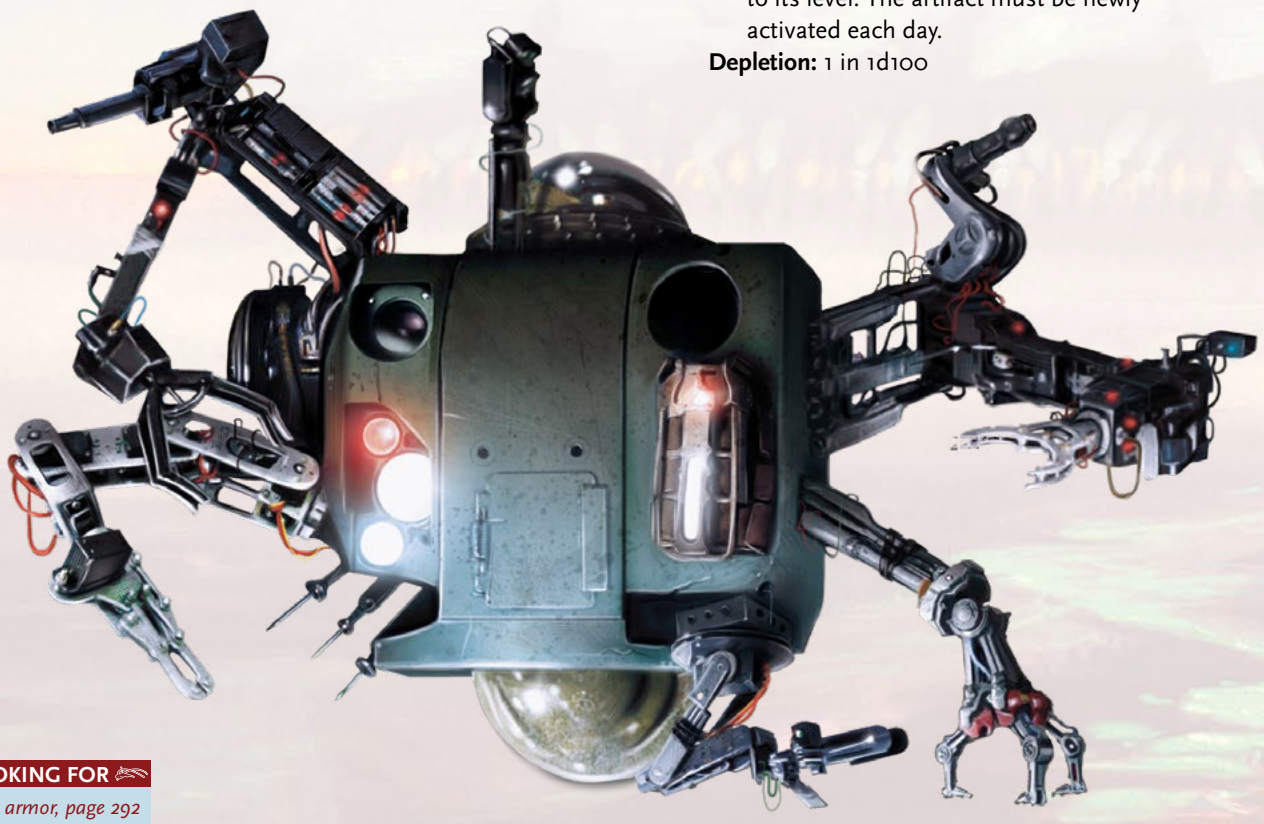
Level: 1
Form: Metal clip or pin easily affixed to clothing
Effect: This object flashes red when in immediate range of dangerous radiation or poisonous gas.
Depletion: —

REMOTE CLAMP

Level: 1d6
Form: Metal clamp with a detachable control pad
Effect: The control pad allows someone to direct this extremely strong device to clamp and unclamp. The pad must be within very long range of the clamp to control it.
Depletion: 1 in 1d10

REPAIR SPHERE

Level: 1d6 + 2
Form: Small spherical automaton about 8 inches (20 cm) in diameter
Effect: This device comes with a small module that can be affixed to a machine. Floating along, the sphere attempts to follow within immediate range of the module (though it can be directed to remain where it is). It moves a short distance each round. It can come to the module from a range of up to 10 miles (16 km) away. If the module is attached to a machine and that machine takes damage, the sphere moves to repair the damage with sophisticated tools, requiring no additional materials, task rolls, or direction. This requires no action on the part of the machine being repaired. The sphere can attempt to repair a machine a number of times per day equal to its level. The artifact must be newly activated each day.
Depletion: 1 in 1d100



LOOKING FOR
Battle armor, page 292

SAFE CORRIDOR

Level: 1d6 + 2
Form: Two separate metal and synth capsules about the size of a human's head, each with a large glass plate
Effect: When the device is activated, the space between the two capsules forms an invisible corridor of breathable atmosphere with a moderate temperature. It hedges out dangerous vapors, vacuum, insects, radiation, nanites, and other particulate matter. The corridor is 8 feet (2.5 m) wide and can be up to 1 mile (1.5 km) long. It must be relatively unobstructed—uneven terrain is fine, but walls, hills, and so on will block it. The corridor remains for 28 hours.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

SECOND SKIN

Level: 1d6 + 1
Form: When not affixed to a creature, this looks like a mass of diaphanous fabric. On a creature, it is almost invisible.
Effect: When stretched over a creature's normal skin, this organic material adheres and conforms to its body shape. While wearing the second skin, the creature has an asset in Might defense tasks to resist poison and disease (eased by two steps if the artifact is level 6 or higher).
Depletion: 1 in 1d100 (checked each day while the skin is worn)

SHATTER WAND

Level: 1d6 + 4
Form: Broad, 8-inch (20 cm) synth stick with a single button
Effect: This weapon realigns the molecular structure of a living target, in effect crystalizing the flesh. It works at long range but has no visible manifestation (no ray or projectile). The device inflicts damage equal to its level. Further, if the target is slain by the device, the target shatters, exploding in an immediate radius with crystalline shrapnel that inflicts 3 points of damage.
This device is a rapid-fire weapon, and thus can be used with the Spray or Arc Spray abilities that some characters have, but each "round of ammo" used or each additional target selected requires an additional depletion roll.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

SHOCK MANACLES

Level: 1d6 + 1
Form: Lightweight pair of metal or synth manacles
Effect: Not only are these restraints binding, but they also inflict their level in damage whenever the wearer attempts to break free. Once active, the manacles operate for 28 hours.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

SKILL BUD

Level: 1d6
Form: Organic pod, almost like a small, hemispherical bit of fruit. Once grafted to a host, it takes on the appearance of the host's flesh.
Effect: This pod grafts onto any living host (must be near the brain) and injects complex chemicals that alter brain and muscle functions. This grants the host training in one (predetermined) skill, or two skills if the artifact is level 5 or higher.
Depletion: —

SKULL BLASTER

Level: 1d6 + 2
Form: Headband with an attached cylinder that runs along the left side of the wearer's head
Effect: This device emits a brilliant beam of focused light up to very long range. Targets hit by the beam take damage equal to the artifact's level.
This device is a rapid-fire weapon, and thus can be used with the Spray or Arc Spray abilities that some characters have, but each "round of ammo" used or each additional target selected requires an additional depletion roll.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

SLUGSPITTER

Level: 1d6 + 1
Form: Long device with a narrow metal tube
Effect: With a quiet sound like a puff of air, this device fires a tiny slug of metal up to long range (very long range if the artifact is level 6 or higher). It inflicts damage equal to the artifact's level.
This device is a rapid-fire weapon, and thus can be used with the Spray or Arc Spray abilities that some characters have, but each "round of ammo" used or each additional target selected requires an additional depletion roll.
Depletion: 1–2 in 1d100



The metallic spikes the abhuman tribe uses as weapons are the remains of a destroyed mechanism once capable of connecting to the datasphere.

The mechanical creatures of the Weal of Baz (page 193) use slugspitters with regularity.

Spray, page 33

Arc Spray, page 34

LOOKING FOR

Artifacts table, page 291
Battlesuit, page 293



The tendril graft, like many biological artifacts, establishes a symbiotic relationship with its user, or "host." It gains all the nutrients it needs by absorbing them from its host. People with such grafts find that they need to eat and drink about 25% more than normal to stay healthy.

SNIPEWAND

Level: 1d6 + 4
Form: Long handheld device with a tiny plate of glass
Effect: Sighting through the glass, the user can view targets up to 1 mile (1.5 km) away as if they were just a short distance away. The user must have a direct line of sight to the target—the device cannot penetrate barriers or go around corners. Once a target is sighted, the device can almost silently fire a tiny slug of metal at the target. The slug inflicts damage equal to the artifact's level.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

STUNNER

Level: 1d6
Form: Handheld device that looks like a metal sphere with a handle
Effect: When activated, this device fires a beam of energy to short range (long range if the artifact is level 6 or higher) that stuns the target for one round, making them lose their next action.
This device is a rapid-fire weapon and thus can be used with the Spray or Arc Spray abilities that some characters have, but each "round of ammo" used or each additional target selected requires an additional depletion roll.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Spray, page 33

Arc Spray, page 34

SUSPENSOR BELT

Level: 1d6 + 1
Form: Belt with a number of brass disks affixed to it
Effect: This belt negates gravity enough to make all movement easier, granting the wearer a +1 bonus to their Speed Edge. Alternatively, a grossly obese creature could wear the belt simply to function normally. The belt supports up to 300 pounds (136 kg), or 500 pounds (227 kg) if the artifact is level 6 or higher.
Depletion: —

"The fluid drained from a biochemical injector sphere also makes an excellent pipe cleaner."
~Sir Arthour

Abykos, page 224

LOOKING FOR

Brain bud, page 293
Cellular disruptor, page 293

TELLTALE GLASS

Level: 1
Form: Clear drinking glass
Effect: This glass turns red if anything poisonous is put into it, even in very small quantities.
Depletion: —

TENDRIL GRAFT

Level: 1d6
Form: Whip-like length of organic material similar to flesh
Effect: This graft attaches to the host's spinal column so that it can be controlled like a limb. The host can use it like a whip (a light weapon) even if their hands are full. They can also use it like a prehensile tail that can hold their weight (assuming they are roughly human-sized) or another object. At level 6 or higher, the tendril provides an asset on attacks made with it.
Depletion: —

THUNDER CANNON

Level: 1d6 + 4
Form: Large, heavy tube with a bell-shaped end and a number of controls
Effect: This massive device can barely be held or carried by a single person. When activated, it emits a 50-foot (15 m) wide cone of pure sonic force out to long range. Any creature in that area is knocked prone and stunned for one round, losing its action. Unfixed items the size of a human or smaller are toppled and/or moved at least 5 feet (1.5 m). Larger objects might also be toppled.
Depletion: 1 in 1d10

TRANSDIMENSIONAL RAY PROJECTOR

Level: 1d6 + 2
Form: Handheld device with a number of controls and a wide dish at one end
Effect: This long-range weapon fires a beam of energy that exists on many levels of reality at once. It inflicts damage equal to its level, and it harms creatures that can be affected only by transdimensional effects (such as an abykos).
This device is a rapid-fire weapon and thus can be used with the Spray or Arc Spray abilities that some characters have, but each "round of ammo" used or each additional target selected requires an additional depletion roll.
Depletion: 1 in 1d20

TRIGGER TRAP

Level: 1d6

Form: Small, rather complex box of metal sensor plates, wires, and controls

Effect: A cypher of virtually any kind can be added to this trigger device to turn it into a trap. First, the cypher is added to the device (an Intellect task with a difficulty of 4), and then various wires and plates are affixed permanently to something—a nearby surface, door, hinge, and so on. When the trap is triggered, the cypher is activated, so people often use straightforward cyphers such as a detonation, a ray emitter, or a similar device.

The trigger can react to a specified movement within 3 feet (1 m)—a door opening, a creature or object moving past the artifact, and so on. The higher the level of the device, the more sophisticated the trigger. For example, a level 4 artifact's trigger might be based on a creature's size or weight, a level 5 artifact can trigger based on a specific type of creature, and a level 6 artifact can trigger based on recognizing an individual creature.

Depletion: Automatic

VUECHI

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: 4-inch (10 cm) silver sphere that hovers in the air

Effect: Once activated, this device follows within 3 feet (1 m) of the user and attacks anyone or anything within immediate range that attacks them. A vuechi attacks with a burst of electricity (up to immediate range) that deals damage equal to the artifact level. Once activated, it functions for 28 hours.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

WEAPON GRAFT

Level: 1d6

Form: Blade, spiked ball, or hammer-like object made of hard, chitinous material or metal, with a sleeve of softer, fleshy material

Effect: This organic graft fits over a hand or empty stump and affixes to the flesh of the host. The physical bond provides an asset to attacks with the grafted weapon. This is a medium weapon that inflicts 4 points of damage (6 points if the artifact is level 5 or higher).

Depletion: —

WINDRIDER

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: 8-foot (2.5 m) long metallic wing

Effect: This is a vehicle that can be ridden by someone who makes a difficulty 1 Speed roll each round. In combat, it moves a long distance each round, but on extended trips, it can move up to 80 miles (130 km) per hour, or 100 miles (160 km) per hour if the artifact is level 6 or higher.

Depletion: 1–2 in 1d100; check on activation but no more than once per day

WINDSLICE BLADE

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Medium-length sword

Effect: This sword is made from a material so durable and dense that the edge is sharper and lasts far longer than Ninth World smithing techniques could ever manage with steel. The blade inflicts 1 additional point of damage (2 points if the artifact is level 6 or higher). Its name comes from the idea that it can slice even the wind in half.

Depletion: —

An automaton sits alone in the desert, unable to do or say anything other than lament the loss of the sea that was once there.



LOOKING FOR

Disruption blade, page 294

CHAPTER 19

ODDITIES & DISCOVERIES

An old woman in Ephremon sells oddities. She requires a minor memory in payment, which once taken is never missed.

Sometimes PCs find things that are interesting but have no real game value. They don't help in combat. They don't grant amazing powers. They don't protect the user. Not everything the ancients created was a combat device or can be used as one now. In Numenera, these devices are called oddities, and they serve a number of purposes.

First, they provide verisimilitude—not everything is suited for an explorer. Second, they're interesting—weird little things that can be sold or used for barter or gifts. Third, and perhaps most important, they add more mystery and feelings of the unknown to the game because oddities are really, well, *odd*. Why did their creators make them? Were they once a part of a larger device with a more understandable function? No one knows, and it's likely that no one ever will.

USING ODDITIES IN THE GAME

Shins, page 93

Oddities can be traded, sold, used, or given as interesting gifts. Usually, their value is around 10 shins, but some oddities might fetch as much as 50 shins depending on their potential utility.

Many of the oddities listed were left vague so the GM can tailor them as needed. The size, color, shape, and so on can be changed. Ninth World crafters might set some of the oddities into jewelry or on the end of a staff.

GMs are encouraged to ensure that oddities always seem odd. One day, have a PC's oddity work differently. For example, the cup that boils liquid now freezes it instead. The rod with blinking lights goes crazy with lights and starts beeping as well. The small mirrored cube starts spinning on its own. No explanation is needed because the owner didn't really understand the oddity in the first place.

DISCOVERIES

Discoveries are a catch-all category of numenera that don't fit into the other categories. These are not devices the PCs can claim as their own. The characters probably can't take a discovery with them, and usually they would have no reason to do so, anyway. A discovery might be a bio lab where genetically engineered creatures are still being artificially produced, a receiver that picks up signals transmitted from a station on Mars, or a still-functioning hovertrain. While these discoveries can be useful, they do not necessarily make the characters more powerful.



ODDITIES TABLE

When giving oddities to characters, either choose from this table or roll 1d100 for random oddities.

A SELECTION OF NINTH WORLD ODDITIES

d100	Oddity
1	Crystal that shatters easily but then instantly reforms
2	Egg-shaped metallic bauble that occasionally spins and speaks in a language no one knows
3	Aerosol can that sprays sparkling paint that hangs in the air
4	Device that emits a projection of a human face that changes expression depending on the direction in which it's looking
5	Unknown musical instrument that plays only soft, unpleasant sounds
6	Circular stone plate with a human face that occasionally changes expression or appears to speak (but has no voice)
7	Box with a tiny group of musicians in it who play when it is opened and look horrified when it is closed
8	Remote-controlled dragonfly with a tiny, handheld controller
9	Pants that fit perfectly and never seem to get dirty but are always chilly
10	Blob of clay that takes on various mysterious shapes when left alone
11	Crystal that hums
12	Necklace made of gears and other machine parts
13	Flute with buttons rather than holes so you can play music without blowing into it
14	Lightning bug in a glass globe
15	Plastic disk that displays ever-changing but meaningless symbols
16	Small rod that emits a voice saying the same thing in an unknown language every time a button is pushed
17	Glass plate that shows what seems to be a live image of the moon, but from a closer vantage
18	Comb that glows when used
19	Small square cage that puts whatever single creature is inside it into stasis
20	Plastic bottle containing a spray that cleans any stain and never runs out
21	Metallic device that creates one sheet of new paper each day
22	Pen that writes in invisible ink revealed only at a very low temperature
23	Tiny toy ornithopter made of a solid piece of material that seems indestructible
24	Fuzzy stuffed ravage bear that makes growling noises when you squeeze it
25	Goggles that tint everything green
26	Series of thin plastic cards that show all kinds of unknown creatures
27	Candle that never runs down
28	Bag of sixteen rubber balloons
29	Three silken gloves with six fingers each
30	Metallic jar that maintains the temperature of liquid inside indefinitely
31	Blue crystal that glows as bright as a candle when held
32	Small coin pouch that holds twice as much as it appears it should
33	Small wand-like device that keeps away normal insects in a 5-foot (1.5 m) radius
34	Unknown plastic device with lights that occasionally blink
35	Powerful magnifying glass
36	Bag that contains dice, each with a different number of sides
37	Small mirrored cube
38	Piece of extremely strong and thin cable 8 feet (2.5 m) long
39	Feathered hat that occasionally makes bird noises
40	Wooden rod that increases in length by about 1 inch (2.5 cm) a month
41	Brass device with nested circular plates that rotate and click
42	Cape that billows as if blown by the wind when worn, even in still air



43	Glass cube that shows what seems to be a live aerial view of an unknown, ruined city
44	Armband that tightens slightly when within 100 feet (30 m) of abhumans
45	Small jar of black paint that refills itself each day
46	Metallic mask that fits perfectly on your face and changes expression when you do
47	Five metallic plates that orbit around your head and display ever-changing, unknown symbols
48	Green glass sphere that floats next to you and whistles when you are angry
49	Metal canister that fills with 4 quarts (3.8 liters) of water at the same time each day
50	Metal and glass disk that, when pressed against flesh, instantly etches a tattoo of a black scorpion
51	Small mirror that shows someone other than you when you gaze into it
52	Canister that produces an extremely foul odor and a puff of dark red smoke when opened
53	Goggles that allow you to see perfectly through steam or smoke
54	Box that produces a 3-inch (7.5 cm) cube of a firm but gelatinous substance at the same time each day
55	Shirt that displays your muscles, bones, and internal organs when you wear it
56	Small leather case of cosmetics that never seem to run out
57	Amulet that, when worn, projects holographic images of fish swimming around you
58	Bracelet with a tiny bell charm that rings like a massive bell when intentionally rung
59	Metallic, pointed-toe boots designed to fit an aneen or a similar creature
60	Cup that instantly boils any liquid poured into it
61	Spectacles that project strange images on the lenses so the wearer sees things that are not there
62	Box of a dozen matchsticks that, when burned, release puffs of lingering smoke that take on the shapes of faces, creatures, or other things
63	Blanket that makes a pleasant, soft humming noise while covering a living creature
64	Semicircular device of metal and glass that projects a harmless, thin red beam up to 50 feet (15 m) when activated
65	Two 5-inch (12.7 cm) metal and glass disks that hover around your wrists
66	Six small, clear synth bags that can be sealed and are very durable
67	Glass orb that always drips perfumed water very slowly
68	Jar of sixteen seeds; when planted, each seed grows into a daffodil made of gold in six months
69	Rose made of nigh-indestructible glass
70	Octagon-shaped amulet that is black during the day and sky blue at night
71	Mummified fish with feathered wings in a wooden box
72	Two-headed animal fetus in a glass jar
73	Saddle sized for a very small animal, such as a squirrel or a small cat
74	Small rectangular device that makes a chirping sound at the same time each day
75	Pair of tiny metal rods that, when brought within 1 inch (2.5 cm) of each other, vibrate exactly fifteen minutes before the sun rises on any given day
76	Ceramic ring that makes you feel as though gentle hands are caressing your body
77	Bottle of twenty-four pills that make you vividly dream about your favorite memory when you next sleep
78	Cylinder that clears the air of smoke, foul smells, and the like in an enclosed room in one minute's time
79	A pair of small, floating cubes that keep a small, enclosed room at the temperature at which water freezes
80	Bracelet that renders you unable to reproduce while worn
81	Chair that can be stored in an extradimensional space when activated
82	Synth disk that will restore a rotten vegetable or piece of fruit
83	Cylinder that, if you speak through it, makes your voice sound wavering and strange
84	Scarf that appears to be made of silk but is virtually indestructible and cannot be dirtied or stained
85	Egg-shaped device that temporarily negates all odor within 3 feet (1 m)
86	Short metal rod that is insubstantial to all matter except the special synth glove that goes with it
87	Cube that, when activated, disappears for one minute and then reappears in the same spot

88	Wristband that buzzes when in complete darkness
89	Plate of glass that, when you view the night sky through it, reveals ten times as many stars
90	Ceramic pot that produces a tiny puff of colored smoke once every hour and a half
91	Hoop that sharpens any blade passed through it
92	Sphere that produces vigorous bubbles when placed in water
93	Tiny awl that inflicts no pain when it pierces flesh
94	Contact lenses that make your eyes seem completely white with no pupils
95	Silken string 3 feet (1 m) long that coils around whatever it touches
96	Large, clear synth bag that keeps food inside it fresh indefinitely
97	Stockings that are always warm
98	Single rubber glove that is extremely durable and resistant
99	Box filled with two dozen spherical magnets, each about the size of a pea
100	Pair of clear drinking glasses that change color depending on the contents

CREATING NEW NUMENERA

This book has plenty of cyphers, artifacts, and oddities to get the game started, but you'll want more options for your campaign as the game progresses. While the Numenera product line has additional books with many more items, GMs can of course design their own items.



ARTIFACTS

Artifacts are the trickiest kind of numenera to create because they are potentially the biggest "game changers." An artifact will likely alter not just one encounter, but many encounters, perhaps over the course of multiple adventures. While most eventually deplete, the abilities they provide change the way that a PC interacts with the world. An artifact that gives a PC the ability to fly means they might choose to fly over every obstacle you put in front of them. That's not a bad thing, but it's something you have to consider so it doesn't catch you off guard.

Use the artifacts in Chapter 18 as a guide for how much damage weapons should inflict or how much Armor defensive items might provide. Consider how much an item might completely short-circuit a whole adventure. Something that allows frequent teleportation, for example, will change the way the campaign goes (no more overland travel—no more terrain obstacles). The areas to be wary of include the following:

Items that provide information: Information is good and facilitates adventures, but getting access to all the secrets easily every time can ruin the challenge of a campaign. Items that are, in effect, "crystal balls" to locate people or things or "mind readers" that give away everyone's secrets work better as cyphers than as artifacts.

Items that provide travel: Having to travel everywhere on foot can be tedious, but a constant ability to instantly travel back home to get help/rest/gear can take some of the excitement out of exploration. Teleporters work better as cyphers or discoveries than as artifacts.**Items that provide Armor:** This is tricky, because you don't want characters to end up with so much Armor that combat is never a threat. For most characters, 1–2 points of Armor are probably necessary. Those who get in a lot of fights or who focus on defense might have 4–5 points. Six or more points of Armor over the long haul (as opposed to one encounter) is probably too good and should be avoided except in campaigns with very high-tier PCs and really potent threats and obstacles (such as dread destroyers and their ilk).

When it comes to assigning a depletion, estimate how many times you'd like a PC to

For a far more detailed look at crafting and repairing in Numenera, see Numenera Destiny, *page 117.*

Chapter 18: Artifacts, page 289



Dread destroyer, page 234

be able to use the artifact. A few times? That's 1 in 1d6. Six or seven times? That's 1 in 1d10. Many times, perhaps over the course of many adventures? 1 in 1d20. Potentially for the rest of the campaign? 1 in 1d100. With a 1 in 1d100 item, you can assume that the PC will use it constantly. So if it's a weapon, it will likely get used every round of every fight.

CYPHERS

Compared to artifacts, cyphers are easy. You almost can't go wrong. Because they are one-use, even a cypher that does something ridiculous (100 points of damage, 10 points of Armor, and so on) isn't going to wreck the campaign. It will change only one encounter. That doesn't mean, of course, that every cypher should be powerful. On the contrary, most should be modest because that encourages their use. (Really potent cyphers encourage PCs to hold back and "save them for the right moment," which is fine sometimes, but overall not what you want to encourage.) Look to the cyphers in Chapter 17 as examples for the kinds of modest effects a typical cypher might have.

Chapter 17: Cyphers, page 272

Don't hesitate to allow some cyphers to affect all the PCs rather than just the user. It's not much fun if only one character gets to become immune to heat and walk into the molten iron smelter in the ancient factory. It's more fun if everyone gets to do that once.

ODDITIES

Oddities might be the easiest thing of all to create, because they need no game mechanic effect. In fact, if you find yourself having to determine a game mechanic effect (damage or level, for example), you've probably accidentally created an artifact or a cypher, not an oddity. The only rule for oddities is that whatever they do, they shouldn't require rules. It's a coffee maker, not a ray emitter. The best oddities are the ones that make no sense. They convey a sense of wonder because they (should) suggest that in their correct context, they did make sense, but that context is long gone—perhaps millions of years gone—and may have been entirely alien to the PCs in the first place. Oddities are there for flavor, and to show the players that no matter how much they know, their characters still don't really understand the world around them. Even though the items are innocuous, they serve to unsettle players, and in a setting like this, that's a good thing.

LOOKING FOR
Nightvision goggles, page 299

Don't hesitate to make oddities into something more than they first appear. The device that projects three-dimensional maps of places no one recognizes may one day become entirely relevant as the PCs find themselves in one of those places. The weird buzzing pyramid may eventually turn out to be a key that leads them into an ancient vault. That shouldn't happen very often, but using that trick once in a campaign will be very meaningful.

DISCOVERIES

Discoveries are the most open-ended of all types of numenera. Discoveries are the things that are too big to be gear, but might still do something cool—a transgalactic portal to another planet, a machine that performs cybernetic implantation surgeries, or a force cube storage facility that can store anything, indefinitely. Each of these has great potential use to the PCs, but it's likely a one-time thing and they can't take it with them to use later. Discoveries are best thought of as part of an adventure as opposed to part of a PC's equipment. In this way, as with cyphers, you don't have to hold back when creating discoveries. The one rule of thumb should be that the cooler they are, the more challenging they are to reach. In some ways, these are the proverbial treasure hoards of a Numenera game.

But not every discovery has to be of use to the PCs. Sometimes they are interesting for their own sake—and thus still worth XP for finding them and interacting with them. A still-functioning factory, a transmitter that once sent messages to other planets, or a vast storage facility of preserved plantlife from ancient times are all discoveries, even though there is no (obvious) use for them.



PART 7:
RUNNING THE GAME



Chapter 20: Using the Rules 310
Chapter 21: Building a Story 334
Chapter 22: Realizing the Ninth World 350

CHAPTER 20

USING THE RULES

Players initiate actions. The only time that a GM should initiate an action is a defense action, like a Speed defense roll. Because if an action is not player-initiated, how does the player know whether to use Effort or not?

Numenera is a game about ideas, not rules. The rules are meant to be a framework upon which to hang the tapestry of the story you and the players create.

Chapter 21: Building a Story, page 334

Chapter 22: Realizing the Ninth World, page 350



Ravage bear, page 249

Ray emitter, page 285

LOOKING FOR

Repair sphere, page 300

Unlike in the rest of this book, I'm going to write this section from me to you. I'm addressing you, the game master (or potential game master), directly because you are vital to turning a halfway-decent game into an amazing game. In uninformed hands, even the greatest rules and the greatest setting will make, at best, a mediocre game. You are the key in this process.

The game master (GM) is the architect of the game but not the sole builder. You're the facilitator as well as the arbiter. You're all of these things and more. It's a challenging role that's not quite like anything else. People try to equate the GM with a playwright, a referee, a judge, or a guide. And those are not terrible analogies, but none of them is quite right, either.

Numenera has been designed to make the challenging tasks of game mastering as simple as possible and allow you as the GM to focus on what's important. Rather than dealing with a lot of die rolls, modifiers, and rules minutiae, you can focus mainly on the flow of the story. This is not to say that you are the sole storyteller. The group is the storyteller. But it's the GM's job to pull together the actions, reactions, and desires of all the people sitting around the table, mesh them with the setting and background created before the session began, and turn it all into a cohesive story—on the fly. Sometimes this means using a heavy hand. Sometimes it means stepping back. Sometimes it means being open-minded. It *always* means giving the other players as much of the spotlight as you have as the GM, and attempting to give it to each of them in turn so that no one person dominates the narrative or the gameplay—not even you.

I will say this now, up front, and I will say it often: the rules are your tools to tell a story, to portray a character, and to simulate the science-fantasy world. The rules are not the final word—you are. You are not subservient to the rules. But you do have a master. That master is fun gameplay mixed with exciting story.

Numenera has also been designed to make game mastering work the way that many experienced GMs run games anyway. The GMs who recognize that they are not subservient to the rules are often forced to work against the rules, to work in spite of the rules, or to use the rules as smoke and mirrors to cover up what they're really doing (which is providing everyone with an exciting, compelling, and interesting narrative in which to participate). Hopefully, as a Numenera GM, you will not find that to be the case. On the contrary, most of the rules were designed specifically to make it easier to run the game—or rather, to allow the GM to focus on helping to shepherd a great story.

In this chapter, first we're going to talk about the rules and how to use them as your tools. In Chapter 21: Building a Story, we'll discuss interacting with players, running games, and crafting great stories. Chapter 22: Realizing the Ninth World provides insight into filling the world (the Ninth World) with interesting things to see, things to experience, and most important, things to do.

THE RULES VERSUS THE STORY

Upon first glance, it might seem that for a story-based game, there isn't a lot of "story" in the rules. A wall, a ravage bear, a pit to leap, and a ray emitter can all be more or less just summed up as a single number—their level. The thing is, Numenera is a story-based game *because* the rules at their core are devoid of story. A wall, a ravage bear, a pit to leap, and a ray emitter all can be summed up as levels because they're all just parts of the story. They're all just obstacles or tools.

There aren't a lot of specifics in the rules—no guidelines for specific judo moves or the differences between repairing an electrically powered forcewall projector and

a biomechanical aircraft. That's not because those kinds of things are to be ignored, but because those kinds of things are flavor—they are story, description, and elaboration for the GM and the players to provide. A player running a character in a fistfight can and should describe one attack as an uppercut and another as a roundhouse punch, even though there's no mechanical difference. In fact, *because* there's no mechanical difference. That's what a narrative game is all about. It's interesting and entertaining, and that's why you're all sitting at the table in the first place.

If different aspects of the game—walls, ravage bears, pits, and so on—have distinctions, they come through as story elements, which are special exceptions to the rules. Having so few general rules makes adding special conditions and situations easier, because there is less rules tinkering to deal with. Fewer special circumstances to worry about. Less chance of contradictions and rules incompatibilities. For example, you can easily have a wall that can be destroyed only by mental attacks. A ravage bear has its unique grapple attack. A pit could have frictionless walls. A ray emitter could freeze foes solid. These are story elements that mechanically build on the very simple base mechanics. And they all make things more interesting.

SETTING DIFFICULTY RATINGS

The GM's most important overall tasks are setting the stage and guiding the story created by the group (not the one created by the GM ahead of time). But setting difficulty is the most important *mechanical* task the GM has in the game. Although there are suggestions throughout this chapter for various difficulty ratings for certain actions, there is no master list of the difficulty for every action a PC can take. Instead, Numenera is designed with the "teach a man to fish" style of good GMing in mind. (If you don't know what that means, it comes from the old adage, "Give a man a fish and he'll eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he'll eat for a lifetime." The idea is not to give GMs a ton of rules to memorize or reference, but to teach them how to make their own logical judgment calls.) Of course, most of the time, it's not a matter of exact precision. If you say the difficulty is 3 and it "should" have been 4, the world's not over.

For the most part, it really is as simple as rating something on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being incredibly easy and 10 being basically impossible. The guidelines in the difficulty table, presented again here for reference, should help put you in the right frame of mind for assigning difficulty to a task.

For example, we make the distinction between something that most people can do and something that trained people can do. In this case, "normal" means someone with absolutely no training, talent, or experience. Imagine your ne'er-do-well, slightly overweight uncle trying a task he's never tried before. "Trained" means the person has some level of instruction or experience but is not necessarily a professional.

With that in mind, think about the act of balance. With enough focus, most people can walk across a narrow bridge (like a fallen tree trunk). That suggests that it is difficulty 2. However, walking across a narrow plank that's only 3 inches (7.5 cm) wide? That's probably more like difficulty 3. Now consider walking across a tightrope. That's probably difficulty 5—a normal person can manage that only with a great deal of luck. Someone with some training can give it a go, but it's still hard.



It's not the GM's duty to come up with a reason why the players are all playing the game—it's the duty of the players. You wouldn't bring a chess set to a poker game, and similarly a player shouldn't come to a group RPG with a character that won't work with a group.

Trained, page 103

LOOKING FOR

Slugspitter, page 301

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).

Of course, a professional acrobat can do it easily. Consider, however, that the professional acrobat is specialized in the task, making it difficulty 3 for her. She probably is using Effort as well during her performance.

Effort, page 23

Let's try another task. This time, consider how hard it might be to remember the name of the previous leader of the village where the character lives. The difficulty might be 0 or 1, depending on how long ago she was the leader and how well known she was. Let's say it was thirty years ago and she was only mildly memorable, so it's difficulty 1. Most people remember her, and with a little bit of thought, anyone can come up with her name. Now let's consider the name of the leader's daughter. That's much harder. Assuming the daughter wasn't famous in her own right, it's probably difficulty 4. Even people who know a little about local history (that is to say, people who are trained in the subject) might not be able to remember it. But what about the name of the pet thuman owned by the daughter's husband? That's probably impossible. Who's going to remember the name of an obscure person's pet from thirty years ago? Basically no one. However, it's not forbidden knowledge or a well-guarded secret, so it sounds like difficulty 7. Difficulty 7 is the rating that means "No one can do this, yet some people still do." It's not the stuff of legend, but it's something you would assume people can't do. When you think there's no way you can get tickets for a sold-out concert, but somehow your friend manages to score a couple anyway, that's difficulty 7. (See the next section for more on difficulties 7, 8, 9, and 10.)

Unless for some reason you're telling the players directly, they'll never know if you change an NPC's stats or a task's difficulty on the fly. If you're doing it to make a better story, that's within your purview.

If you're talking about a task, ideally the difficulty shouldn't be based on the character performing the task. Things don't get inherently easier or harder depending on who is doing them. However, the truth is, the character does play into it as a judgment call. If the task is breaking down a wooden door, an 8-foot (2.5 m) tall automaton made of metal with nuclear-driven motors should be better at breaking it down than an average human would be, but the task rating should be the same for both. Let's say that the automaton's nature effectively gives it two levels of training for such tasks. Thus, if the door has a difficulty rating of 4, but the automaton is specialized and reduces the difficulty to 2, it has a target number of 6. The human has no such specialization, so the difficulty remains 4, and he has to reach a target number of 12. However, when you set the difficulty of breaking down the door, don't try to take all those differences into account. The GM should only consider the human because the Task Difficulty table is based on the ideal of a "normal" person, a "trained" person, and so on. It's humanocentric.

Most characters probably are willing to expend one or two levels of Effort on a task, and they might have an appropriate skill or asset to ease the task. That means that a difficulty 4 task will often be treated as difficulty 2 or even 1, and those are easy rolls to make. Don't hesitate, then, to pull out higher-level difficulties. The PCs can rise to the challenge, especially if they are experienced.



THE IMPOSSIBLE DIFFICULTIES

Difficulties 7, 8, 9, and 10 are all technically impossible. Their target numbers are 21, 24, 27, and 30, and you can't roll those numbers on a d20 no matter how many times you try. Consider, however, all the ways that a character can reduce difficulty. If someone spends a little Effort or has some skill or help, it brings difficulty 7 (target number 21) into the range of possibility—difficulty 6 (target number 18). Now consider that they have specialization, they use a lot of Effort, and they have help. That might bring the difficulty down to 1 or even 0 (reducing it by two steps from training, three or four steps from Effort, and one step from the asset of assistance). That practically impossible task just became routine. A fourth-tier character can and will do this—not every time, due to the cost, but perhaps once per game session. You have to be ready for that. A well-prepared, motivated sixth-tier character can do that even with a difficulty 10 task. Again, they won't do it often (even with an Edge of 6, they'd have to spend 7 points from their Pool, and that's assuming they're specialized and have two levels of assets), but it can happen if they're really prepared for the task (being specialized and maxed out in asset opportunities reduces the difficulty by four more steps). That's why sixth-tier characters are at the top of their field, so to speak.

FALSE PRECISION

One way to look at difficulty is that each step of difficulty is worth 3 on the die. That is to say, increase the difficulty by one step, and the target number rises by 3. Decrease the difficulty by one step, and the target number is lowered by 3. Those kinds of changes are big, meaty chunks. Difficulty, as a game mechanic, is not terribly precise. It's measured in large portions. You never have a target number of 13 or 14, for example—it's always 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, and so on. (Technically, this is not true. If a character adds 1 to their roll for some reason, it changes a target number of 15 to 14. But this is not worth much discussion.)

Imprecision is good in this case. It would be *false precision* to say that one lock has a target number of 14 and another has a target number of 15. What false precision means in this context is that it would be a delusion to think we can be that exact. Can you really say that one lock is 5% easier to pick than another? And more important, even if you could, is the difference worth noting? It's better to interact with the world in larger, more meaningful chunks than to try to parse things so carefully. If we tried to rate everything on a scale of 1 to 30 (using target numbers and not difficulty), we'd start to get lost in the proverbial weeds coming up with a meaningful distinction between something rated as an 8 and something rated as a 9 on that scale.

CONSISTENCY

Far more important than that level of precision is consistency. If the PCs need to activate a device that opens a spatial displacement portal, and the GM rules that it is a difficulty 6 task to get the antimatter rods spinning at the proper rates to achieve a specific harmonic frequency, then it needs to be a difficulty 6 task when they come back the next day to do it again (or there needs to be an understandable reason why it's not). The same is true for simpler tasks like walking across a narrow ledge or jumping up onto a platform. Consistency is key. The reason is that players need to be able to make informed decisions. If they remember how hard it was to open that portal yesterday, but it's inexplicably harder to open it today, they'll get frustrated because they tried to apply their experience to their decision-making process, and it failed them. If there's no way to make an informed decision, then all decisions are arbitrary.

Think about it in terms of real life. You need to cross the street, but a car is approaching. You've crossed the street thousands of times before, so you can look at the car and pretty easily judge whether you can cross safely or whether you have to wait for it to pass first. If the real world had no consistency, you couldn't make that decision. Every time you stepped into the street, you might get hit by a car. You'd never cross the street.

Players need that kind of consistency, too. So when you assign a difficulty to a task, note that number and try to keep it consistent the next time the PCs try the same task. "Same" is the key word. Deciphering one code isn't necessarily like deciphering another. Climbing one wall isn't the same as climbing another.

You'll make mistakes while doing this, so just accept that fact now. Excuse any mistakes with quick explanations about "a quirk of fate" or something along the lines of a surprisingly strong wind that wasn't blowing the last time.

MISTAKES

Sometimes the PCs will break down a door, and you'll realize that you rated it too low. Or the PCs will try to paddle a raft down a fast-moving river, and you (and probably they) will quickly discover that the difficulty you gave the task was ridiculously high.



Specialized, page 103

Asset, page 103

While I continually stress that Numenera is about story, not rules, it is still a game, which means that the PCs (and the players) can fail. That's why it's not accurate to think of the game as being identical to novels or movies. It is its own kind of storytelling. The players have to feel that there are real stakes. That if they screw up, there will be consequences—sometimes very harsh consequences. And they have to be right in that assumption.

LOOKING FOR

Trigger trap, page 303
Vuechi, page 303
Windrider, page 303

Don't fret.

That door was already weakened by an earthquake, a structural flaw, or the fact that other explorers pounded on it all day a while back. That river was actually moving far faster than the PCs thought at first, or their raft was faulty.

The point is, mistakes are easy to cover up. And sometimes, you can even tell your players it was just a mistake. They might even help provide an explanation if you do. It's not the end of the world.



More important, most of the time, no one will even know. Should have rated a task as difficulty 3 and instead you said it was 4? Oh well. Unless the player rolls a 9, 10, or 11—which would have succeeded for difficulty 3 but not difficulty 4—it won't matter. And even if they do roll one of those numbers, who cares? Maybe the rain was really coming down that day, and it increased the difficulty by a step.

The thing to take away is this: don't let fear of making a mistake keep you from freely and quickly assessing the difficulty of a task and moving on with the game. Don't agonize over it. Give it a difficulty, call for a roll, and keep the game moving. Hesitating over a rating will be far more detrimental to the game than giving something the wrong rating.

ROUTINE ACTIONS

Don't hesitate to make actions routine. Don't call for die rolls when they're not really needed. Sometimes GMs fall into the trap illustrated by this dialogue:

Chapter 14: Creatures, page 222

Abykos, page 224

GM: What do you do?
Player: I_____.
GM: Okay, give me a roll.

That's not a good instinct—at least, not for Numenera. Players should roll when it's interesting or exciting. Otherwise, they should just do what they do. If the PCs tie a rope around something and use it to climb down into a pit, you could ask for tying rolls, climbing rolls, and so on, but why? Just to see if they roll terribly? So the rope can come undone at the wrong time, or a character's hand can slip? Most of the time, that makes players feel inadequate and isn't a lot of fun. A rope coming undone in the middle of an exciting chase scene or a battle can be a great complication (and that's what GM intrusions are for). A rope coming undone in the middle of a simple "getting from point A to point B" scene only slows down gameplay. The real fun—the real story—is down in the pit. So get the PCs down there.

GM intrusion, page 123

LOOKING FOR

Oddities, page 304
Oddities table, page 305

There are a million exceptions to this guideline, of course. If creatures are throwing poisoned darts at the PCs while they climb, that might make things more interesting and require a roll. If the pit is filled with acid and the PCs must climb halfway down, pull a lever, and come back up, that's a situation where you should set the difficulty and perhaps have a roll. If a PC is near death, carrying a fragile item of great importance, or doing something similar, then climbing down the rope is tense, and a roll might add to the excitement. The important difference is that these kinds of complications have real consequences.

On the flip side, don't be afraid to use GM intrusion on routine actions if it makes things more interesting. Walking up to the Amber Pope in his audience chamber in the middle of a ceremony only to trip on a rug? That could have huge ramifications for the character and the story.

OTHER WAYS TO JUDGE DIFFICULTY

Rating things on a scale of 1 to 10 is something that most people are very familiar with. You can also look at it as rating an object or creature on a similar scale, if that's easier. In other words, if you don't know how hard it would be to climb a particular cliff face, think of it as a creature the PCs have to fight. What level would the creature be? You could look in the Creatures chapter and say, "I think this wall should be about as difficult to deal with as an abykos. An abykos is level 4, so the task of climbing the wall will be difficulty 4." That's a weird way to do it, perhaps, but it's fairly straightforward. And if you're the kind of GM who deals in terms of "How tough will this fight be?" then maybe rating tasks as NPCs to fight isn't so strange after all. It's just another way to relate to them. The important thing is that they're on the same scale. Similarly, if the PCs have to tackle a knowledge task—say, trying to determine if they know where a caravan is headed based on its tracks—you could rate the task in terms of an object. If you're used to rating doors or other objects that the PCs have broken through recently, the knowledge task is just a different kind of barrier to bust through.

Everything in Numenera—characters, creatures, objects, tasks, and so on—has a level. It might be called a tier or a difficulty instead of a level, but ultimately it's a numerical rating system used to compare things. Although you have to be careful about drawing too many correlations—a first-tier character isn't easily compared to a difficulty

1 wall or a level 1 animal—the principle is the same. Everything can be rated and roughly compared to everything else in the world. (It works best to take PCs out of this equation. For example, you shouldn't try to compare a PC's tier to a wall's level. Character tiers are mentioned here only for completeness.)

Last, if your mind leans toward statistics, you can look at difficulty as a percentage chance. Every number on the d20 is a 5% increment. For example, you have a 5% chance of rolling a 1. You have a 10% chance of rolling a 1 or a 2. Thus, if you need to roll a 12 or higher, you have a 45% chance of success. (A d20 has nine numbers that are 12 or higher: 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20. And 9×5 equals 45.)

For some people, it's easier to think in terms of a percentage chance. A GM might think, "She has about a 30% chance to know that fact about geography." Each number on a d20 is a 5% increment, and it takes six increments to equal 30%, so there are six numbers that mean the PC succeeds: 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20. Thus, since she has to roll 15 or higher, that means the target number is 15. (And that means the task is level 5, but if you've already determined the target number, you likely don't care about the level.)

ADVANTAGES OF THE SYSTEM

1. The GM makes measured adjustments in large, uniform steps. That makes things faster than if players had to do arithmetic using a range of all numbers from 1 to 20.

2. You calculate a target number only once no matter how many times the PCs attempt the action. If you establish that the target number is 12, it's 12 every time a PC tries that action. (On the other hand, if you had to add numbers to your die roll, you'd have to do it for every attempt.) Consider this fact in light of combat. Once a player knows that she needs to roll a 12 or higher to hit her foe, combat moves very quickly.

3. If a PC can reduce the difficulty of an action to 0, no roll is needed. This means that an Olympic gymnast doesn't roll a die to walk across a balance beam, but the average person does. The task is initially rated the same for both, but the difficulty is reduced for the gymnast. There's no chance of failure.

4. This is how everything in the game works, whether it's climbing a wall, sweet-talking a guard, or fighting a bioengineered horror.

5. Perhaps most important, the system gives GMs the freedom to focus entirely on the flow of the game. The GM doesn't use dice to determine what happens (unless they want to)—the players do. There aren't a lot of different rules for different actions, so there is little to remember and very little to reference. The difficulty can be used as a narrative tool, with the challenges always meeting the expected logic of the game. All the GM's mental space can be devoted to guiding the story.

GM INTRUSION

GM intrusion is the main mechanic that the GM uses to inject drama and additional excitement into the game. It's also a handy tool for resolving issues that affect the PCs but do not involve them. GM intrusion is a way to facilitate what goes on in the world outside the characters. Can the mastigophore track the PCs' movements through the complex? Will the fraying rope hold?



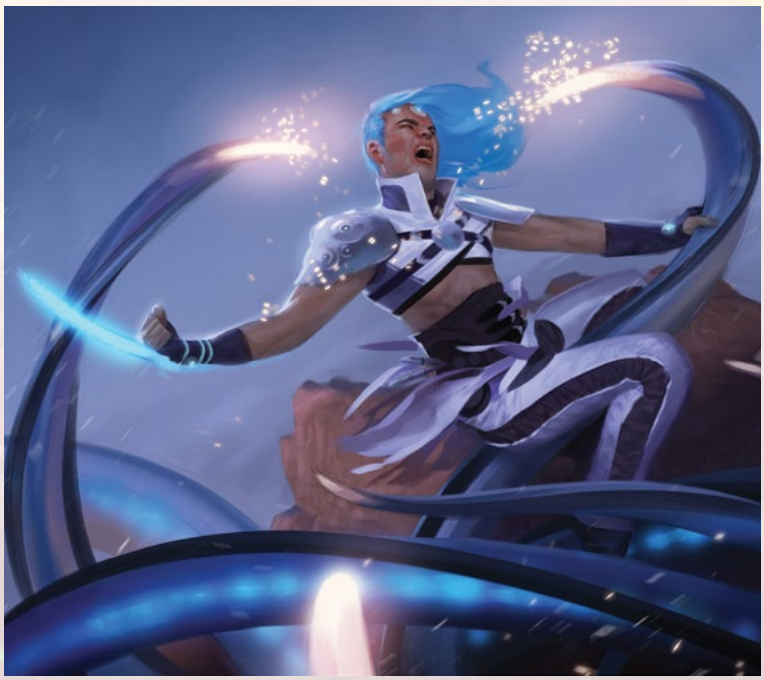
Mastigophore, page 241

Since the players roll all the dice, GM intrusion is used to determine if and when something happens. For example, if the PCs are fighting a noble's guards, and the GM knows that there are more guards nearby, the GM doesn't need to roll dice to determine if the other guards hear the scuffle and intervene (unless the GM wants to). They just decide when it would be best for the story—which is probably when it would be worst for the characters. In a way, GM intrusion replaces the GM's die rolling.

Remember, any time you give a player 1 XP for a GM intrusion, you're actually giving them 2: one to keep and one to give to another player.

The mechanic is also one of the main ways that GMs award experience points to the PCs. This means that the GM uses experience points as a narrative tool. Whenever it seems appropriate, they can introduce complications

Experience points, page 19



into the game that affect a specific player, but when they do so, they give that player 1 XP. The player can refuse the intrusion, but doing so costs her 1 XP. So by refusing an intrusion, the player does not get the experience point that the GM is offering, and she loses one that she already has. (This kind of refusal is likely to happen very rarely in your game, if ever. And, obviously, a player can't refuse an intrusion if she has no XP to spend.)

Ultimately what you want is for the players to interact with the situations in the game, not with the rules and numbers that represent the situation. Don't let the players get too worked up over mechanics, dice percentages, and whatnot. That doesn't drive the story.

Here's how a GM intrusion might work in play. Say the PCs find a hidden console with some buttons. They learn the right order in which to press the buttons, and a section of the floor disappears. As the GM, you don't ask the players specifically where their characters are standing. Instead, you give a player 1 XP and say, "Unfortunately, you're standing directly over this new hole in the floor." If the player wanted, they could refuse the XP, spend one of their own, and say, "I leap aside to safety." Most likely, though, they'll make the defense roll that you call for and let it play out.

Defense roll, page 119

There are two ways for the GM to handle this kind of intrusion. You could say, "You're standing in the wrong place, so make a roll." (It's a Speed defense roll, of course.) Alternatively, you could say, "You're standing in the wrong place. The floor opens under your feet, and you fall down into the darkness." In the first example, the PC has a chance to save himself. In the second example, he doesn't. Both are viable options. The distinction is based on any number of factors, including the situation, the characters involved, and the needs of the story. This might seem arbitrary or even capricious, but you're the master of what the intrusion can and can't do. RPG mechanics need consistency so players can make intelligent decisions based on how they understand the world to work. But they'll never base their decisions on GM intrusions. They don't know when intrusions will happen or what form they will take. GM intrusions are the unpredictable and strange twists of fate that affect a person's life every day.

When player modifications (such as skill, Effort, and so on) determine that success is automatic, the GM can use GM intrusion to negate the automatic success. The player must roll for the action at its original difficulty level or target number 20, whichever is lower.



PLAYER-AWARDED EXPERIENCE POINTS

Players who gain 1 XP as the result of GM intrusion also get 1 XP to award to another player for whatever reason they wish—maybe the other player had a good idea, told a funny joke, lent a helping hand, or whatever seems appropriate. This means that whenever the GM uses GM intrusion, they're actually giving out 2 XP. The ability to award XP to your friends is empowering and interactive. It helps the players regulate the flow of XP so that no one is left out. It rewards good play that pleases the group as a whole, ensuring that everyone contributes to everyone else's enjoyment. It shouldn't just be the GM who decides which players have done well. Some groups will want to decide the criteria for player-awarded points ahead of time. Some will just want to play it by ear.

Variant: Alternatively, the group could combine the player-awarded points and vote at the end of a session to decide who gets how many XP. This might be the most egalitarian way to do it, but it's probably not as fun or empowering to the individual players.

USING GM INTRUSION AS A NARRATIVE TOOL

A GM can use this narrative tool to steer things. That doesn't mean railroad the players or direct the action of the game with a heavy hand. GM intrusion doesn't enable you to say, "You're all captured, so here's your 1 XP." Instead, the GM can direct things more subtly—gently, almost imperceptibly influencing events rather than forcing them. GM intrusion represents things going wrong. The bad guys planning well. Fortune not favoring the PCs.

Consider this scenario: the GM plants an interesting adventure seed in a small village,

but the PCs don't stay there long enough to find it. Just outside the village, the PCs run afoul of a vicious viper that bites one of them. The GM uses intrusion to say that the poison from the snake will make the character debilitated unless they get a large dose of a very specific antitoxin, which the group doesn't have. Of course, they aren't required to go back to the village where the GM's interesting adventure can start, but it's likely that they will, looking for the antitoxin.

Some players might find intrusion heavy handed, but the XP softens the blow. And remember, they can refuse these narrative nudges. Intrusion is not meant to be a railroading tool—just a bit of a rudder. Not an inescapable track, but a nudge here and there.

What's more, the GM doesn't need to have a deliberate goal in mind. The complication they introduce could simply make things more interesting. They might not know where it will take the story, just that it will make the story better.

This is wonderfully empowering to the GM—not in a "Ha ha, now I'll trounce the PCs" way, but in an "I can control the narrative a little bit, steering it more toward the story I want to create rather than relying on the dice" sort of way. Consider that old classic plot development in which the PCs get captured and must escape from the bad guys. In heroic fiction, this is such a staple that it would almost seem strange if it didn't happen. But in many roleplaying games, it's a nearly impossible turn of events—the PCs usually have too many ways to get out of the bad guy's clutches even before they're captured. The dice have to be wildly against them. It virtually never happens. With GM intrusion, it could happen (again, in the context of the larger encounter, not as a single intrusion that results in the entire group of PCs being captured with little explanation or chance to react).

For example, let's say the PCs are surrounded by sathosh. One character is badly injured—debilitated—and the rest are hurt. Some of the sathosh produce a large weighted net. Rather than asking for a lot of rolls and figuring the mechanics for escape, the GM uses intrusion and says that the net goes over the PCs who are still on their feet. The rest of the abhumans point spears menacingly. This is a pretty strong cue to the players that surrender is a good (and possibly the only) option. Some players won't take the hint, however, so another use of intrusion might allow the sathosh to hit one of the trapped PCs on the head and render him unconscious while his friends struggle



in the net. If the players still don't surrender, it's probably best to play out the rest of the encounter without more GM intrusions—using more would be heavy-handed by anyone's measure—although it's perfectly reasonable to rule that a character rendered debilitated is knocked unconscious, since the abhumans are trying to take the PCs alive.

USING GM INTRUSION AS A RESOLUTION MECHANIC

This mechanic offers a way for the GM to determine how things happen in the game without leaving it all to random chance. Bad guys trying to smash down the door to the room where the PCs are holed up? The GM could roll a bunch of dice, compare the NPCs' stats to the door's stats, and so on, or the GM could wait until the most interesting time, have the bad guys break in, and award an experience point to the PC who tried their best to bar the door. The latter way is the Numenera way. Intrusion is a task resolution tool for the GM. In other words, GMs don't base things on stats but on narrative choice. (Frankly, a lot of great GMs over the years—even in the very early days of the hobby—have run their games this way. Sometimes they rolled dice or pretended to roll dice, but they were really manipulating things.) This method frees GMs from worrying about mechanics and looking up stats and allows them to focus on the story.

This isn't cheating—it's the rules of the game. This rule simply replaces traditional dice rolling with good game mastering, logic, and intelligent

GM intrusions that come as a result of a player rolling a 1 don't have to be tied to the action involved in the roll. A 1 is not a "fumble." Further, the effect of the intrusion doesn't have to be immediate.

Sathosh, page 251

Remember that GM intrusions can occur at any time, not just during combat. Disrupting or changing a tense interaction with NPCs can have big repercussions.

LOOKING FOR

Creating new artifacts, page 307
Creating new cyphers, page 308

At any time, it's reasonable to switch one "condition" for another. Thus, if a PC moves one step down on the damage track as the result of someone attempting to knock them out, that happens instead. This could also be the case if someone was trying to blind or deafen a PC, or anything else appropriate. Conversely, an effect that blinds could instead move a character one step down the damage track.

storytelling. When a PC is climbing a burning rope, and everyone knows that it will break at some point, the game has a mechanism to ensure that it breaks at just the right time.

Variant: If you want more randomness in your game, or if you want your game to seem like more of a simulation, assign a flat percentage chance for whatever you're trying to resolve. For example, each round, the abhumans have a 20% chance to break down the door—or, if you want the risk to escalate, a cumulative 20% chance to break down the door. By not using GM intrusion, this method robs the PCs of a few XP, but when they see you rolling dice, it might help with their immersion. Alternatively, you can pretend to roll dice but really use GM intrusion, though this method seriously robs the characters of XP.

There's a better way. Announce your intrusion, but say that there's only a chance it will happen (state the percentage chance), and then roll the dice in plain view of everyone. If the intrusion occurs, award the XP as normal. This is likely the best of both worlds. However, it takes the narrative power out of your hands and gives it to the dice. Perhaps this method is best used only occasionally. If nothing else, it injects some variety and certainly some drama.

USING (AND NOT ABUSING) GM INTRUSION

Too much of a good thing will make the game seem utterly unpredictable—even capricious. The ideal is to use about four GM intrusions per game session, depending on the length of the session, or about one intrusion per hour of game play. This is in addition to any intrusions that are triggered by players rolling 1s.

GM intrusions can be an opportunity to inject more of the weird into the game. Consider the following sample intrusions:

- *The broken hound suddenly speaks and begs for mercy (but it's a ploy, and the hound gets a sneak attack if the PCs stop their attack).*
- *The ground opens beneath the PC, who falls into an ancient, long-buried ruin.*
- *A nearby machine activates, and the air in the ancient complex turns to liquid.*
- *The PC's artifact suddenly develops an artificial intelligence of its own.*
- *The PC's cypher turns their skin glowing orange.*
- *An ultraterrestrial suddenly appears, takes something belonging to the PC (or gets in the way of an important action, foiling it) and then disappears.*

INTRUSION THROUGH PLAYER ROLLS

When a PC rolls a 1, handle the GM intrusion the same way that you'd handle an intrusion you initiated. The intrusion could mean the PC fumbles or botches whatever they were trying to do, but it could mean something else. Consider these alternatives:

- In combat, the PC's foe is not as hurt as it seemed. Give the foe 5 extra health.
- In combat, the PC drops their guard, and the foe gets a free attack.
- In combat, reinforcements for the PC's foes show up.
- In combat (or any stressful situation), an ally decides to flee.
- In combat (or any stressful situation), an ally doesn't like the PCs as much as they thought. He steals from them or betrays them.
- Out of combat, the PC's pack falls open, or the sole of their shoe tears open.
- Out of combat, it begins to rain heavily.
- Out of combat, a surprise foe appears, and the scene turns into a combat.
- In an interaction, the GM introduces a surprising motive for the NPC. For example, the PCs are trying to bribe an official for information, and he reveals that what he really wants isn't money but for someone to rescue his kidnapped son.

GM INTRUSION THAT AFFECTS THE GROUP

The core of the idea behind GM intrusion is that the player being adversely affected gains an experience point. But what if the intrusion affects the whole group equally? What if the GM uses it to have an unstable device overload and explode, harming all the characters? In this case, if no PC is involved more than the others (for example, no single PC was frantically attempting to repair the device), the GM should give 1 XP to *each* character but not give any of them an extra XP to hand out to someone else.

However, this kind of group intrusion should be an exception, not the rule. GM intrusions are much more effective if they are more personal.

EXAMPLE GM INTRUSIONS

It's not a good idea to use the same events as GM intrusions over and over ("Dolmar dropped his sword *again*?"). Below are a number of different intrusions you can use.

BAD LUCK

Through no fault of the characters, something happens that is bad or at least complicating. For example:

- The floorboard beneath the PC gives way.
- The boat lists to starboard at just the wrong moment.
- A gust of wind blows the papers out of the character's hand.
- The buckle of the PC's explorer's pack snaps at an inopportune time.
- The NPC that the characters need to speak with is home sick today.
- A device (cypher or artifact) malfunctions or gives the user a jolt.

AN UNKNOWN COMPLICATION EMERGES

The situation was more complex (and therefore more interesting) than the PCs knew—perhaps even more than the GM knew, at least at the start. For example:

- A poisonous snake darts out from the tall grass and attacks.
- The box that holds the plans is trapped with a poison needle.
- The NPC that the PCs need to befriend doesn't speak their language.
- The NPC that the PCs try to bribe is allergic to the bottle of alcohol they offer.
- The PCs find the book they need, but the pages are so brittle that if they open it, it might crumble.

AN IMPENDING COMPLICATION EMERGES

GMs can use this type of intrusion as a resolution mechanic to determine NPC success or failure. Rather than rolling dice to see how long it takes an NPC to rewire a damaged force field generator, it happens at a time of the GM's choosing—ideally when it would be most interesting. For example:

- The abhuman reinforcements finally get through the locked door.
- The ropes of the old rope bridge finally snap.
- The city guards show up.
- The unstable ceiling collapses.
- The NPC who holds a dagger to a character's throat and says "Don't move" cuts the PC when he does, in fact, move, putting him immediately at debilitated on the damage track.

OPPONENT LUCK OR SKILL

The PCs aren't the only ones with surprising tricks up their sleeves. For example:

- The PC's opponent uses a lightning-fast maneuver to dodge all attacks.
- The PC's opponent sees an opening and makes an additional, immediate attack.
- The NPC commander rallies the troops, and they all gain a +2 damage bonus for one round.
- The PC's opponent uses a cypher or similar device that produces just the right effect for the situation.
- A bit of the wall collapses in the middle of the fight, preventing the characters from chasing the fleeing NPC.

FUMBLES

Although you might not want every player roll of 1 to be a fumble, sometimes it could be just that. Alternatively, the GM could simply declare that a fumble has occurred. In either case, consider the following examples:

- In combat, the PC drops their weapon.
- In combat, the PC misses and strikes the wall, breaking or damaging their weapon.
- In combat, the NPC hits the PC harder than usual, inflicting 2 additional points of damage.
- In combat, the PC hits an ally by accident and inflicts regular damage.
- Out of combat, the PC drops or mishandles an important object or piece of equipment.
- In an interaction, the PC inadvertently (or even unknowingly) says something offensive.

PARTIAL SUCCESS

GM intrusion doesn't have to mean that a PC has failed. For example:

- The PC disables the explosive device before it goes off, but if someone doesn't remain and hold the detonator, it will explode.
- The PC creates the antidote, but it will turn the imbiber's flesh blue for the next few weeks.
- The PC jumps across the pit but accidentally knocks loose some stones from the edge, making the jump harder for their friend following behind.

PLAYER INTRUSIONS

Player intrusions give the players a small bit of narrative control over the world. However, the world still remains in the GM's purview. You can always overrule a player intrusion, or suggest a way to massage it so that it fits better into the setting as you have set it up. Still, because it is indeed narrative control, a player intrusion should always involve a small aspect of the world beyond the character, and not just the character. "I punch my foe really hard" is an expression of Effort or perhaps character ability. "My foe slips and falls backward off the ledge" is a player intrusion.

Player intrusions should never be as big as GM intrusions. They should not end an encounter, only (perhaps) provide the PC the means to more easily end an encounter normally. They should not have a wide-reaching or even necessarily a long-term effect on the setting. A way to consider this might be that player intrusions can affect a single object (a floorboard snaps), feature (there's a hidden shallow spot in the stream to ford), or NPC (the vendor is an old friend of mine). But not more than that. A player intrusion can't affect a whole village or even a whole tavern in that village. A rock can come loose, but a player intrusion can't create a landslide.

THE REST OF THE RULES

I'll say it again: the rules exist to be used as tools to shape the game, the story, and the experience. When you tell a player that the howling, bestial abhumans at the top of the cliff throw heavy stones down on her character and she gets hurt, the rules give you a way to explain just how hurt.



Player intrusion, page 30

It's telling that in Numenera, the rules define "quite hurt" and "pretty far" very generally, intentionally leaving a lot up to the GM's storytelling abilities. A game with a less-story-based approach would likely define such things far more precisely.

LOOKING FOR

Running the Game, page 309

One way to look at it is this: the GM is the sensory input for the player. The player can't know anything about what's going on in the fictional reality of the game unless the GM tells them. The rules, then, are one way to convey information to the players in a manner that is meaningful to everyone sitting at the table. The GM could say, "You're quite hurt," but the rules clarify *how* hurt. The GM could say, "You can hurl that spear pretty far," but the rules provide a definition of "pretty far" that helps keep things consistent, moderately realistic, and understandable so the GM doesn't have to repeat things over and over.

Might, page 22

The rules do more than that, of course. They determine success or failure for PCs and NPCs. They help define what resources characters have to interact with the world (although the best resource is the players' ingenuity, and that isn't defined by the rules).

ADJUDICATING



A lot of what I'm talking about here is what people sometimes call "adjudicating." Adjudicating is basically the difference between a computer game and a game run by an actual, living human being. All a computer can do (as of yet) is follow the rules. But a human can use their sense of logic (we'll discuss that in detail below) to determine whether the rules make sense for a given situation, and they can do it on a case-by-case basis. Because there's a human GM using logic, the rules for how to play Numenera take up only a small part of this hefty book. If the rules had to cover every imaginable situation, well, this would be a very different book.

Needler, page 299

For example, imagine that the PCs encounter an assassin who tries to kill them with a needler loaded with poisoned needles. One of the PCs is heavily armored and takes no damage from the needles—not even close. That sort of sounds like the needles just bounced off their armor. Should the poison on a needle that can't penetrate a character's armor affect that character? Probably not. But that's not an actual rule. Well, why not make it a rule? Because then suddenly anyone wearing a leather jerkin can't be affected by poison needles. Should that be the case? No, because the thick leather doesn't protect every area on the PC's body. It's more complex than that. Could you devise a rule to cover both situations? Probably, but why bother? The GM can make a decision based on the situation. (They can also use GM intrusion and say that a needle hit where the armor didn't offer protection—GM intrusion really does solve a lot of these issues.)

Likewise, sometimes a character who falls off a high ledge should be stunned and lose their next turn. That isn't the rule, but it makes sense—sometimes. And the key word is *sometimes*. Because sometimes the situation or the context means you don't want that to happen, so you adjudicate.

A character falling from a 100-foot (30 m) ledge might take 10 points of damage. That's a lot, but a fresh character with a decent amount of Might can take that and keep going. Sometimes that's okay, but sometimes it stretches our suspension of disbelief. If a player reads the rules on how much damage is dealt by falling, they might even have their character jump off a high cliff deliberately, knowing that they can take it. So you adjudicate that they don't just lose their next turn, but the fall also knocks them down a step on the damage track. That's harsh, and the player will really feel it. But they should, and it will keep them from exploiting what might seem like a hole in the rules in a way that no real person would (and no one in a story would).

Remember, it's your job to use the rules to simulate the world, even if the world is a fictional place with all kinds of strangeness. You're not a slave to the rules—it's the other way around. If you come across a hole in the rules or something that doesn't make sense, don't shrug your shoulders and say, "Well, that's what the rules say (or don't say)." Fix it.

When talking about rules, sometimes people will toss around words like "game balance" or refer to rules as "broken." These concepts belong in games where players build characters using extensive rules and make a lot of choices and then pit those characters against specific challenges to see how they fare. In such a game, a challenge rated or designed poorly, or a character option that grants too much or too little power, can throw everything completely out of whack. Advancing and improving characters is the point of that kind of game, and the way that characters "win" is by overcoming challenges (often, by fighting). Because Numenera is not a game about matching PC builds against specific challenges, nor is it a game about advancing characters (at least not solely, and in any event, characters do not advance due to fights or overcoming challenges), these concepts don't really apply. If something seems broken, change it. If a PC ability is too powerful, make it less so. Do it either as a part of the story, or—perhaps even better—just be up front with the players. "Hey, guys,

While GMs always have notes that they put together before the game session, it's smart to have a lot of blank paper to scribble on during the game. You'll invariably have to make stuff up as you go, and later you might want to remember what you did. Sometimes it will be a rules issue (remembering that it was a difficulty 4 jump to get across the pit, so it will be consistent when the PCs come back that way again), and sometimes it will just be an NPC's name or some detail about them.

this new psychic power of Ray's is just too good. It's making every fight a pushover and that's not fun. So I'm going to tone down its effect. Sound okay?" An honest discussion with the players is often the very best way to handle, well, just about any problem that crops up in a game. And if a player can't handle that kind of interaction, maybe you don't want them at your table anyway.

LOGIC

Running a game requires a lot of logic rather than a careful reading of the rules. For example, some things give characters a resistance to fire (almost always expressed as Armor). But there is no special rule for "fire damage" as opposed to "slicing damage" or "lightning damage." Instead, you use logic to determine whether the damage inflicted counts as fire. In these situations, there are only two times when your answer is wrong.

The first is when the answer breaks the players' suspension of disbelief. For example, something that makes a PC fire resistant should probably provide some protection against a heat-based weapon. If it doesn't, your answer will spoil the moment for the group.

The second wrong answer is when you're inconsistent. If you allow the fireproof armor a PC wears to give some protection against lava one time but not the next, that's a problem—not only because it breaks the suspension of disbelief but also because it gives the players nothing to base their decisions on. Without predictable consistency, they can't make intelligent decisions.

The Numenera rules are written with the assumption that the GM does not need to fall back on rules for everything, either for their own sake or as a defense against the players. "There's no rule that says you can't wear two kinds of armor, so that means I can wear two leather jerkins and get double protection, right?" Of course not. That makes no sense. The GM's logic rules the day here.

You shouldn't need pedantic rules to defend against the players. You and the players should work together to create a logical, consistent, and believable world and story. Players who try to use the lack of pedantry in the rules to gain unrealistic and illogical advantages for their characters should revisit the basic concept of Numenera.

Further, the rules don't say things like, "The GM decides if the NPC knows the answer to the question, or if he will answer, or how he will answer." Of course that's the kind of thing you decide—that's your role. The rules don't state that you decide if something is logical and appropriate to the story or setting any more than they state that the players decide what actions their characters will take. That's just the way the game works.

Does this put more pressure on the GM? Yes and no. It means that you need to make more judgment calls—more of the adjudication described above—which can be challenging if you're new at it. But being an arbiter of what seems appropriate and makes sense is something that we all do, all day long. Look at it this way: when you're watching a television show or a movie, at some point you might say, "That seems wrong," or "That seems unrealistic." There's no difference between doing that and using logic as a GM.

In the long run, relying on logic frees the GM. No longer saddled with hundreds (or thousands) of individual rules, compatibility issues, loopholes, and the like, you are free to move ahead with the story being told by the group. You can focus more on the narrative elements of the game than on the mechanical ones. To look at it a different way, in other games GMs sometimes spend a lot of time preparing, which is almost always rules-related stuff: creating NPC stat blocks, memorizing rules subsystems that will come into play, carefully balancing encounters, and so on. A Numenera GM does very little of that. Prepping for the game means figuring out cool storylines, weird new devices or foes, and the best way to convey the atmosphere. The mechanical elements can be handled during the game, using logic at the table.

DICE ROLLING

Using the rules involves rolling dice. If the dice don't mean anything, then everything is predetermined, and it's no longer a game by any definition—just a story being told. So the dice need to matter. But that means that sometimes a PC will fail when they would succeed if it were a story, and vice versa. That's not a flaw; it's a feature. It's what makes roleplaying games so exciting. When we're watching an action movie, we know that in the third act the hero will defeat the villain at just the right moment. But in an RPG, maybe not. It's not so predictable. That's one of the things that makes them so special.

On the other hand, things like GM intrusions sometimes trump the die rolls to help the story move along in a direction that is (hopefully) best for the game. How do you manage it all?

As you describe the action or as the PCs move about the world, the vast majority of

Armor, page 109

GMs can encourage smart players to be ready with their actions, and to know enough about how actions work so you don't have to ask if they're using Effort, or even tell them that they need to make a roll. In a perfect world, when it's Michele's turn and you ask what she's doing, she says, "I'm going to try to climb the tree to get out of the reach of the yovok. I'm going to use a level of Effort, and I rolled a 14." That way, you can just take that info and immediately tell her if she succeeded or not. This keeps play moving at a wonderfully brisk pace, and doesn't let game mechanics talk bog things down.

Remember, most of the time, powers, abilities, devices, and so forth are written from the point of view of the PC. But only players make die rolls. So, for example, if the circumstances call for an NPC to make a defense roll, that means a PC should make an attack roll instead.

things that happen shouldn't involve dice. Walking around, buying things in a market, chatting with NPCs, crossing the wilderness, looking for an ancient ruin—these are not actions that normally require die rolls. However, it's easy to think of exceptions where rolls might be needed. How do you decide? There are two rules of thumb.

First, don't ask for a roll unless it seems like there should be a chance of failure and a chance of success. If a PC wants to shoot an arrow from his bow and hit the moon, there's no need to roll, because there's no chance for success. Likewise, if they want to shoot that same arrow at a large building from 10 feet (3 m) away, there's no chance for failure. You and logic run the game, not the dice.

Second, if a creature (PC or NPC) or object is affected in a harmful way—or, in the case of a creature, in a way that they don't want to be affected, harmful or not—you need to involve a die roll. Whether the action is slashing with a blade, using deception to trick someone, intrusively reading an NPC's mind, breaking down a door, or applying poison, something is being harmed or affected in a way that it doesn't want to be, so a die roll is needed.

Might, page 22

Speed, page 22

Intellect, page 22

Thus, someone using a power to become invisible likely doesn't require a roll. It just works. There's really no chance of failure (unless the power comes from a faulty device or some other extraneous force is at work), and it doesn't directly affect anyone or anything other than the character becoming invisible. However, using a device to shape the emotions of another creature would require a die roll.

Good description is vital to a fun, engaging game. See Chapter 21: Building a Story (page 334) for more on this topic.

Of course, sometimes a character can use Effort to reduce the difficulty so there's no need to make a roll. But you, as the GM, can also waive the need for a roll. Consider a Nano who uses their Flash esotery on a bunch of level 1 rodents. Each has only 3 health, and the PC needs to roll only 3 or higher to affect each one, but there are twenty-four rodents. You can simply say, "With a discharge of sudden energy, you incinerate the swarm of rodents, leaving little behind but scorch marks and the smell of burnt hair." This keeps things moving and prevents the game from coming to a dead stop while the player makes two dozen rolls. Frankly, most first-tier characters will find level 1 creatures merely a nuisance, so no drama is ruined when the Nano takes them all out. Move on to another, greater challenge.

Nano, page 36

Flash, page 40

When you waive the need for a die roll, what you're effectively doing is making the action routine, so no roll is needed. In the case of the Nano, you're reducing the difficulty by one step due to circumstances: the rodents just aren't that tough. That's not breaking the rules—that's *using* the rules. That's the way the game is meant to be played.

As an aside, this doesn't mean that the swarm of rodents is a bad encounter. It would be bad in a game where it takes an hour and a half to resolve a fight that was no real challenge. But in Numenera? Even if the Nano doesn't blast every rodent, an encounter like that can be resolved in five minutes. Not every encounter needs to be life-or-death to be interesting. But we'll talk about designing encounters (and the related issue of pacing) in the next chapter.

TYING ACTIONS TO STATS

Although the decision is open to your discretion, when a PC takes an action, it should be fairly obvious which stat is tied to that action. Physical actions that involve brute force or endurance use Might. Physical actions that involve quickness, coordination, or agility use Speed. Actions that involve intelligence, education, insight, willpower, or charm use Intellect.

In rare instances, you could allow a PC to use a different stat for a task. For example, a character might try to break down a door by examining it closely for flaws and thus use Intellect rather than Might. This kind of change is a good thing because it encourages player creativity. Just don't let it be abused by an exuberant or too-clever player. It's well within your purview to decide that the door has no flaws, or to rule that the character's attempt will take half an hour rather than one round. In other words, using a stat that is not the obvious choice should be the exception, not the rule.

THE FLOW OF INFORMATION

You are the eyes and ears of the players. They can't know anything about the world unless you tell them. Make sure that the information you provide is both precise and concise. (We'll discuss good description in the next chapter.) Be evocative, but not to the point that the players lose details in the language you use. Be open to answering their questions about the world around them.

Sometimes it's easy: a PC looks over the top of the hill, and you tell them what they see. Other times things are hidden, or there's a chance that they miss something important—secret panels, cloaked assassins, creatures with natural camouflage, details of significance in a crowded marketplace, and so on. In these cases, perhaps a roll is involved. But it's odd to ask players to roll when they haven't taken any actions. It's within the bounds of the rules,

but it can be jarring. There are different ways to handle the situation: you can call for a roll, compare levels, or use an intrusion.

GM Calls for Rolls: This is the most straightforward approach. It's always the best choice if a PC's action is to search, listen, or otherwise keep an eye out. If a PC is on watch while her comrades rest, call for an Intellect roll immediately and use the result if anything happens during the entire time she is guarding.

But what if the PC isn't actively looking? Let's say a pickpocket moves up behind them to lift a few shins, so you ask the player to make an Intellect roll with a difficulty equal to the pickpocket's level. (Arguably, they could make a Speed-based roll to see if they are quick enough to catch a glimpse—it's up to you.) Some PCs are skilled in perceiving, and that would come into play here. Success means that you tell the PC what they see, and failure means that they notice nothing. However, the player knows that they had to make a roll, so they know that something is up. One way to keep players on their toes is to call for rolls when there is nothing to notice.

GM Compares Levels: You can take the player out of the equation (so as not to alert their suspicions) by comparing the PC's tier to the difficulty of the perceiving task. Ties go to the PC. You can still figure in skills and assets as bonuses to the PC's tier. So a third-tier character trained in perceiving will spot the level 4 predator cat stalking up behind them. This method is particularly good for determining simple results, such as whether the PC hears a river in the distance. That kind of thing isn't worth a roll, but for some reason, you might not want to give out the information automatically. This method also rewards a perceptive character, who will hear the noise before anyone else. Don't forget to increase the difficulty for distance in such a situation.

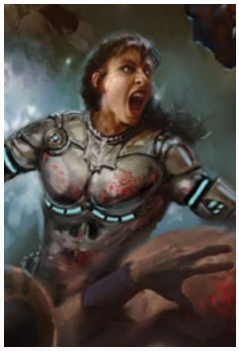
GM Intrudes: Rarely, you can keep things to yourself and spring the knowledge of what happened as a GM intrusion. If the PC discovers that their pocket is now empty of shins, that's certainly a complication. Sometimes the "discovery" itself is a complication—for example, the PC notices a mugging going on in the alley as they walk by.

In addition, the GM is the source of knowledge about the parts of the PCs' lives that don't take place in a game session. If a character used to be in the military and needs to know the name of their old unit commander, you need to give it to the player (or, better yet, let them come up with the name).

FAILURE TO NOTICE

Consider PCs missing a sensory detail very carefully. If there's a cool secret chamber in the ancient complex or an important clue under the table in the castle guardroom, maybe a perceptive PC should just find it (no roll required), particularly if they said they were looking. To do otherwise might mean submitting to the tyranny of the dice. Just because the PC rolled a 2, should the adventure come to a dead stop?

Well, in the first place, don't design a scenario that can come to a dead stop if the PCs botch one roll. There should always be multiple paths to success. In the second, consider your other options. Maybe the PCs will learn about the secret chamber later and they'll have to backtrack to find it. If the characters don't find the clue under the table, an NPC might—and then lord it over them with a show of superiority. If all else fails, as noted above, sometimes discovery is a complication, and you can simply foist it upon a PC through GM intrusion. In such a case, however, you might want to include a challenge. For example, the PC finds the secret door accidentally by leaning against the hidden control pad, which lets out the flying insectoid hunter-seekers guarding the chamber before the characters are ready for them.



The more information you give a player, the more intelligent a decision they can make.

On the other hand, perhaps in such a situation, the PCs didn't "earn" the discovery—if there was no roll, then no Effort was expended and no risks were taken. That's not good. Maybe the PCs just miss out this time. Maybe they should learn to be more observant.

In other words, the answer depends on the situation. Don't hesitate to vary things. It keeps the players guessing.

GRADUATED SUCCESS

Sometimes, a GM will break away from the traditional model that governs Numenera task resolution and allow for a graduated success. With this method, the GM sets a difficulty as usual, but if the player succeeds at a difficulty at least one step higher, the success is better than normal. Likewise, if their roll indicates that they would have succeeded at one step (or more) lower, they might have a partial success.

For example, a PC tracking murdens looks for tracks in the woods to see if any of the creatures came down a certain path recently. Given the terrain and the weather, the GM decides that the difficulty is 4, so the target number is 12. The player rolls a 10. This isn't enough to accomplish the task that the PC set out to do, but since they would have succeeded if the difficulty had been 3, the GM decides that they still learn that something

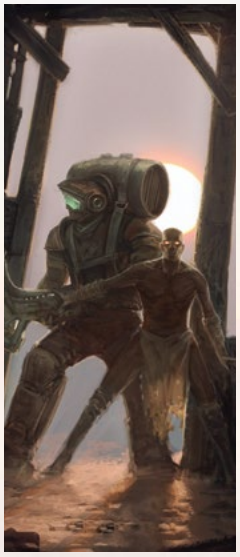


Murden, page 243

had come down the path recently—they just aren't certain if it was murdens, humans, or a large animal. The reason is that if the PC had simply been looking for tracks of any kind, the GM would have set a difficulty of 3. Similarly, if the player had rolled a 17—a success at least one step higher—the GM would have said that not only did they find murden tracks, but there were five of them, and their tracks show that they were burdened. In other words, the player would have received more information than they asked for.

In a situation where there are more results than simply success or failure, the GM can convey these results based on multiple difficulties. A player can state an action, and a GM can come up with not one difficulty but two, three, or more. For example, if the PCs try to persuade a merchant to give them information, the GM can predetermine that he gives them one minor bit of information if they succeed at a task with a difficulty of 2, a fair bit of information if they succeed at a task with a difficulty of 3, and everything he knows on the topic if they succeed at a task with a difficulty of 4. The players don't make three different rolls. They make one roll with a scaled, graduated success.

Cyphers, page 272



As a rule of thumb, reverse-engineer the situation. If the player rolls considerably higher or lower than the target number (more than 3 away), consider what a success at the difficulty they did overcome would have gained them. If creating a makeshift electronic key to open a numenera door has a target number of 18, what does the PC create if the player rolls 16? Perhaps the answer is nothing, or perhaps it is a makeshift key that works intermittently.

This system is rarely (if ever) used in combat or situations where something either works or doesn't. But when crafting an object, interacting with an NPC, or gaining information, it can be very useful. Of course, the GM is never required to use this model of task resolution—sometimes success or failure is all you need to know. Usually, graduated success involves going only one step higher or lower than the original difficulty, but the GM can be as flexible about that as they wish.

Last, sometimes a GM can offer a "consolation prize" for trying. Say a PC fears that a door has been rigged with a trap. They search it but fail the roll. The GM might still reveal something about the door. "You don't find anything special, but you do note that the door appears quite sturdy and is locked." It's the kind of information the GM might give automatically (think of it as a difficulty of 0), but it softens the blow of failure. Some information is better than none, and it makes sense that the PC will learn at least something if they study an object for a few minutes.

DEALING WITH CHARACTER ABILITIES

A lot of people might think that Numenera is a class-and-level game because it has things that are enough like classes (types) and levels (tiers) that it's easy to see the misconception. And that's fine.

But here's the real secret, just between you and me: it's not tiers, types, or any of that stuff that is the key to really understanding the system.

It's the cyphers.

In fact, there's a reason we call the game system of Numenera the Cypher System. The cyphers are the key to making the game work differently than other games. Numenera isn't about playing for years before a character is allowed to teleport, travel to other dimensions, lay waste to a dozen enemies at once, or create a mechanical automaton to do their bidding. They can do it right out of the gate if they have the right cypher.

This system works because both the GM and the player have a say over what cyphers a character has. It's not limiting—it's freeing.

The easiest way to design a good game is to limit—and strictly define—PC power. Characters of such-and-such a level (or whatever) can do *this* kind of thing but not *that* kind of thing. The GM knows that the characters aren't going to ruin everything because they can see into the past or create a nuclear explosion.

But that's not the only way to design a good game. What if you decide that while it wouldn't be so great if the PCs could see into the past (which would ruin the mystery of your scenario), it would be okay if they could blow up half the city? The Cypher System allows you to permit anything you feel is appropriate or interesting.

To put it another way (and to continue the ever-more-absurd examples), PCs who can solve every mystery and blow up every city probably end up making the game a pushover (and thus dull), but PCs who can solve *one* mystery or blow up *one* city won't ruin the campaign. Cyphers allow the characters to do amazing, cool, and fun things—just not reliably or consistently. Thus, although they potentially have access to great power from time to time, they have to use it wisely.

As the GM, it's important to remember the distinction between a character ability gained through type or focus, an ability or advantage gained through an artifact, and an ability gained



through a cypher. The first two kinds of abilities will shape the way you expect the characters to behave, but the cyphers won't. If a PC has the Exists Partially Out of Phase focus, they're going to be walking through walls all the time—it's what they do—so it shouldn't catch you off guard. In a way, you should "prepare" for it. I put that word in quotes because I don't mean that you nullify it. Don't put in a bunch of walls that they can't get through. That's no fun. Walking through walls is what they do, and if you take that away, they don't get to do anything. (Foiling their power every once in a while is fine because it might add to the challenge, but it should be the exception, not the rule.) By "preparing" for their ability, I mean don't expect a locked door to keep them out. Be ready when they sneak into places most people can't go, and be ready to tell them what they find.

But with cyphers, no preparation is necessary. First of all, most of them don't throw a wrench into anything—they just help the character deal with a situation in a faster way, giving them some healing, a temporary boost, or a one-use offensive power. Second, the PCs never end up with a cypher that you didn't give them, so you can have as much say over their cyphers as you want. And third (and perhaps most important), when a PC pulls out a detonation cypher and blows up the lead wagon in the caravan, completely changing the situation, that's part of the fun. You'll have to figure out on the fly what happens next, and so will the players. That's not ruining things—that's what is supposed to happen. Players surprising the GM is part of the game. Cyphers just make those surprises more frequent, and in ways as interesting as you're willing to allow.

We'll look at designing encounters later, but for now, remember this point: no single encounter is so important that you ever have to worry about the players "ruining" it. You hear those kinds of complaints all the time. "Their telepathic power totally ruined that interaction," or "The players came up with a great ambush and killed the main villain in one round, ruining the final encounter."

No. No, no, no. See the forest for the trees. Don't think about the game in terms of encounters. Think about it in terms of the adventure or the campaign. If a PC used a potent cypher to easily kill a powerful and important opponent, remember these three things:

1. They don't have that cypher anymore.
2. There will be more bad guys.
3. Combat's not the point of the game—it's merely an obstacle. If the players discover a way to overcome an obstacle more quickly than you expected, there's nothing wrong with that. They're not cheating, and the game's not broken. Just keep the story going. What happens next? What are the implications of what just happened?

Exists Partially Out of Phase, page 69

LOOKING FOR
GM intrusion, page 315

OPTIONAL RULE: MODIFYING ABILITIES

Sometimes, a player can use a special ability in a way that goes beyond its normal bounds. Such changes can be done on the fly. In some cases, it simply costs more points to use the ability in a new way. In other cases, more challenges are involved.

For any Intellect ability with a specific range, you can increase the range by using more mental energy. If you spend 1 additional Intellect point, you can change the range by one step—either from short to long, or from long to very long. You can't increase a range beyond very long (which is 500 feet, or 150 m) by spending more points. Any Intellect ability that has a duration (anything more than a single action in a single round) usually lasts one minute, ten minutes, or one hour. By spending 1 additional point of Intellect, you can increase the duration by one step, so an ability that lasts one minute can be made to last ten minutes. Durations cannot be increased by more than one step.

Hover, page 41

A player can make a special roll to modify the range, area, or other aspects of an ability. The roll is always modified by the stat it's normally based on.

The GM sets the difficulty for the roll based on the degree of modification. Like any roll, the player can use Effort, skill, and assets to reduce the difficulty. Generally, the difficulty falls into one of three categories:

Impossible (modifying an ability to accomplish an effect that has nothing to do with its description or intent)

Formidable (modifying an ability to do something similar to the description or intent, but changing its nature)

Difficult (modifying an ability to do something within the spirit and general idea of the ability)

For example, say a Nano knows the Hover esotery and wants to modify its use in the middle of an encounter. If they want to use it to blast someone with fire, that's an impossible task (difficulty 10) because fire has nothing to do with the ability.

If they want to use it offensively within the general description of the ability, they might try to make a foe fly up and hit its head on the ceiling. However, turning an ability that is not offensive into an attack changes its nature, making the task formidable (difficulty 7).

If they want to use it to make a friend hover rather than hovering themselves, that's within the spirit and general idea of the esotery. That's difficult (difficulty 4) but not unreasonable.

ENCOURAGING PLAYER CREATIVITY

Numenera is a game that places more importance on creativity than on understanding the rules. The players should succeed not because they've chosen all the "right" options when creating their characters but because they come up with the best ideas when facing challenges. This means that for every challenge, there should be a straightforward solution (destroy the lightning-emitting turret to get into the tower) and a not-so-straightforward one (sneak up to the tower, find the power conduit to the turret, and sever it). It's not your responsibility as the GM to come up with both. The players will come up with the not-so-straightforward solutions. You just have to be willing to go with their ideas.

This doesn't mean you have to let them succeed if they try something weird. On the contrary, the not-so-straightforward solution might end up being as hard as or harder than the straightforward one. But you have to be ready to adjudicate the idea no matter what. It's tempting to say that there's no way to find or sever the power conduit and the PCs have to destroy the turret the old-fashioned way (a combat encounter). In some situations, that might be appropriate—perhaps the conduit is simply not accessible to the PCs on the outside of the tower. But a GM has to be willing to say that sometimes it *is* possible and to adjudicate the details on the fly. If you don't, and you shut down the players' outside-the-box ideas, they will learn that the only thing to do is charge into the fray every time. That the obvious solution is the only possible solution. Eventually, this will make for boring play because things will seem repetitive and too tightly structured.

The best solution is not to develop preconceived notions of how the PCs might deal with the encounters in an adventure. If they're going to break into an Aeon Priest tower, you can note that the tower has a few guards, a pressure-sensitive intruder alert system around the perimeter, and a lightning-emitting turret on the top. But you don't know if the PCs will fight the guards, bribe them, or sneak past them. You don't know how they're going to deal with the alert system and the turret. That's not the kind of thing you need to think about ahead of time, but you have to be ready when it comes up at the table. You should prepare for the most obvious situations—for example, predetermine the level of the turret and how much damage it does. But when a player states that their action is to look around for spots where the turret cannot strike because a wall blocks it or the angle prevents it, that's when you take a second to consider and (particularly if they roll well on an Intellect action) maybe say, "Yes, as a matter of fact, there is a spot," even if no such thing had occurred to you before that moment.

CYPHERS

Although it's all right if players think of cyphers as equipment or treasure, the GM should look at them as character abilities. This means that it is incumbent upon the GM to make sure that players always have plenty of cyphers to use. In the course of their travels, the PCs should find that cyphers are extremely common. And since the PCs are limited in the number of cyphers they can carry, they will use the devices liberally.

Cyphers can be found by scavenging through ancient machines. They can be found in the corpses of numenera-powered foes (automatons, biomechanical or cybernetic creatures, and so on). They can be found among the possessions of intelligent fallen foes or the lairs of unintelligent creatures, either amid the bones of former meals or as shiny decorations in a nest. They can be found in villages, in the back of a merchant's cart that sells junk and scavenged parts. They are offered as rewards by people who are grateful for the PCs' help.

Some adventures will offer more cyphers than others. PCs will find more cyphers while exploring a machine-filled ruin than while exploring a forest. Still, as a rule of thumb, in any given adventure, a character should use at least as many cyphers as they can carry. This means they should find that number of cyphers in that same amount of time (give or take). Thus, you can simply add up the number of cyphers the PCs can carry, and on average, they should find at least that many cyphers in a given adventure.

If your players are typical, they will use combat-related cyphers liberally but hold onto their utility cyphers. A ray emitter or defensive shield will be used, but a suspensor belt or phasing module will linger longer on their character sheets.

As with everything else in the game, it's intentionally very easy for the GM to create new cyphers. Just think of the effect and how to express it as a game advantage. Two kinds of cyphers exist: those that allow the user to do something better, and those that allow the user to do something they couldn't do otherwise.

The first group includes everything that reduces the difficulty of a task (including defense tasks). The second group includes things that grant new abilities, such as flight, a new means of attack, the ability to see into the past, or any number of other powers.

A few more important notes about devising new cyphers:

- Cyphers should be single-use items. The PCs use them up and find new ones.
- Cyphers should be potent. A minor ability isn't worth the trouble. If an attack cypher isn't as good as a sword or a bow, why bother with it?
- Cyphers shouldn't have drawbacks.
- Cyphers should be temporary. Typically, a power is used once. Abilities or advantages that have a duration last from ten minutes to 28 hours (at most).
- Cyphers can take any form. Although most of the cyphers in chapter 17 have obvious forms, a ray emitter could be an injected nanite cluster that gathers in the host's eye, granting them the power to shoot a beam from that eye.

ARTIFACTS

In terms of the narrative, artifacts are a lot like cyphers, except that most are not one-use items. Mechanically, they serve a very different purpose. It's assumed that characters are exploring with some cyphers at their disposal. Artifacts, however, are added abilities that make characters broader, deeper, and often more powerful. They aren't assumed—they're extra.

The powers granted by artifacts are more like the abilities gained from a character's type or focus in that they change the way the PC is played overall. The difference is that almost all artifacts are temporary. They last longer than cyphers do, but because they have a depletion roll, any use could be their last.

Like cyphers, then, artifacts are a way for the GM to play a role in the development of the characters. Although armor, weapons, and the like are fine, special capabilities—such as long-range communication or travel—can really change the way the PCs interact with the world and how they deal with challenges. Some of these abilities enable the actions you want the PCs to take. For example, if you want them to have an underwater adventure, provide them with artifacts (or cyphers) that allow them to breathe underwater.

Also like cyphers, artifacts are simple to create. The only difference is that you give artifacts a depletion roll, using any numbers on 1d6, 1d10, 1d20, or 1d100. If you want the artifact to be used only a few times, give it a depletion roll of 1 in 1d6, 1 or 2 in 1d10, or even 1 or 2 in 1d6. If you want the PCs to use it over and over, a depletion roll of 1 in 1d100 more or less means that they can use it freely without worrying too much.

Don't be afraid to have PCs find artifacts. Some other games and settings might use the word "artifact" to denote something of incredible power, but we use it in Numenera in its more standard definition: an object crafted

Numenera isn't a game where PCs should get too attached to their belongings. Cyphers, of course, are "fire and forget" items, expendable and easily replaced. Even artifacts only last for a while before they are depleted. While technology is obviously an important part of the game, what characters can do themselves is more important. Those are the abilities they can always rely on.



Oddities are not designed to have actual game effects. If the players think of a creative way to use an oddity to gain an advantage, let them.

While an NPC's level and stats are important, just as important are their appearance, the way they talk, and how they act. If an NPC is going to be more than a simple, short-term foe (like a bandit), when you make your notes about things like their level and Armor, also note something about their appearance or personality. If an NPC is going to interact with the PCs for more than a minute, note at least two different things: they make stupid jokes, they have a scar on their ear, they laugh too much, they talk very softly, they smell bad, and so on.

by an intelligent being in the past. Some artifacts are quite modest in their potency. Many tier 1 and 2 characters should find or otherwise obtain artifacts, and certainly by tier 3, essentially all PCs should have *at least* one.

SKILLS AND OTHER ABILITIES

Sometimes, the rules speak directly to character creativity. For example, players can make up their own skills. It's possible to have a skill called "tightrope walking" that grants a character a better chance to walk across a tightrope, and another skill called "balance" that gives a character a better chance to walk across a tightrope and perform other balance actions as well. This might seem unequal at first, but the point is to let players create precisely the characters they want. Should you let a character create a skill called "doing things" that makes them better at everything? Of course not. The GM is the final arbiter not only of logic but also of the spirit of the rules, and having one or two single skills that cover every contingency is clearly not in the spirit.

It's important that players play the character they want. This concept is supported not only with the open-ended skill system but also with the ability to get an experience point advance to tailor a character further. Likewise, the GM should be open to allowing a player to make small modifications to refine their character. In many cases, particularly ones that don't involve stat Pools, Armor, damage inflicted, or the costs of Effort or actions (like esoteries), the answer from the GM should probably be, "Sure, why not?" If a PC ends up being really good at a particular skill—better than they "should" be—what's the harm? If Devrial the Glaive can swim incredibly well, how does that hurt the game in terms of the play experience or the story that develops? It doesn't. If Havane the Jack can pick practically any mundane lock she finds, why is that a bad thing? In fact, it's probably good for the game—there's likely something interesting on the other sides of those doors.

Stat Pool, page 22

In a way, this is no different than adjudicating a not-so-straightforward solution to a challenge. Sometimes you have to say "No, that's not possible." But sometimes, if it makes sense, open yourself up to the possibility.

HANDLING NPCs

Nonplayer characters are people and creatures that live in the world alongside the PCs. They are just as much a part of the world as the PCs and should be portrayed as realistically as PCs. NPCs are the main way to breathe life into the world, tell the stories the world has to tell, and portray the kind of game you want to run. Memorable NPCs can make or break a campaign.

Chapter 15: Nonplayer Characters, page 263

Because Numenera isn't just about combat and gaining power, Numenera NPCs should be motivated by things beyond that. Love, lust, embarrassment, loyalty, revenge, familial ties, altruism, and curiosity are all great motivators.

LOOKING FOR

Group intrusion, page 318

NPCs shouldn't be "cannon fodder" because no one thinks of themselves that way. Real people value their lives. They shouldn't be idiots, easily fooled into doing things or acting in ways that no person ever would, simply because a die roll suggests it (unless they're not very bright or something more powerful—like mind control—is at work).

Think about real people that you know or characters from books, television, and movies. Base your NPCs' personalities on them. Make them as widely varying, as interesting, and as deep as those people.

Remember, too, that there are minor characters and major ones, just like in a book. The bandits who waylay the PCs are in the spotlight for only a few minutes at most and don't need a lot of development, but a major adversary or ally might get a lot of attention from the players and therefore deserves a lot from you. As with so many things related to being a good GM, consistency and believability are the keys to developing a good NPC.

NPC GAME STATS

NPCs should be easy to create. Most can simply be pegged at a level from 1 to 10 and you're done. Working on how to describe or portray them will take longer than working up their game stats.

Sometimes, though, you'll want to elaborate on the NPC's capabilities and tailor them to the concept. A level 4 NPC who is an expert in the numenera might be level 5 or 6 in numenera-related tasks, such as understanding numenera or identifying devices. But don't simply make the NPC level 5 or 6 overall because then they'd also be better at combat, interactions, climbing, jumping, and everything else, and that doesn't fit your concept.

Use the NPCs in Chapter 15: Nonplayer Characters as good starting points or as examples for what you can do. But you're not limited by them. In fact, you're not limited in any way. The most important thing to remember about NPCs in Numenera is that they do not follow the same rules as PCs. They don't have descriptors, types, or foci. They don't have tiers or any of the same stats. They don't even roll dice.

NPCs work precisely as you (and the setting and story) need them to. If an NPC is the greatest swordsman in the land, you can give him obvious advantages with a sword in attack and defense, but you can go outside the box as well, allowing him to attack more than once

per turn, attempt to disarm foes with a flick of his blade, and so on.

There are no hard-and-fast rules for creating an NPC who can be matched perfectly against the PCs in combat—it's not that kind of game, and that's not the purpose of NPCs. Instead, use the game's simple mechanics to portray the NPCs in the world and in your narrative so that they make sense and can do what you want them to do (and cannot do what you don't want them to do).

Like the player characters, NPCs often carry and use cyphers. Thus, any NPC could have virtually any capability at their disposal as a one-shot power. In theory, NPCs can heal themselves, create force fields, teleport, turn back time, hurt a foe with a sonic blast, or do anything else. An NPC might also use esoteries, possess mutant powers, or have biomechanical implants. You can lay out these cyphers and abilities when preparing for the game, or you can just go with the idea that certain NPCs can produce amazing and surprising effects and make them up as you go along—with some caveats.

If all NPCs can do whatever they want, whenever they want, that won't instill much believability in the players or give you much credibility as a GM. So keep the following things in mind.

Keep to the Level: NPCs should generally keep to their level parameters. Sure, you can give a tough NPC more health than their level might indicate, and the aforementioned great swordsman might attack and defend with his blade at higher than his normal level, but these are minor exceptions.

Explain Things However You Want: If you keep to the level parameters generally, you can express them in all sorts of interesting ways. For example, a level 5 NPC usually inflicts 5 points of damage. But that damage might come from waves of magnetic force that they can produce thanks to a nanotech virus that has taken over their body.

Wild Cards: You might give some NPCs—Nanos, cobblers with many strange devices, and the like—a wild card ability that allows them to do interesting things like levitate, use telekinesis, construct objects of pure force, and so forth. You don't have to nail down these powers ahead of time. These rare NPCs can just do weird things. As long as you keep them reasonable most of the time, no one will bat an eye. (If every important foe has a force field, that will seem repetitious, dull, and unfair to the PCs.)

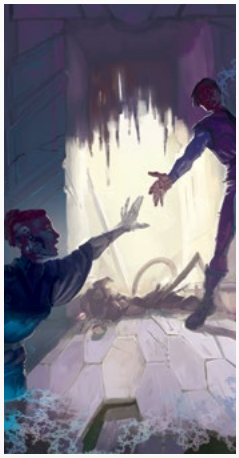
Use GM Intrusions: Since a PC can produce all kinds of interesting, useful, and surprising effects thanks to cyphers, you can occasionally replicate this for an NPC by using GM intrusion to give them precisely the ability needed in the current situation. If an NPC has been poisoned, they pull out a vial of antivenom. If a villain is cornered by the PCs, they activate a device on their belt that lets them phase down through the floor. If a foe is at the extreme edge of health, they inject themselves with a temporary adrenaline boost that restores 15 health immediately.

You can think of GM intrusion for a creature like this: "This creature can do whatever horrible thing I want it to do, and to activate that ability, I give its victim 1 XP."

NPCs AND DEATH

As explained in Chapter 15: Nonplayer Characters, NPCs have a health score rather than three stat Pools. When an NPC reaches 0 health or below, they are down. Whether that means dead, unconscious, or incapacitated depends on the circumstances as dictated by you and the players. Much of this can be based on logic. If the NPC is cut in half with a giant axe, they're probably dead. If they're mentally assaulted with a telepathic attack, they might be insane instead. If they're hit over the head with a club, well, that's your call.

It depends on the intentions of those who are fighting the NPC, too. PCs who want to knock out a foe rather than kill them can simply state that as the intention and describe their actions differently—using the flat of the blade, so to speak.



INTERACTIONS

Let's say the PCs want to learn more about a missing man, so they talk to his best friend. You and the players roleplay the conversation. The players are friendly and helpful and ask their questions with respect. Do you call for an Intellect roll (using the friend's level to determine the difficulty) to see if he will talk to them, or do you simply decide that he reacts to them well and gives them the information?

As another example, an old woman has watched over the entrance to an ancient ruin for years. She considers it a duty given to her by the gods and has never told anyone the secrets she knows. The PCs come along with some training in interactions, roll dice, and expect the woman to spill her guts. Does she tell them everything?

The answer to both questions is: it depends. In either situation, you're justified in ignoring the dice and mechanics and simply handling things through table conversation. That's what makes interaction encounters so interesting and so distinctive from, say, combat. You can't put aside the dice and act out the fight between the PCs and a dread destroyer, but you can roleplay a conversation. In such cases, you can portray the NPCs precisely as you want, in ways that seem

Dread destroyer, page 234



fitting to their personalities, without worrying about die rolls. The best friend probably wants to help the PCs find his missing comrade. The old woman would never give her secrets to a band of smooth talkers that shows up on her doorstep one day. You can also ensure that the players get the information you want them to get—and don't get the information you don't want them to get.

For more about language in the Ninth World, see Language, page 132.

On the other hand, sometimes using game mechanics is a better option. For example, a person who isn't particularly eloquent might want to play a character who's a smooth talker. You wouldn't require a player who's never held a sword in real life to prove that they're an adept combatant to win a fight in the game, so you should not force the player of a charming character to be, well, charming. The game mechanics can simulate those qualities.

Truth, page 133

And sometimes, you can use both approaches. You can let the conversation with the NPC play out around the table, and then call for rolls—not to determine whether the PCs succeed or fail at the interaction but to get an idea of the degree of success. For example, if the characters have a good cover story for why the guards at the gate should let them pass, the roll might determine not whether the guards say yes (you can use logic for that) but whether the guards accompany the PCs beyond the gate. In a way, the die roll shapes an NPC's reaction. It's not an on/off switch but a general degree of the overall trust that the PCs earn.

Want to learn to talk like a Ninth-Worlder? See page 412.

LANGUAGE

Careful readers will have noticed that there are no rules for languages in Numenera. That's because for most people, language is more of a background or roleplaying feature than a mechanical one. You don't want to have to make a roll to speak, for example. Characters should begin the game knowing the language(s) that make the most sense for them. For the vast majority, that will be the Truth, and maybe a bit of some local dialect or unique language. As the game progresses, characters can learn new languages by spending XP to gain short-term benefits. More than likely, learning a new language will have only a limited or short-term benefit because most languages other than the Truth aren't widely used.

Language is a special case, however, because some people won't want to deal with it. And that's fine. Some players and GMs will find it an interesting challenge to communicate with people or creatures who don't share a common language. Others will think it's an impediment to interaction with no real upside. You can handle the issue however you want.

NPC ALLIES

Because the players usually roll all the dice, NPCs who are not opponents raise unique issues in Numenera. If a character gains an

NPC ally who accompanies the group, how are the ally's actions resolved?

Most of the time, the GM should decide what makes the most sense in the context of the situation and the NPC. If the characters climb up a steep slope and must make rolls to ascend, the NPC doesn't make a roll. Instead, the GM quickly considers whether he could climb it and goes from there. A fit, able ally should simply climb the slope. A feeble or out-of-shape NPC will need assistance. In other words, the NPC doesn't face the challenge (that's what the PCs do)—he remains a part of the unfolding story. The old man the PCs must escort through dangerous mountains needs help climbing because that's part of the story of the adventure. His able-bodied son who also travels with the group does not need help because that wouldn't make much sense.

If the entire group is caught in a landslide later in that same adventure, the GM can do one of two things in regard to the NPCs. Either decide what happens to them as seems most logical or fitting (perhaps using GM intrusion, since what befalls the NPCs also affects the PCs), or have the players roll on behalf of the NPCs and treat them just like the player characters in every way possible.

CREATURES

Whenever possible, creatures should be handled like other NPCs. They don't follow the same rules as the player characters. If anything, they should have greater latitude in doing things that don't fit the normal mold. A many-armed beast should be able to attack multiple foes. A charging rhino-like animal ought to be able to move a considerable distance and attack as part of a single action.

Consider creature size very carefully. For those that are quick and hard to hit, increase the difficulty to attack them by one step. Large, strong creatures should be easier to hit, so decrease the difficulty to attack them by one step. However, you should freely give the stagger ability to anything twice as large as a human. This means that if the creature strikes a foe, the target must make an immediate Might defense roll or lose its next turn.

A creature's level is a general indicator of its toughness, combining aspects of power, defense, intelligence, speed, and more into one rating. In theory, a small creature with amazing powers or extremely deadly venom could be high level, and a huge beast that isn't very bright and isn't much of a fighter could be low level. But these examples go against type. Generally, smaller creatures have less health and are less terrifying in combat than larger ones.

Numenera has no system for building creatures. There is no rule that says a creature with a certain ability should be a given level, and there is no rule dictating how many abilities a creature of a given level should have. But keep the spirit of the system in mind. Lower-level creatures are less dangerous. A level 1 creature could be poisonous, but its venom should inflict a few points of damage at most. The venom of a level 6 creature, however, might knock a PC down a step on the damage track or put them into a coma if they fail a Might defense roll. A low-level creature might be able to fly, phase through objects, or teleport because these abilities make it more interesting but not necessarily more dangerous. The value of such abilities depends on the creature that uses them. In other words, a phasing rodent is not overly dangerous, but a phasing battle juggernaut is terrifying. Basic elements such as health, damage, and offensive or defensive powers (such as poison, paralysis, disintegration, immunity to attacks, and so on) need to be tied directly to level—higher-level creatures get better abilities and more of them.

CHARACTER CUSTOMIZATION OPTIONS

Numenera characters are easy to create, but some players will want to customize them more than the system initially allows. They can use the following rules to slightly (or significantly) customize their characters precisely as they wish. As always, the GM is the final arbiter of which optional rules are available in the game.

OPTIONAL RULE: ACTING WHILE UNDER ATTACK

When a character is engaged in melee combat, doing anything other than fighting makes them more vulnerable. This is true for PCs and NPCs. If a character engaged in melee takes an action other than fighting, each of their opponents can make an immediate extra attack. The only exception to this rule is moving. If the character's only action is to move, they are assumed to be moving slowly and carefully out of the fight, safely withdrawing from combat.

For example, Toram has his back against a security door while fighting two sathosh. If he tries to open the door using its control terminal, he is taking an action other than fighting, and both sathosh get to make an attack against him.



It's possible—even likely—that different NPCs might have different words or names for the same creature, the same geographical feature, or the same bit of numenera.

Creatures, page 222

The GM could also handle this kind of attack with an occasional GM intrusion.

CUSTOMIZING CHARACTER TYPES

The following aspects of the three character types can be modified at character creation as suggested. Other abilities should not be changed.

Cypher, page 272

STAT POOLS

Stat Pools, page 22

Each character type has a starting stat Pool value. A player can exchange points between their Pools on a one-for-one basis, so, for example, they can trade 2 points of Might for 2 points of Speed. However, no starting stat Pool should be higher than 20. Keep in mind that Jacks get more starting points than other characters get, and this option could make them more potent.

Glaive, page 28

Nano, page 36

Jack, page 44

EDGE

Edge, page 23

A player can start with an Edge of 1 in whichever stat they wish. Because Glaives start with an Edge of 1 in both Might and Speed, using this optional rule allows a Glaive to have an Edge of 1 in any two stats (not just Might and Speed). Keep in mind that Jacks already have the ability to choose which stat they have an Edge in, so using this optional rule decreases one of the advantages of being a Jack.

Might, page 22

Speed, page 22



Shins, page 93

CYPHER USE

If a starting character sacrifices one starting skill (a physical skill for a Glaive, or understanding numenera for a Nano), they can use one more cypher than is listed. Alternatively, if a character gives up one cypher, they gain an additional trained skill of their choosing. Either way, no more than one cypher should be changed.

NONVARIABLE ABILITIES

Each type has static, unchanging abilities at the first tier that don't involve any of the above aspects. For a first-tier Glaive, those abilities are Combat Prowess, Trained in Armor, and Weapons. For a Nano, they are Weapons and Skills. For a Jack, those abilities are Weapons, Skills, and Flex Skill. Any one of these abilities can be sacrificed to gain training in one skill of the player's choice.

CUSTOMIZING DESCRIPTORS

Under the normal rules, each descriptor is based on some modification of the following:

Some descriptors offer +4 to one stat Pool and either two narrow skills or one broad skill.

Other descriptors offer +2 to one stat Pool and either three narrow skills or one narrow skill and one broad skill.

A broad skill covers many areas (such as all interactions). A narrow skill covers fewer actions (such as deceptive interactions). Combat-related skills, such as defense or initiative, are considered broad skills in this sense.

Regardless, you can add an additional skill if it is balanced by an inability that is essentially a "negative skill." You can add other nonskill abilities by eyeballing them and trying to equate them to the value of a skill, if possible. If the descriptor seems lacking, add about 10 to 15 shins' worth of additional equipment to balance things out.

With this general information, you can customize a descriptor, but keep in mind that a heavily customized descriptor isn't a descriptor if it no longer says one thing about a character. It's better to use this information to create a new descriptor that fits exactly how the player wants to portray the character.

CUSTOMIZING FOCI

At any tier, a player can select one of the following abilities in place of the ability granted by the tier. Many of these replacement abilities, particularly at the higher tiers, involve bodily modification with devices or something similar.

TIER 1

Self-Improvement: You gain 6 new points to divide among your stat Pools however you wish. Enabler.

Bringing the Pain: You deal 1 additional point of damage with every attack you make. Enabler.

More Training: You gain an additional skill of your choice (not combat or defense) in which you are not already trained. Enabler.

TIER 2

Lower-Tier Ability: Choose any tier 1 ability, above.

Offensive Combat Training: Choose one type of attack in which you are not already trained: light bashing, light bladed, light ranged, medium bashing, medium bladed, medium ranged, heavy bashing, heavy bladed, or heavy ranged. You are trained in attacks using that type of weapon. Enabler.

Defensive Combat Training: Choose one type of defense task in which you are not already trained: Might, Speed, or Intellect. You are trained in defense tasks of that type. Enabler.

TIER 3

Lower-Tier Ability: Choose any tier 1 or 2 ability, above.

Nanotech Health: Thanks to an injection of artificial antibodies and immune defense nanobots into your bloodstream, you are now immune to diseases, viruses, and mutations of any kind.

Fusion Armor: You find someone to perform surgery on you, and the procedure gives you biometal implants in major portions of your body. These implants give you +1 to Armor even when you're not wearing physical armor.

TIER 4

Lower-Tier Ability: Choose any tier 1, 2, or 3 ability, above.

Nanotech Resistance: Thanks to an injection of biological agents and nano-defenders, you are now immune to poisons, toxins, or any kind of particulate threat, including the iron wind. You are not immune to viruses, bacteria, or radiation.

Built-in Weaponry: You find someone to perform surgery on you, and the procedure gives you biomechanical implants in your hands or eyes. The implants allow you to fire a blast of energy that inflicts 5 points of damage with a range of 200 feet (60 m). There is no cost for you to use this ability. Action.

TIER 5

Lower-Tier Ability: Choose any tier 1, 2, 3, or 4 ability, above.

Adaptive Field: Thanks to a device implanted in your spine, you now have a field that radiates 1 inch (2.5 cm) from your body. The field keeps you at a comfortable temperature; keeps out dangerous radiation, diseases, and gases; and always provides you with breathable air.

Defensive Field: Thanks to a device implanted in your spine, you now have a force field that radiates 1 inch (2.5 cm) from your body and provides you with +2 to Armor.

TIER 6

Lower-Tier Ability: Choose any tier 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 ability, above.

Reactive Field: Thanks to a device implanted in your spine, you now have a force field that radiates 1 inch (2.5 cm) from your body and provides you with +2 to Armor. In addition, if struck by a melee attack, the field provides a backlash that inflicts 4 points of electricity damage to the attacker.

DRAWBACKS AND PENALTIES

In addition to all the other customization options, a player can choose to take a variety of drawbacks or penalties to gain further advantages.

WEAKNESS

Weakness is, essentially, the opposite of Edge. If you have a weakness of 1 in Speed, all Speed actions that require you to spend points cost 1 additional point from your Pool. At any time, a player can choose to give a character a weakness and in exchange gain +1 to their Edge in one of the other two stats. So a PC can take a weakness of 1 in Speed to gain +1 to their Might Edge.

Normally, you can have a weakness only in a stat in which you have an Edge of 0. Further, you can't have more than one weakness, and you can't have a weakness greater than 1, unless the additional weakness comes from another source (such as a disease or disability arising from actions or conditions in the game).

INABILITIES

Inabilities are like negative skills. They hinder one type of task. If a character chooses to take an inability, they gain training in a skill of their choosing. Normally, a character can have only one inability unless the additional inability comes from another source (such as a descriptor or from a disease or disability arising from actions or conditions in the game).

The rules for customizing foci are designed for players who like the idea of a particular focus but find that perhaps one of the abilities that it confers doesn't quite fit their character concept.

Skills, page 27

Advances in tier are dramatic. While PCs start out capable, by tier 3 they are quite powerful. Tier 6 PCs are capable of miracles. This is so that characters are ever-changing and play experience never dulls. If these changes are too dramatic for your tastes, slow advancement down by requiring that players use some specific portion of their XP for rerolls or options unrelated to tier advancement.

Armor, page 109

CHAPTER 21

BUILDING A STORY

TEACHING THE RULES

It's not really your job to teach the players the rules, yet it often falls upon the GM to do just that. Before beginning a game, encourage the players to read Chapter 2: How to Play Numenera to get an overview of the game. It won't take them long.

You'll probably also want to give them an overview of the setting (Chapter 1: Welcome to the Ninth World is designed just for this purpose). Focus primarily on the kinds of characters a player can create and what they might do in the game. Once players understand who they are and what they'll do, the rest of the setting is just details they can discover as they go along.

The key to teaching someone the game is to start with the idea of the dice rolls and how they use the same mechanic no matter what a character tries to do. Then explain using Effort, which involves an introduction to the three stats. After that, a player is ready to start making a character. Taking a new player through the character-creation process gets them ready to play. Don't overload them with a lot of details beyond that. All of those can be picked up as needed in the course of play.

GM intrusion, page 123

Difficulty, page 102

For additional assistance with character creation, see Appendix D: Character Creation Walkthrough, page 406.

Target number, page 15

For further immersion in the setting, encourage your players to read "The Amber Monolith," page 6.

Dice rolls, page 321

Effort, page 23

Stats, page 22

THE FIRST FEW SESSIONS

With any game, GMs should consider running it a little differently the first few times, and Numenera is no different. There are a few things a GM can expect with a table full of new players. First of all, they won't get the terminology and the jargon right—they'll use the terminology and jargon of the last game they played. And that's fine. But the GM should try to get it right because the players will follow the GM's lead, and after a session or two, they'll start getting it right. If the GM always calls things by the wrong name, the players will, too. However, don't just spout jargon. Each time you use a new term for the first time, such as "damage track," "GM intrusion," or even "difficulty," explain what it means. Make sure everyone's on the same page, even with the basic stuff.

When using Numenera distance terminology, feel free to use "close" and "immediate" interchangeably. Use whatever sounds best in context. The Nano might be "close" to the Glaive, within "close range," or within "immediate distance."

Damage track, page 110

The players won't know what's easy and what's hard. Part of good Numenera play is knowing when to use Effort and when to conserve, but beginning players will have no frame of reference. In this case, the best way to give them some solid ground on which to stand is to be fairly transparent. Tell them the target number for each task before they attempt an action. Guide them through the process. Remind them that they can use Effort if need be, although they probably won't forget. On the contrary, beginning players tend to use Effort on every roll. You can almost count on it. This means you can expect beginning characters to do very well in whatever they set out to do, but they'll have to rest more often because they'll deplete their stat Pools more quickly.

RUNNING NUMENERA COMBATS

Numenera combats should be *about* something. There should be something interesting at stake. "Trying not to die" is an interesting stake, but it's not the only one. Combat can be fun and hopefully exciting in its own right, but it's not necessarily the focus. In other words, fighting through a long combat isn't the point, and finding a way to win a combat quickly through creative thought isn't cheating. In fact, it should be encouraged. Defeating the "big boss monster" easily should not be a letdown; it should be the result of smart, creative play. And Numenera adventures shouldn't always have a climax involving a "big boss monster," anyway. The exciting end to the story could involve surviving a massive landslide, finding a way to shut down a dangerous machine, or convincing a tyrannical warlord to let the hostages go.

OPTIONAL RULE: ALTERNATIVES TO POINTS OF DAMAGE

Sometimes, a GM might want to portray the dangers of the Ninth World in ways other than points of damage. For example, a particularly nasty disease or wound might give a character a weakness or inability.

Weakness is, essentially, the opposite of Edge. If you have a weakness of 1 in Intellect, all Intellect actions that require you to spend points cost 1 additional point from your Pool.

Damage can also inflict inabilities. As explained in chapter 5, inabilities are like "negative skills." Instead of easing that kind of task, you're hindered.

NUMENERA IS ABOUT DISCOVERY. CAN YOU HAVE DISCOVERY THROUGH COMBAT?

Sure. Say the PCs are exploring an ancient complex and encounter a strange life form. The creature attacks, but during the fight, it telepathically says things like "Curious" and "Creature unknown" and "Protect the sanctum." It's telepathically talking to someone else, but the PCs "overhear." Although the combat is fairly standard, the PCs have discovered a new creature, and they know it's something that's never encountered a human before. There are more of them, somewhere, and there's some kind of sanctum. It's not just a fight. The PCs have learned something.

In a more standard setup, the combat is the obstacle that the PCs must overcome to reach the discovery, which again reinforces the idea that there is no right or wrong way to overcome the obstacle. Sneak past the foes or convince them to let the PCs pass—both are entirely valid.

Mechanically, combat in Numenera doesn't play out as it does in many games where damage whittles down a character's hit points or health score. This kind of slow attrition is less likely to happen in Numenera because the PCs will try to avoid getting hit. For example, many players will spend points from their Speed Pool to add Effort to their defense rolls to ensure that they don't get hit (and thus don't lose points from their Might Pool). Characters also have numerous abilities to add to their Speed defense rolls or ease a Speed defense task. Last, and perhaps most significant, the most frequent use of experience points for rerolls will probably be defensive in nature. Players just don't like their characters to get hit.

There are two important aspects to this. The first is that it's the players' choice. They're in control of which points they lose and how many, so it feels different, even though the effect is largely the same—a slow loss of points over time. The second aspect is that, narratively, you don't have to explain and describe lots of minor wounds and scratches that eventually amount to something. In Numenera combats, when PCs are struck, it's likely significant. Plus, so many creatures and foes have effects that paralyze, infect, poison, stun, and so on that the damage is not necessarily the interesting or significant part of what they do to the PCs. That's why there are creatures whose attacks can move a PC down the damage track a step or two. It's not so much about the points of damage but the consequences of being hit at all.

Weakness and inability, page 333

CRAFTING STORIES

I keep saying over and over that Numenera is all about story—narrative. Your biggest job as the GM is to provide the impetus for stories in the game. The stories themselves arise out of gameplay, but they are started and guided by you. You provide the seed of the story and present the events as they unfold because of what the PCs and NPCs do.

Encourage the players to describe their actions, not the mechanics involved. The game is more fun if a player says things like, "I leap up on the table and swing my sword down on the creature," instead of "I use my jump skill to get up on the table to ease my attack roll."

Crafting a good story is a topic that could fill a book of this size. I highly recommend that interested GMs read books or articles aimed at fiction writers (many of which are available on the Internet) that provide advice on plot. For that matter, similar sources about characterization can help in the creation of NPCs, as well.

For now, remember these few key concepts:

- Learn what motivates the players at your table. Exploration? Combat? Puzzle-solving? Interacting with NPCs? Cater to these desires.
- Learn what motivates the PCs that the players run. What are the characters' goals? What do they seek? Wealth? Satisfying their curiosity? Power? Protecting others? Use these things to start your stories.
- Create stories that involve the PCs as directly as possible. If something bad is affecting people, have it affect the PCs or their loved ones, too. Rather than enticing them to strive to save a random farmer, get them to save a character's brother or best friend.
- Remember that the players are your co-storytellers, and that the PCs are the main characters of the story, so their decisions should have direct impact on what happens.

Speed Pool, page 22

Might Pool, page 22

The chapters in this part of the book are as close as I can come to relating how I run my own games.

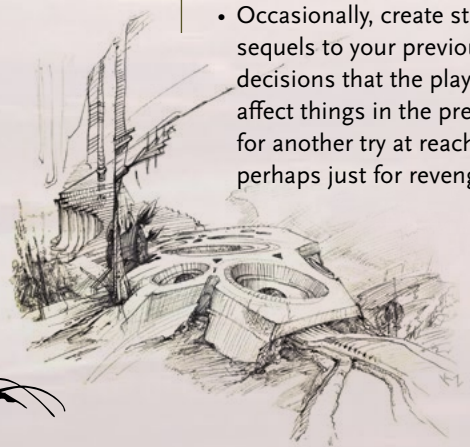
- Weave multiple stories together. Have the PCs learn about the beginning of one story while they're still embroiled in another.
- Vary your stories. Follow a combat-heavy exploration of an ancient ruin with an intrigue-filled adventure in a large city that involves a lot of interaction. Create one story that is a long quest but then follow it up with another that wraps up in a single game session.
- Vary the encounters within a story. Even in the middle of a series of battles, there's always room for exploration or interaction (and it breaks things up).
- Not every story needs to be about saving the world. Sometimes the smaller stories about helping one person can be the most interesting.
- Twists and unexpected events are wonderful and should be used often, but sometimes the biggest twist is to have things go exactly the way the players think it will.

Margr, page 240

- Don't get bogged down justifying, rationalizing, or explaining every detail. This is Numenera. It's supposed to be weird. The players aren't supposed to understand everything.
- Stories that involve a lot of events the PCs are unaware of will end up making little sense to the players, and should probably be avoided, unless you're going for the weirdness of it, in which case it's fine. Keep in mind that the numenera and its myriad effects (including nonhuman creatures) should seem weird, but the people of the Ninth World are still people and should be relatable.

Shins, page 93

- Base your stories on real human emotion. NPC villains can be driven by greed or power, but also by love, longing, curiosity, or even misguided altruism. Don't make your players just interact with the events—make them react to the emotions behind the events. Villains should inspire actual hate and anger. The loss of a valued ally should inspire actual sadness and loss.
- Occasionally, create stories that are sequels to your previous stories. The decisions that the players made in the past affect things in the present. Villains return for another try at reaching their goal, or perhaps just for revenge.



PACING

The key to running a great game as opposed to an adequate one is often the simple matter of pacing. Well, pacing is simple to describe, but it's not so simple to understand or implement. It comes with practice and a sort of developed intuition.

Pacing can mean many things. Let's briefly break them down.

PACING WITHIN AN ENCOUNTER

Keep things moving. Don't let the action get bogged down by indecisive players, arguments about the rules, or irrelevant minutiae. Don't let the middle of an encounter get sidetracked by something that reminds a player (or worse, you) of a gaming story, a movie, or a funny thing on the Internet. There's time for all of that later, probably after the game session is over.

Don't let the end of the encounter drag out. When it's clear how things are going to turn out, and people might start to get bored, wrap it up. If the PCs were fighting two dozen margr and only three are left, there's nothing wrong with saying that those last three run away or surrender or that the PCs handily dispatch them. Wrap things up and move along.

PACING WITHIN A GAME SESSION

Have many different encounters in a session—some long, some short, some complex, some straightforward. One of the trickiest aspects of game session pacing is deciding what to play out and what to skip.

For example, the PCs want to buy new gear with the shins they were paid for a job. You could describe the town's market and roleplay each interaction with various merchants. You could even call for occasional rolls to see if the characters get good deals or not. Alternatively, you could say, "Okay, you guys buy whatever you want," and then move on. There are good cases to be made for both approaches, depending on the context. Maybe one of the PCs contracted a disease on the last mission and doesn't realize it until he is interacting with people in the market. Maybe a thief in the market attempts to steal from the PCs, or they notice a thief stealing from a merchant. Maybe the players like interacting with NPCs and enjoy your portrayal of minor characters. All of these are good reasons to play out a shopping encounter. But if there's no compelling reason, just advance through it.

Sometimes, you should do this even if one player wants to play out every moment of their character's life and describe everything

Skip the boring bits.

in excruciating detail. Although you want everyone to be happy, you're in charge of pacing. If you must err, make the players struggle to keep up, rather than letting them be bored and wondering when you're going to get on with it. Thus, if there's no compelling reason against it, don't hesitate to advance time, even in large chunks. If the PCs finish a big scenario and some downtime makes sense, there's nothing wrong with announcing, "So, three weeks later, you hear that . . . " and starting in on the next storyline (as long as the players are content with it). Books and movies do this kind of thing all the time. *Skip the boring bits.*

In addition, feel free to intrude on player discussions for the purpose of moving things along. Sometimes players spin their wheels or plan and plan their next move, never accomplishing anything. You can intrude by throwing an encounter or a surprise their way ("A message from the priests at the clave arrives"), or you can simply say, "Let's move things along, guys."

Keep a clock handy so you can see how much time is left in the session. *Never lose track of time*. You want to end a session at a good point—a place where everyone can catch their breath, at a good cliffhanger, or as everything in a story wraps up so you can start anew next time. These are all fine stopping points, but you want to control which one you use. Next session, you'll have to start things up again, recap past events, and get everyone back into the swing of things.

Try to ensure that at the end of any session, the players can look back on what they did and feel like they accomplished something.

PACING WITHIN A STORY

This aspect of pacing goes back to researching how fiction writers handle story creation, and it's a huge subject, but consider the standard three-act structure as a good starting point. In act one, the problem is introduced. In act two, things get worse (or a new complication is introduced). In act three, things are resolved. There are many other ways to do it, but remember that the action needs to ebb and flow. You need downtime between the moments of action, horror, or high drama.

PACING WITHIN A CAMPAIGN

Mix short scenarios in with longer ones. Weave the plotlines together so that as one story ends, the PCs still have things to do. But don't be afraid of downtime. Let the characters have a week, a month, or longer here or there to live their normal lives before throwing them once again into the heart of danger. If a campaign takes a year of play time in the real world, you don't want it to take place in only three weeks of game time. That never feels right.



DESCRIPTION

In Chapter 20: Using the Rules, I recommended using description that was both precise and concise. Precision comes from avoiding relative terms like "big" or "small" or emotional words like "terrifying" because these words mean different things to different people. This doesn't mean you have to specify the exact height of every structure the PCs find. But rather than describing a building as "a tall tower," consider saying "a tower at least five times the height of the trees around it."

Chapter 20: Using the Rules, page 310

Being concise is important, too. Go on too long with descriptions, and the players' minds will drift. Sometimes, what works best are short, declarative, evocative descriptions with pauses in between for player comments or questions.

DESCRIBING THE ACTION

Great roleplaying game sessions often involve immersion. Immersion comes from a sense of being truly caught up in the action and the fictional world. Just as when you read a great book or watch a well-made movie, playing an RPG can get you caught up in your own imagination. And best of all, you're sharing your imaginative escape with everyone else at the table. For immersion to work, you have to give great descriptions.

Clave, page 12

Numenera combat, for example, is very simple and open-ended rather than precise, giving you lots of room to describe how characters move, how they attack, and how they avoid attacks. A successful Speed defense roll might mean dodging, blocking with a weapon, or ducking behind a pillar. A character who is struck in combat for 3 points of damage might have dodged the weapon attack but fallen backward onto a jagged and ruined control console.

I've seen bad pacing ruin more games than probably anything else. Keep things moving. Keep them interesting.

The players should describe their actions, too. Encourage them to be creative in what they do and how they perform a task, whether it involves the way they attack, what they do to give themselves the best chance to make a difficult leap over a pit, or how they slip into a noble's study to steal the map they need.

Don't take any of this as a requirement. Long descriptions can be tedious as easily as they can be interesting. Sometimes the best way to serve the pacing of a combat encounter is to state whether an attack hit and how much damage is dealt and keep things moving. Vivid description is great, but it's not a valid excuse for you or a player to drag things out and destroy the pacing.

DESCRIBING A WEIRD WORLD

If things bog down, or if you even suspect that they might, interject something weird. A house with permeable walls rather than doors or an old woman with a strange aura that only one PC can see makes even the dullest village interesting.

The Ninth World is a weird place, and describing it can be difficult. When possible, stress the weird aspect of your description. For example, don't bother telling the PCs about the normal buildings in the city if the central tower is a double helix supporting a glowing ball of energy like a miniature sun.

Although precision is a good thing, pedantic, exhaustive detail is not. Even if that's what is needed to fully describe the weird creature, character, device, structure, or phenomenon, don't do it. Leave the players with an impression rather than an exact description. "A creature that looks like three black beetles, each the size of a mastiff, with too many legs and eyes" isn't a full description, but it's an impression. It gives the players something to picture, even if it's not precisely what you're picturing. It's weird and evocative, and that's important.

The coerim is a tiny beetle that nests in mammalian ears, feeding on sound. Victims believe they are deaf.

Be wary of shorthand description and inappropriate comparisons. If the PCs see a vehicle flying through the air toward them and you describe it as "sort of like a flying car," they're going to see a flying 21st-century sedan with tires, a steering wheel, and bumpers, and that's not the image you want in their heads. Instead, try to give them the gist of the vehicle. Saying something like "A large, dark mass—sharply angled and full of strange protrusions from all directions—suddenly rumbles toward you through the sky, blocking out the sun" puts a more evocative and weird image in the players' minds. It's better to be vague than incorrect or, worse, jarringly inappropriate.

If you must, use 21st-century terms or comparisons to describe things, but introduce them sparingly because they can break the mood very easily. Be wary of clichéd sci-fi or fantasy terms as well. To keep the weird vibe, if there's a more obscure word for something, use it rather than an overly familiar word.

Some general suggestions to keep in mind:

- Say *automaton*, never *robot*. *Android* is okay (rarely), but never say *droid*.
- Say *machine intelligence* before *artificial intelligence*, but never say *A.I.* or even *computer* if you can help it.
- Say *ray emitter*, but never say *blaster*, *ray gun*, or *laser gun*.
- Say *slugspitters* and *needlers*, but not *guns*, *pistols*, or *rifles*.
- Avoid words like *laser* (use *beam* or *ray* instead), *grenade* (use *detonation* or *explosive* instead), *radar*, *car*, *train*, *plane*, *spaceship*, and so on.
- Avoid words like *dragon* or mythological creature names like *griffons* or *faeries*.
- Say *world*, not *planet* (although be aware that this could be confusing sometimes because Numenera refers to the past as the "prior worlds").
- Say *dimension* or *universe*, not *plane*.

SOMETIMES THE DETAILS SELL IT

Although the creatures, devices, and other aspects of the Ninth World are the important elements, sometimes inconsequential, unexplained details are what make the setting unique. Include them in your descriptions of new places and people as often as you can. Here are a few ideas to get you started.

- Giant, gleaming insects glide about on multiple pairs of wings.
- Flowering plants seem to sing or moan.
- Floating crystals orbit an NPC's head.
- An NPC's clothing shifts color and texture.
- Mechanical birds flutter through the air.
- Floating, glowing motes of light swirl about.
- The materials decorating a structure change substance.
- A structure has no doors, but any wall can be passed through as if it weren't there.
- Portions of a wall have eyelike mechanisms that follow you as you move.
- Odd patches of violet fungus grow everywhere.
- An antenna juts out of the body of an otherwise normal-looking beast.
- Bells hang from cords that dangle from every possible surface.
- Gravity shifts orientation in a location.
- Everyone in a group of NPCs has the same facial scar.
- Everything emits a hazy glow.
- The voice of an NPC does not match the movements of her mouth.
- A creature leaves behind colored trails in the air as it moves.



- An object that appears to be normal is actually a bioengineered creature in that shape.
- A window looks out onto a scene that is nowhere nearby.
- A structure has thin organic membranes rather than doors.
- Floating spores from a plant give off a slightly euphoric odor.
- A structure is larger on the inside than the outside.
- It is always night in a limited locale.
- All the trees and plants move as much as possible to avoid being touched.
- A deep pool of water can be walked across as if it were solid.
- Sounds are strangely amplified in a given location.
- Time in a limited locale seems to move slightly slower.
- Everything made of a certain material—wood, stone, iron, synth, or something else—ceases to exist in a given location.

PREPARING FOR THE GAME SESSION

Numenera doesn't require you to spend hours carefully designing stats for NPCs (unless you want to). There aren't a lot of rules to memorize. It's not worth writing out elaborate descriptions of each encounter because if you allow things to proceed organically, many planned encounters might not be used. The rules of Numenera allow you to come up with a lot of the details as you go along, since you don't have to reference loads of books and stats during the game session.

To prepare for a session, you need to create only three things: a list of names, a brief outline, and a list of ideas.

1. A list of names. No matter how much you prepare, you'll end up creating some NPCs on the fly, so have a list of names to use when this happens. Leave room to write a quick note next to each name you use in case that NPC shows up in the game again.

2. A brief outline. The outline is an idea of where you think the story could go. Of course, the key word is *think*. You can't know for certain—the actions of the PCs will take things in unexpected directions. In truth, "outline" is probably not the right word. Think in terms of places the PCs might go, people or creatures they might interact with, and events that might occur. For example, let's say that the PCs are in a small village. You plan to start the session by having them hear about a local man named Drahl who disappeared mysteriously. Your notes might say:

- Drahl disappeared outside the flour mill where he worked. North of town.
- Drahl lived in a small, run-down house. Family: wife Narla and two kids. Narla: distraught and prone to drink.
- Flour mill: About a dozen workers. Boss: Arlas Finney. Witness: Sarai saw Drahl disappear right in front of her. Doesn't want to talk about it because she's scared it might be some kind of evil curse (level 4 to get her to talk). Knows Drahl recently found a strange device—looked like two silver coins joined at the edges.
- Pickpocket (level 3) attempts to steal from one PC while they're in town.
- Local Aeon Priest: Rorich. Has seen small devices like the one Sarai describes. Sends PCs to a nevajin that lives west of the village.

And so on.

Some Ninth World human names:

Horrek
Bish Novalar
Gren Coronus
Thremody Marcelell
Erance Noriban
Quen the Trigger Warred
Linanou Casatile
Anive the Mancer
Blue Dain
Propalas Vil
Brast
Flen Yamorian
Melbae Soran
Xinma Oh
Leck eForalloch
Teague the Skyweaver
Ushant Roun

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Designing creatures, page 331

Every 27 years, a line of light is gouged across the night. Children born when it's brightest possess weird symbols etched on their skin.

Obviously, that's just the beginning, but you've covered a lot of the contingencies, assuming the PCs investigate Drahl's disappearance at all. Some of that material might not get used. The PCs might not go to his house—only to the mill and then to the Aeon Priest. Maybe they won't go to the priest at all, and you'll need to have someone else direct them to the nevajin. Or maybe the PCs will come up with a wholly unexpected path of investigation.

3. A list of ideas. Just like with the list of names, jot down a bunch of random ideas. These are things you can throw into the game at a moment's notice. They might be flavor, cool visuals, or important side plots. For example, your list might include:

- Metal chest with ornate decoration, including feet that look like twined serpents
- Man with one side of his face horribly burned long ago by a numenera weapon
- Device that looks like a hollow hemisphere, with circuitry on the inside
- Pests that look like tiny, two-legged frogs with bat-like wings
- Door that won't open unless the correct flavor of smoke is wafted past a sensor



Energy Protection, page 41

These are all ideas that you can sprinkle into the game when appropriate. You haven't tied them to a specific encounter, so you can insert them whenever you want.

HANDLING PLAYERS

Part of being a GM is "handling" players. This means a lot of things. For example, it's partially your job to make sure that everyone has a good time. You need to ensure that all the players get to do the kinds of things they like to do in games, and that no one is left out. If one player really likes combat and another enjoys NPC interaction, provide some of both. Before you can do that, you need to find out what the players want in the first place, so talk to them and learn their expectations.

Another big part of handling players is coping with disruptive players. Disruptive players can be the death of a game. They can hog all the attention, tell other players what to do, or challenge your rulings at every turn. A lot of GMs are tempted to deal with such players during the game by punishing them or giving them negative feedback. For example, they have the character get attacked more often, lose experience points, or suffer similar consequences. Resist this temptation. Instead, speak with the player person to person (not GM to player) outside of the game and explain that their behavior is causing problems. Be clear, direct, and firm, but also be friendly.

The bottom line, however, is don't play games with jerks. One disruptive, rude, or offensive player can ruin the whole group's fun.

A different problem player is one who just doesn't get the narrative focus of Numenera. These kinds of players tend to see all games as competitive enterprises, and they might try to "win" Numenera by exploiting what they see as holes in the rules to create and play an unbeatable character. Although part of many people's RPG experience is the fun of playing a powerful character, it shouldn't be the ultimate goal in Numenera because such a player will get frustrated and bored.

For example, a player might try to use the Energy Protection esotery to protect against kinetic energy and then claim that they are immune to all attacks. They'll see this as a hole that they were smart enough to exploit, and they'll hold up the rules and say, "Show me where I'm wrong!"

When a player does that, point them here: "You're wrong."

They're wrong because Numenera isn't a board game where the rules are like a puzzle to be solved or beaten. The rules exist to facilitate

the story and portray the world. If there's a "hole" in the rules or a rule that would produce an illogical or unenjoyable result if followed to the letter, change it, redefine it, or just overrule it. It's that easy.

On the other hand, some players absolutely will get it. They'll understand that it's the spirit of the rules, not the letter, that's important. They'll get that the story being told is key. Rather than poring over the description of a power and trying to twist the words to an unintended meaning, they'll use their intelligence and creativity to figure out the best way to use the power to portray a character who fits the setting and is fun to play.

People who try to exploit the *rules* don't understand Numenera, but people who exploit the *situations* do. If a player is smart and creative enough to turn the tables on their foes in an unexpected way by using what's around them, allow it (if it makes sense). If the PCs find a pool of caustic fluid and lure their foes into it rather than fighting them in a straightforward manner, that's not cheating—that's awesome.

Be certain you don't accidentally penalize players for not doing the obvious or straightforward thing. Be generous with people who take nonstandard actions or who do something realistic (such as using their action to take stock of the situation rather than attack—grant them a step bonus). Don't make "attack" always the right choice. It's a creative game, so allow the players to be creative.

MATURE THEMES

Sometimes, it's appropriate to involve mature themes in Numenera games. Sex, extreme violence, and other topics certainly fit into the Ninth World. But each group must decide for themselves if such things fit into their game. You should also prepare your stories with your specific players in mind. If one or more are very young or have issues with certain topics, avoid things that would be inappropriate. Also be aware that some topics, like overt sexuality, rape, and graphic violence are the kinds of things that might disturb players even when you aren't expecting it. It's always best to know for certain before allowing these topics into your game.

Think of it like the movie rating system. If you can tell the story that you want to tell in a G or PG (or even PG-13) way, you're likely fine. If events unfold that are going to give your game an R rating or higher, it's best to talk with your players ahead of time. It's not a matter of good or bad, it's a matter of appropriateness for the "audience" and giving people a heads up ahead of time—just like movie ratings.

DESIGNING ENCOUNTERS

Encounters are to a game session what scenes are to a movie or a book. They're a way to break up the session, and the adventure at large, into smaller, more manageable chunks. You'll find, for example, that the adventures in Part 8 are divided into encounters.

Part 8: Adventures, page 361

Sometimes it's messier than that, more difficult to know where one encounter ends and another begins. For that reason, "encounter" is not always a useful or meaningful game term. It's only useful for you when you think about the scenes of your adventure. When the PCs go talk to the Aeon Priests, that's one encounter. After they do so, hopefully getting the information they need, they head off into the wilderness, where they have to cross a deep chasm—another encounter. When an erynth grask appears and attacks, that's another encounter, and so on.

The Ninth World is meant to be an isolated place. The knowledge in one village might not be known in the village just down the road.

Erynth grask, page 235

Thus, not everything that happens is an encounter. Heading off into the wilderness, for example, probably involved gathering supplies, deciding on a route, and so on, but it isn't really an "encounter." An encounter is when you, the GM, are going to provide a lot of detail. You and the players are going to interact a lot in an encounter. You might decide to subdivide everyone's actions into rounds to help keep track of who's doing what, when.

Detail in description, page 338



COMPLEX ENCOUNTERS

Encounters aren't just about combat. As mentioned above, talking to NPCs is an encounter. Dealing with a physical obstacle is an encounter. Figuring out how to use a complex machine is an encounter. The best encounters—the really memorable ones, in fact—are going to involve multiple things happening at once. A fight on a boat racing down the rapids, for example, is an interesting encounter. An encounter where a couple of PCs must disable a giant bomb while the others fend off attacking laaks is interesting too.

Ravage bear, page 249

Laak, page 239

Sometimes, then, an encounter can be intentionally designed with that goal. At least occasionally, you should take an idea you have for an encounter and then add in something else that will make it even more interesting, exciting, or challenging. In the Ninth World, the possibilities are endless. Perhaps gravity functions differently than expected. There's a weird fungus giving off spores that alter perception. The encounter takes place inside a sentient machine that must be reasoned with and appeased while everything else is going on. An interdimensional effect makes all metal in the encounter temporarily cease to exist. And that's just for starters. Use the weird to your advantage to make things crazy and fun. Design encounters that are like nothing the players have ever experienced.

Sometimes, even the term "adventure" gets just as messy as "encounter." Deciding where one adventure begins and another ends can be—and perhaps should be—difficult. "Adventure" is a useful term for published products, but for your own use, you might want to toss the concept out and just let one story or event flow into another naturally.

LOOKING FOR
Pacing, page 336

But sometimes these kinds of encounters with multiple levels of action or weird complications just arise out of the game itself. The PCs have to leap onto a moving platform to get down into the giant machine's interior conduit system, which is interesting, but the ravage bears that they ran from earlier suddenly show up while they're doing so, having tracked them by scent. You didn't plan for that ahead of time; it just happened because that's the way things went. Which is great.

Last, GM intrusions can bring about these kinds of encounters on the fly. The PCs have to repair a huge device at the heart of an ancient complex that is venting poisonous gas before they are all overcome. With a GM intrusion that occurs to you at the last moment, you let them know that the gas also weakens the structural integrity of metal, and the supports under the floor are buckling and will collapse with the PCs standing on it at any moment.

BALANCING ENCOUNTERS

In Numenera, there is no concept of a "balanced encounter." There is no system for matching creatures of a particular level or tasks of a particular difficulty to characters of a particular tier. To some people, that might seem like a bad thing. But as I've written earlier, matching character builds to exacting challenges is not a part of this game. It's about story. So whatever



If a player is smart and creative enough to turn the tables on their foes in an unexpected way by using what's around them, allow it (if it makes sense). That's not cheating—that's awesome.

you want to happen next in the story is a fine encounter as long as it's fun. You're not denying PCs XP if you make things too easy or too difficult, because that's not how XP are earned. If things are too difficult for the PCs, they'll have to flee, come up with a new strategy, or try something else entirely. The only thing you have to do to maintain "balance" is set the difficulty within that encounter accurately and consistently.

In a game like Numenera, if everyone's having fun, the game is balanced. Two things will unbalance the game in this context.

One or more PCs are far more interesting than the others. Note that I said "more interesting," not "more powerful." If my character can do all kinds of cool things but can't kill abhumans as efficiently as yours does, I still might have a whole lot of fun.

The challenges the PCs face are routinely too easy or too difficult. The first issue should be handled by the character creation rules. If there's a problem, it might be that poor choices were made or a player isn't taking full advantage of their options. If someone really doesn't enjoy playing their character, allow them to alter the character or—perhaps better—create a new one.

The second issue is trickier. As previously stated, there is no formula that states that N number of level X NPCs is a good match for tier Y characters. However, when the game has four or five *beginning* characters, the following guidelines are generally true.

- Level 1 opponents will be nothing but a nuisance, even in sizable numbers (twelve to sixteen).
- Level 2 opponents will not be a challenge unless in numbers of twelve or more.
- Level 3 opponents will be an interesting challenge in numbers of four to eight.
- Level 4 opponents will be an interesting challenge in numbers of two or three.
- A single level 5 opponent might be an interesting challenge.
- A single level 6 opponent will be a serious challenge.
- A single level 7 or 8 opponent will likely win in a fight.
- A single level 9 or 10 opponent will win in a fight without breaking a sweat.

But let me caution you, and I can't stress this enough—it depends on the situation at hand. If the PCs are already worn down from prior encounters, or if they have the right cyphers, any of the expectations listed above can change. That's why there is no system for balancing encounters. Just keep in mind that beginning characters are pretty hardy and probably have some interesting resources, so you aren't likely to wipe out the group by accident. Character death is unlikely unless the PCs have already been through a number of other encounters and are worn down.

For more on balance in gameplay, see Chapter 20: Using the Rules, page 310.

RESOLVING ENCOUNTERS

Don't plan for how an encounter will end. Let the game play determine that. This ensures that players have the proper level of input. You decide, for example, that if the PCs go into the tower, there is a gang of mutants inside that will attack. You can't, however, decide how that encounter will end. Maybe the PCs will be victorious. Maybe they won't. Maybe they'll flee, or maybe they'll bargain for their lives.

If you try to decide such things ahead of time, that's called railroading the game, and it puts the players in the role of observers rather than actors. Even if you plan out the results of an encounter ahead of time but then let the gameplay dictate what occurs, you still might end up planning a lot of outcomes that don't happen. In other words, if you base a whole plotline on the PCs fleeing out of the tower from the mutants, but they manage to drive the mutants out instead, all your plans are wasted.

Plan for various possible outcomes, but don't predetermine them. Think of your story as having many possible plotlines, not just one.

For more on ways to earn XP, see Chapter 8: Rules of the Game, page 100.

CHALLENGING CHARACTERS

If the game has a balance problem, it's more likely due to players finding things too easy rather than too hard. If things are too hard, they should run away and find something else to do (or you should lighten up a bit). But if the characters in the group need a greater challenge, try one or more of the following options.

Stat Pool, page 22

Armor, page 109

Broken hounds, page 226

Sometimes players are unwilling to spend XP on anything other than character benefits, which in turn lead to advancing to new tiers. The truth is, spending XP on immediate or short-term gains very likely provides as much overall benefit. In other words, in the big picture, four crucial rerolls are probably about the same as acquiring a new skill. It will take some players a while to come to that conclusion, however.

Damage Track: Sometimes a few points of damage aren't enough to scare a player. But a weapon or effect that immediately moves them one step down the damage track will terrify them. No matter how big a character's stat Pools are, no matter how much Armor they have, there are only three steps to death.

Ongoing Damage: Poisons that inflict even a small amount of damage (1 or 2 points) every round until an antidote is found can be extremely deadly. Or consider this: one of the reasons that napalm is so terrible is that it clings to surfaces, including flesh. Imagine a weapon or effect that inflicts 5 points of fire damage every round and persists for 8 rounds unless the characters can figure out a way to douse it.

Lasting Damage: For a more realistic simulation of damage, the GM can use a GM intrusion to indicate that damage suffered by a player character is "lasting." Most of the time, this damage is described as being a concussion, a broken bone, a torn ligament, or severe muscle or tissue damage. This damage does not heal normally, so the points lost cannot be regained by using recovery rolls. Instead, they return at a rate of 1 point per day of complete rest (or 1 point per three days of regular activity). Until the points are restored, the damage has a secondary effect. Using lasting damage is particularly appropriate in cases where it would be an obvious consequence, such as when a character falls a long distance. It is also appropriate for characters who are already impaired or debilitated.

Permanent Damage: Similar to lasting damage, permanent damage is a special situation adjudicated by the GM. Permanent damage never heals normally, although the numenera can repair damage or replace lost body parts. This kind of damage should be used sparingly and only in special situations.

Effects Other Than Damage: Attacks can blind, stun, grapple, paralyze, infect, hobble, or otherwise hinder a character without dealing any points of damage at all.

Effects That Harm Equipment: A PC's gear is often the source of their abilities. Destroying or nullifying cyphers or artifacts damages them just as surely as breaking their leg would—it limits a player's options, which really hurts.

Enemies Working in Concert: Although a group effectively acting as one is a special ability of some creatures (such as broken hounds) you could apply it to any creature you like. As a general rule, for every four creatures working together, treat them as one creature with a level equal to the highest of them plus 1, with a minimum of a +2 damage bonus. So a level 4 bandit who has three level 3 allies could team up and attack one foe as a level 5 NPC. That means their attack deals more damage and is harder to defend against. It also means less die rolling, so the combat moves along faster.

Beef up the Foes: You're in charge of the NPC stats. If they need more Armor, more health, or higher levels to be a challenge, simply make it so. It's easy and straightforward to give an NPC a "boost package" of four things:

- +10 health
- +1 to Armor
- +3 points of damage
- Attacks and defends as 1 level higher

That should do the trick, but if necessary, give the boost package to the same NPC again.

Beef up the Obstacles: Include more exotic materials in doors and other barriers, which increase their difficulty by one to three steps. Make physical challenges more difficult—the surfaces that need to be climbed are slippery, the waters that need to be swum are roiling, and other actions are hampered by strong winds. Don't beef up obstacles in this way too often, but remember that circumstances such as weather are your tools for adjusting the difficulty of any action.





HIGHER-TIER CHARACTERS

Although characters start out quite capable, by the time they reach the fifth or sixth tier, they will be truly legendary. Both you and the players might find reaching the upper tiers more rewarding and satisfying if the journey unfolds more gradually, so you can slow down this progress if desired. To do this, starting at third or fourth tier, you can specify how the players can spend the experience points they earn. Requiring that some XP (as much as half) must be spent on immediate, short-term, or long-term advantages—rather than on character advancement—will slow down the progression through the upper tiers. But it won't take anything away from the play experience because spending XP on those advantages is fun and rewarding, too.

CHARACTER DEATH

Challenging characters is important. If there is no threat of failure—or at least the perceived threat of failure—it's hard for players to feel compelled by the story. Very often, the ultimate failure a PC might face is death. The Ninth World is a dangerous place. But death is serious because it means the player can no longer play their character.

If a character dies, the easiest and most straightforward response is to have the player create a new character. Ideally, they will make a beginning character (which is the easiest to create), but if the other characters are third tier or higher, it will be more satisfying to let the player create their new character at an advanced tier.

However, keep in mind that a lower-tier character can operate effectively in the company of higher-tier characters. The differences are not so striking. If a player brings a new beginning character into a group of advanced characters, be particularly generous with XP to help the new character catch up to the others a bit.

Regardless, arrange the circumstances of the story so that you can bring in the new character in a logical fashion and as quickly as possible.

Not Quite Dead: There is an alternative for a player who really, really wants to keep playing the same character. Allow the PC to teeter on the brink of death but survive, saved by their companions (or through sheer luck). Such a character might recover but have serious injuries that result in a weakness, an inability, or some other drawback. The point is not to penalize the PC (although barely escaping death should have some repercussions) but to change the character in a memorable way.

The GM can use lasting or permanent damage as a substitute for death. In other words, if a PC reaches 0 in all of their stat Pools, they would normally be dead, but instead you could say that they are knocked unconscious and wake up with some kind of lasting or permanent damage.

Weakness and inability, page 333

AN EXAMPLE OF PLAY

Sometimes the best way to understand a game is to see it played. This section provides the next best thing: a script depicting a group playing through a Numenera encounter.



GAME MASTER: Just as the trinket salesman in the village described, you see the cave at the base of the cliff. You note that the cliff is extremely sheer and vertical. The cave mouth opening is about 12 feet high and 8 feet across. It's very regular, though oddly shaped.

BRUCE (playing a second-tier Jack named Bannor): What do you mean, regular but oddly shaped?

GM: The sides and top of the cave mouth are straight lines, although the cave entrance is wider on the top than the bottom.

DIANA (playing a second-tier Glaive named Prinan): So it's more of a doorway than a cave, albeit a strange one.

GM: Perhaps.

CLARK (playing a second-tier Nano named Kalex): I walk toward the cave entrance.

DIANA: Doorway.

BRUCE: I'm going to check around there first—search for anything strange or dangerous.

GM: Okay, Bruce. That's going to be an Intellect task.

BRUCE: I'm going to use a level of Effort. I have an Edge of 1 in Intellect, so it will cost me 2 points from my Pool.

The GM knows there's nothing to find at the doorway, but she muses for half a second as if pretending to figure out a target number.

GM: Roll.

BRUCE: Rolled a 7.

GM: You don't find anything out of the ordinary. However, it looks as though a number of creatures come and go out of this cave on a regular basis.

This bit of information is a "gimme." The characters had already learned that the cave was the home of a small group of bandits.

DIANA: The bandits. We're at the right place.

CLARK: I take out a glowglobe and go inside.

BRUCE (to Clark): Yeesh. You're overconfident. (To GM) I follow him but try to be quiet.

DIANA: I go in, too. They'll need me.

CLARK: I've got my Ward to protect me.

DIANA: Still, I'm going to take the lead.

GM: Okay.

BRUCE: I still have my eyes peeled for any sign of danger.

GM: With your light, you can see that the "cave" has smooth walls, and the floor is not just smooth, but made of ancient metal.

BRUCE: We're in some kind of ancient structure that just looks like a cliffside after all these millennia.

DIANA: I agree.

CLARK: What's ahead?

GM: Eventually, you come to a large chamber filled with pipes of different widths that go in all directions across the ceiling. About ten paces into the room, there's a sharp drop-off, almost like a chasm that bisects the room, but on the other side is a bank of machinery. It's quite humid, and the sound of dripping water comes from multiple places in the dimly lit chamber.

CLARK: I want to check out the machinery.

GM: Okay, but there's a chasm in your way. It's about 16 feet across.

DIANA: How deep is it?

GM: When you look down, you see more pipes and conduits about 30 feet below you. There might be more open space below them. It's hard to tell.

CLARK: This place is huge.

BRUCE: The bandits that live here must cross this somehow.

GM: As you say that, you notice a pile of wooden planks on the other side of the chasm.

BRUCE: Ah.

DIANA: Damn.

CLARK: I'm going to leap across.

BRUCE: Of course you are.

GM: Okay. Going to back up to get a running start? There's plenty of room to back up.

CLARK: Yes.

DIANA: Perhaps I should go, or at least Bannor. You're a Nano.

CLARK: You forget—I took jumping as a skill a while back. I'm trained in this task, so that eases the jump.

GM: With a running start, a jump of 16 feet is difficulty 3. So for you it's only difficulty 2. That's a target number of 6 or better.

CLARK: I'll roll. No Effort. I got a 13!

GM: You leap across in a single bound.

CLARK: Great!

GM: And that's when two men come out of the shadows behind the machinery. Their dark-colored clothing and hoods helped them to remain hidden. They brandish wickedly curved knives of great size.

DIANA: Oh, no!

BRUCE: Bandit guards!

GM: I need initiative rolls.

The bandits are level 4 NPCs. That means that the target number to beat them in initiative (and just about anything else) is 12. It also means that they have 12 health and if they hit in combat, they will do 4 points of damage. However, the GM also decides to give them 1 point of Armor and poison on their blades to make things more interesting.

BRUCE: I got a 12.

CLARK: 4.

DIANA: 8.

GM: Okay, Bannor goes first, but Prinan and Kalex don't act until after the bandits.

BRUCE: I take out my bow as fast as I can and shoot an arrow.

GM: It's a medium weapon, so you'll inflict 4 points of damage if you hit.

BRUCE: Right. I roll a 17!

GM: That not only hits, but you inflict an extra point of damage.

BRUCE: 5 points!

GM: You stated that you kept your eyes peeled for danger, so when the bandits appeared, you reacted swiftly. Your shot seems to have surprised the bandit, and it slices across his thigh, drawing blood despite his leather armor.

CLARK: Nice shot.

GM: The bandit that was shot curses and glares at Bannor, but both men move toward Kalex, knives drawn. "You should not have come here!" they say, menacingly, as they slash with their long knives. Clark, make two Speed defense rolls.

CLARK: I roll a 12 and a 13.

GM: The energy field that surrounds you turns away the first attack, and you duck and avoid the second.

BRUCE: It's like he can't be hurt.

DIANA: He's always lucky. My turn?

GM: Sure.

CLARK: No, Diana, wait. I'm going to use my action to put one of these boards across the divide so you can get across. Let me go first.

DIANA: While they attack you?

CLARK: They've already missed me. (To the GM) That's what I do.

The GM silently agrees with Diana. The boards are about 18 feet long. It will be difficult for Kalex to place one while two murderers try to kill him with knives. The GM slides two experience cards across the table toward Clark. The group uses the cards to represent XP, so Clark knows that the GM is using GM intrusion.

GM: As you grab the board and lift it across the expanse, one of the bandits uses this opportunity to attack you again. Roll for Speed defense.

CLARK: I don't want to get hit. I'm going to apply a level of Effort. Ugh! I rolled a 1.

GM: Things go from bad to worse. The bandit hits you for 4 points of damage, slicing into your arm. In the pain, you drop the plank down into the deep chasm, where it clatters amid the conduits. You're not wearing armor—

CLARK: But my Ward gives me +1 to Armor.

GM: Oh, right. So that reduces the damage to 3 points, which come straight out of your Might Pool.

BRUCE: This is why you should stay toward the back.

CLARK: That's just not my style—I mean, Kalex's style.

GM: It gets still worse. The bandits seem to have something quite vile coating their blades. Clark, make a Might defense roll.

CLARK: This isn't good. I don't really have the Might to apply Effort.

DIANA: Is that wise? You don't know what kind of poison this might be.

BRUCE: He is, however, the luckiest man alive.

CLARK: I don't feel that lucky at the moment, but yeah, I'm just going to make the roll . . . and I get a 7.

The GM frowns and prepares to tell Clark that he is now impaired due to the poison, but before she can do that, she is interrupted.

DIANA (sliding an experience card toward the GM): I'm going to spend an experience point to have Clark reroll that.

GM: Okay. Clark, roll again.

CLARK: Thank you, Diana. I roll a 12 this time. That's better, at least.

GM: It's good enough. You're fine and don't notice any ill effects. Oh, and Clark, you still have an experience point to give to one of the other players.

CLARK: Oh, right. I give it to Diana, obviously, for saving me.

DIANA: Thanks.

GM: The bandits still glower, their blades flickering in the light of your glowglobe, which hangs in the air.

DIANA (who has the Bears a Halo of Fire focus): Well, I still have my turn. I'm going to hurl flame at the wounded bandit and use a level of Effort to increase the damage to 5. I roll a 14.

GM: You call upon your halo of fire and sheathe yourself in flame. With a quick motion, you hurl a handful of fire at the bandit, and you hit! Your damage burns him badly. He cries out in surprise and pain. It's now Bannor's turn again.

BRUCE: I loose an arrow at the same bandit as before. I roll a 10.

GM: The arrow goes right in the bandit's chest. He drops his blade and clutches his wound as he drops to the floor. The other bandit looks far less confident but swings at Kalex again.

CLARK: I roll a 4 for defense.

GM: That's another 4 points of damage, plus you need to make a Might defense roll for the poison.

CLARK: I roll 19. A minor effect.

GM: Okay, you're still fine.

CLARK: With the minor effect, can I make him drop the weapon?

GM: No, that would be a major effect. How about the poison on the blade doesn't hurt you, and now it's rubbed off?

CLARK: I'll take it. I'll follow that up with an Onslaught esotery. I'll use the force blast option. I'm using two levels of Effort and adding both to damage. I have an Intellect Edge of 2, so the Effort costs 3 points from my Intellect Pool. I roll a 12.

GM: You hit for 10 points of damage. With a gesture and some concentration, you blast raw force into this guy's jaw. It knocks him back a few feet, and he looks sorely wounded.

DIANA: I'm going to back up for a running start, draw my sword, and leap across the chasm. I roll a 14.

GM: Nice. You get across.

DIANA: Can I attack, too?

GM: No, backing up, getting across skillfully and safely, and landing ready for battle is your action.

DIANA: All right.

BRUCE: I fire another arrow, but I roll a 2.

GM: Your arrow sails over the bandit's head. He calls out for help and backs up, looking like he's trying to take a defensive posture.

On the fly, the GM decides that the bandit does not attack but instead will hold out until reinforcements arrive. She rules that this hinders the characters' attacks on him.

CLARK: I use another force blast, but this time I don't use any Effort. With my Edge, it costs me nothing. And don't forget that I'm trained. But, sadly, I only roll a 6.

GM: You miss. Diana?

DIANA: I lunge forward and attack. I roll a . . . 17.

GM: He tries his best to block your blow, but your strength and skill surpass his. You strike him in the side and he drops to the floor.

DIANA: Yes!

CLARK: I'm going to check out those machines. First I'll see if they're functioning and try to identify them. If not, I'll just root around for anything I can salvage—maybe a cypher or two.

DIANA: I'm going to search the dead guards.

GM: You should both give me Intellect-based rolls.

The GM pegs Clark's difficulty at 7 and Diana's at 1.

BRUCE: There's no time for that! More bandits will be here any second. Is there an exit over on that side?

GM: Yes. There's a dark doorway in the right-hand corner.

BRUCE: I nock an arrow and cover that door.

CLARK: I get a 14.

GM: The machines are long dead. You have no idea what they once did. Scavenging through them will take at least fifteen minutes.

CLARK: Okay, never mind—for now.

DIANA: I rolled a 5.

GM: Each bandit was wearing leather armor. The blades are medium weapons and look like they're in good shape. Each also has a few smaller throwing knives. One has a pair of dice and 6 shins in a bag. The other has nothing else.

If Diana had failed her roll, she would have missed the shins.

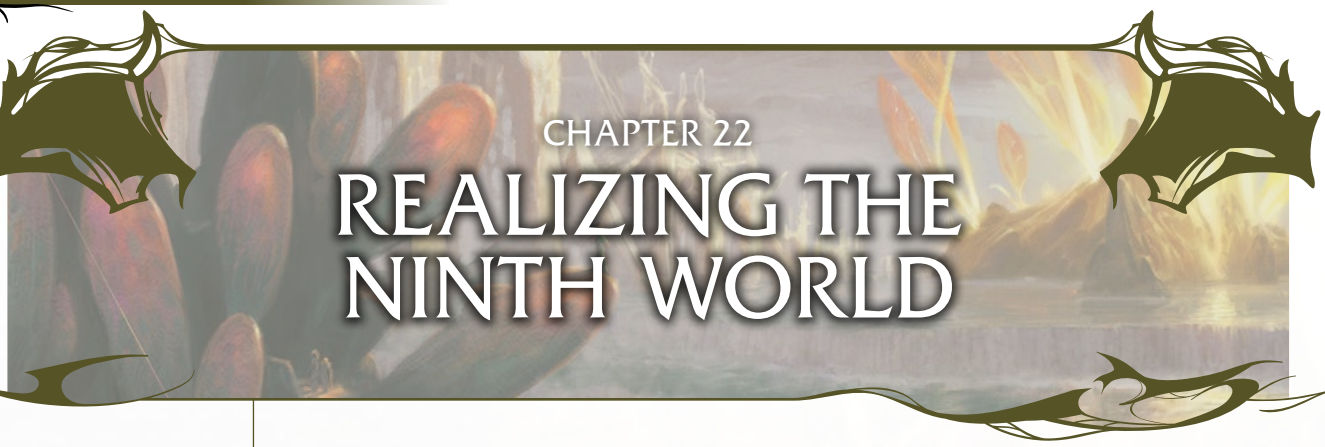
BRUCE: I'm listening for more bandits on the way.

GM: Give me a roll. It's an Intellect task.

BRUCE: I got a 10.

The GM had set the difficulty at 2 to hear the bandits, since they're not trying to be quiet and their shouts can be heard easily even at a distance. Because Bruce succeeded at a difficulty 3 task, the GM decides to give him a bit more information.

GM: You hear shouts in the distance, echoing down corridors. You don't know how many voices there are, but it could be a lot. They're getting closer. You estimate that you've got about three rounds before they get to you. What do you do?



CHAPTER 22

REALIZING THE NINTH WORLD

"My people have lived on this planet for untold generations—hundreds of millennia, at least. But we will always be the outsiders here."
~Visixtru, varjellen philosopher

The Ninth World is a setting unlike any other. Building stories there can seem challenging. Portraying a world one billion years in the future can be daunting.

Chapter 1: Welcome to the Ninth World is a great source for additional information about how to explore and talk about the world. If you haven't already done so, I recommend reading that chapter to give you a good sense of the world before progressing.

MAINTAINING THE WEIRD

Numenera is meant to be weird. The Ninth World is built on the bones of prior civilizations that not only created technologies that surpass understanding but also lived in cultures and carried out activities that cannot be imagined by the current inhabitants. Even the very nature of these past people cannot be truly understood—no more than a Cro-Magnon person could begin to understand an inhabitant of the 21st century typing on a plastic keyboard on a computer hooked wirelessly to the Internet to play a space exploration game with friends on the other side of the planet.

With all that distance dividing any kind of understanding, things will seem pretty weird to the characters. Just as important, things should seem weird to the players.

Mutant, page 397

Weird is a combination of frightening and interesting. It's a combination of disturbing and fascinating. Weird is a few steps beyond. Murdens are thieving abhumans that have some of the features of ravens. Raven-headed humanoids aren't entirely typical, but that alone probably isn't enough to be considered weird. Murdens also emit a psychic buzzing sound in the minds of anyone who draws close that seems like an irritating bit of mental noise. That's kind of weird. Sometimes, however, intelligent beings hear the voices of people from their past echoing throughout the buzzing. That's Numenera weird.

Murden, page 243

Abhuman, page 13

Weird is sustained by mystery, and mystery comes from the unknown and the unexplained. This means that in Numenera, no player should ever truly feel like they understand everything around them. If a PC comes upon a control panel and figures out what a few of the controls do, there will always be far more buttons and dials that they do not understand.

When you run a Numenera game, you should maintain the weird. Below are a few tips.

DESCRIBE, DON'T DEFINE

Because mystery is so important to weird, the Ninth World is never about strict definitions or concrete quantifications. "Describe, don't define" might be the number one rule. It not only leaves room for further development later, but it also keeps things mysterious and weird, and that's the most important characteristic of the setting.

Actually, perhaps the rule should be, "Describe rather than define, and if you must define, never quantify." In other words, when talking about abhumans, I might describe them as "misshapen, brutish humanoids that live outside human society." However, you might have to distinguish (define) them from mutants at some point during a game, because in the Ninth World "mutant" means something different (some abhumans might be mutants, but not all mutants are abhumans . . . but I digress).

I would never say, "There are six types of abhumans, and they are . . . " That kind of quantification is the death of mystery.

NEVER USE THE SAME TRICK TWICE

If a PC finds an injector device that heals wounds, the next time they find a similar device, it's a pill. The next time, it's an elixir they must drink. And so on. Changes keep things unknowable and keep the players from feeling safe.

Of course, you can also turn the tables on them later. Have the characters visit a region where healing always comes in identical pills, and the pills are somewhat common. Where are they all coming from?

One way to communicate a sense of the weird while maintaining verisimilitude is to have the PCs encounter NPCs who are familiar with the beasts and devices of that adventure. So although the PCs have never encountered or heard of a cragworm, the NPCs they meet in a nearby village have seen the beasts and can relate details about them. In fact, now and then, it will seem all the weirder to the players if strange creatures and things that are wonders to them are just another part of the lives of the people they meet.

THEN AND NOW

Are we—living in the 21st century—one of the eight prior worlds? Well, in the first place, the people of the Ninth World never specify distinctions between the prior worlds because such things are meaningless to them. If the civilization of 100 million years ago had qualities that set it apart from the civilization of 800 million years ago, what difference does it make to Ninth Worlders? None. And even if they did care, the differences between the two would likely be incomprehensible to them. So the current civilization is the Ninth World because that's what the people choose to call it, not because they know for a fact that there were eight civilizations before them.

In the second place, our 21st-century civilization would have to advance dramatically to rise to the level of the so-called prior worlds. If we survive, say, another million years, then maybe—just maybe—we will be one of those worlds. The ancient people of the Ninth World's past are so far beyond us, so alien to us, that we are more like the Ninth Worlders in our level of understanding. The people of those prior worlds commanded the very forces of the universe. They moved planets and suns, traveled to other galaxies, and explored other universes. We cannot truly comprehend what they were like. From our point of view, just as from the Ninth Worlders' point of view, they wielded magic.

DON'T USE ONE IDEA—USE TWO (OR MORE)

If you have a couple of cool ideas for new and dangerous creatures for the PCs to encounter, don't create several different beasts. Instead, take all those ideas and incorporate them into one creature. Don't create a serpent with a hypnotic stare and a plant with poisonous thorns—create a serpent bristling with long, venom-tipped spines that are in turn covered with a fungus that emits hypnotic spores.

Cragworm, page 230

ALWAYS PROVIDE ANOTHER DOOR

If the PCs explore an ancient technological complex, make it vast—far too big to explore everything. Give them more doors than they can open or countless corridors stretching into darkness. The traditional "crawl" type of adventure, where the PC explore room after room, isn't always the best Numenera adventure (you can do it, but it's challenging). In a narrative where the characters explore an ancient structure, it's better to use statements like this one: "After hours of exploring numerous chambers filled with the remnants of strange machines, winding conduits, and pipes, and after descending many levels, you find yourself in a large area . . ." Descriptions like that leave plenty of room for the unknown without devolving into tedium. Tedium is the enemy of weird.

Weird does not mean surreal or some kind of inexplicable psychedelic dreamscape. Weird is usually more subtle and works in juxtaposition with the non-weird, unlike surreality.





DIFFERENT WAYS TO USE THE NINTH WORLD

Part 4: The Setting, page 129

Although Part 4: The Setting lays out the basics of the Ninth World (at least from the point of view of those in the Steadfast), you, as the GM, need to decide the precise feel and flavor you want to give it—your own personal spin, if you will. If you like fantasy, you can immerse the players in the perspective of the Ninth World folk, who often use words such as "magic," "spells," "witches," and "demons," and who never use technological or science words. If you like science fiction, you can portray the same things as being more grounded in sciences that we have names for, at least, if not true understanding.

See Appendix C: Bibliography and Resources (page 405) for more inspirational suggestions.

Below are some examples of how to give the setting your own feel.

A POST-APOCALYPTIC SETTING

Near certain yellowish-glowing formations in the Ninth World, cyphers and oddities sometimes wake and begin to speak the Truth for a time.

The Ninth World exists among the ruins of a prior civilization. Less-advanced people scavenging among the remnants of an enlightened, long-lost culture is a staple for many post-apocalyptic stories, from *Planet of the Apes* to *Thundarr the Barbarian*.

With this focus, most adventures would involve the PCs exploring the ruins of the prior worlds to recover whatever they can to help them survive. Most likely, the point of the campaign would not be about rebuilding, but simply enduring. Politics and daily life in Ninth World towns and cities would be merely a backdrop for the real action: delving into the legacies of the ancients, finding danger and reward among the ruins.

A QUASI-MEDIEVAL FANTASY SETTING

When all is said and done, the differences between the techno-magic of a Ninth World Nano and the rituals and incantations of a classic fantasy wizard are rather pedantic. Fans of traditional fantasy, swords and sorcery, and so on could easily use the Ninth World with only a slight change of mental focus.

In this take on the setting, you've got a mixed band of characters going through ancient ruins to find treasure and fight monsters. Sound familiar? Here, though, the dungeons are vast subterranean machines, the magic items are practically undecipherable devices, and the monsters are genetically engineered horrors transplanted from another world or dimension. Careful use of language—for example, always referring to artifacts as magical—allows the Ninth World to retain a fantasy feel.

Many Numenera GMs will be tempted to use technological terminology in their descriptions from time to time. If you want to portray the Ninth World as a quasi-medieval setting, you should avoid technical jargon and always describe things in terms of traditional fantasy—dragons, demons, steel, golems, and so on. The players might develop a sort of literary irony since they have a basic understanding of the setting, but if you reinforce the traditional fantasy outlook of the characters, soon everyone will feel like they are playing in a familiar setting with unique twists.

Many fantasy stories—from *The Dying Earth* to the *Shannara* series—all use settings built on the remnants of a technological past. Gene

Wolfe's series *The Book of the New Sun* turns on the idea that although it feels like a fantasy tale in a realm based on our past, it's actually a far-future story where technology resembles magic.

A WEIRD HORROR SETTING

In this take, the people of the Ninth World try to survive in a world they did not create. They have no idea what horrors of the past wait for them just beyond the lamps of their tiny communities—perhaps engineered monstrosities, machines that kill, or clouds of the so-called iron wind that can tear people apart in a heartbeat or, worse yet, change them into something else. The mysteries of the past are beyond comprehension, and those who attempt to learn these secrets are doomed.

This is a rather nihilistic, pseudo-Lovecraftian approach to horror, but it is no stretch to think that someone with the sensibilities of ancient humanity would develop a rather dark view of the universe when living in a world of nanotech run amok.

GMs wishing to use the Ninth World as a horror setting need to keep the technologies of the past utterly mysterious—essentially, incomprehensible. Every creature needs to be a unique monster, and each must be more horrific, deadly, and difficult to defeat than the last. Technology/magic cannot be mastered or even understood, and it always comes with a price. Exploring ancient locales is a last resort—something that is done because without the dangerous secrets found within, destruction is imminent.

A HOPEFUL NEW WORLD SETTING

The people of the Ninth World have been given a great gift: a whole world that is theirs to tame and make their own. Now they must overcome the remnants of the past and, where possible, recover what they can to forge a new future.

Brave explorers seek the legacies of the prior worlds. They strive to build a world that is as fantastic as or better than the ones that came before. Yes, the land is full of dangers thanks to the actions of the ancients, but these are merely challenges to be overcome.

ALL AT ONCE

Careful readers will note that each of these suggestions focuses on only one aspect of the Ninth World. Any of the options can be used without making massive changes to the setting because the Ninth World comprises each of them already.

SUFFICIENTLY ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

The artifacts and cyphers that the PCs find are bits and baubles that can be used immediately in interesting ways or cobbled together into handy tools or dangerous weapons. That's the magic of the Ninth World.

Artifact, page 289

Cypher, page 272

But magic is more than that. Even without the use of artifacts or cyphers, humans and creatures have weird powers. They might be the legacies of mutation, genetic manipulation, electromagnetic fluctuations, transdimensional rifts, nanotechnology, overlapping networks broadcast by hidden towers and orbiting satellites, some combination of all of these, or something even stranger.

Part of the point is that it's incomprehensible. The technology of the prior worlds is such that we, as 21st-century people, can't truly understand or even identify it, so how can the far younger people of the Ninth World think of it as anything other than magic? (And honestly, are they really so wrong?) But the inability of the players—let alone the characters—to really understand the "tech" of the Ninth World is important.

Don't describe a piece of technology as a gun, a phone, or a computer. It's all far stranger than that. The artifacts and cyphers that characters find are often bits and pieces of larger, more complex, and ultimately less comprehensible devices. The lightning-throwing tube that Jerik found might have been part of the power conduit for a larger machine. The glass that shows faraway places might have been the viewfinder of something else, and the glass that allows Nemmol to see through walls might be a similar object that has been modified or is malfunctioning.

The common people of the Ninth World lump every kind of technology together under the label "the numenera." To them, it's all supernatural stuff. They don't necessarily recognize that some technology is far more advanced than others. They don't realize that a medical scanner is more advanced than a piston-driven engine. A simple blowtorch seems the same as a device that disrupts organic cells.



Aeon Priests are tinkerers who take artifacts found by explorers and turn them into usable devices. They understand (or perhaps misunderstand) just enough of the old technologies to get the bits and pieces to perform handy tasks. When a Glaive brings them a strange, glowing crystal pyramid, the priests know that it can be made into a personal power shield or a magnetized tractor beam.

Aeon Priest, page 264

Numenera is meant to be weird. The Ninth World is built on the bones of prior civilizations that not only created technologies that surpass understanding but also lived in cultures and carried out activities that cannot be imagined by the current inhabitants.

Green fruit from the gavorin tree gives the eater very limited, very unreliable, and very temporary access to the datasphere.

But some of the prior worlds were millions (or hundreds of millions) of years in the past. How can such incredibly old stuff still be around? Sometimes, stasis fields preserve objects. Other times, they have self-repair mechanisms, or nanites repair them on a molecular level. Still others are made of such advanced materials that they are effectively immune to time. Last, impossible longevity might be a property of the location where the items were found, with perfect seals or protective fields maintaining a structure and its contents indefinitely.

TYPES OF TECHNOLOGY

Oddities, page 304

Discoveries, page 123

When thinking about cyphers, artifacts, oddities, discoveries, and other relics of the past, it's worth breaking them down into broad categories. These classifications don't necessarily have meaning as game mechanics. For example, whether a weapon is a bioengineered organism, a mechanically retracting blade, or an item that attacks a victim on a molecular level, it might have the same basic mechanics and do the same amount of damage. The average Ninth Worlder doesn't understand these types of distinctions, either, but it's useful for GMs to think in these terms, mostly to keep their horizons open. The numenera can do virtually anything, limited only by the understanding of those who recover it.

The following categories use 21st-century terms and understanding to explain these broad types of technology. They're not meant to be comprehensive or to put limits on what can be found—just the opposite, in fact. Use these classifications as creative inspiration not just for items the PCs use but also for machines and technologies they encounter in their explorations. Remember, too, that sometimes the numenera encompasses many of these technologies at once.



MACHINES AND ENGINES

The technology in this category is perhaps the simplest, based on mechanical principles and often powered by chemicals or electricity. Although this might be the most straightforward and understandable category of technology, it should still be utterly baffling. It includes clocks, vehicles, firearms, generators, automatons, cybernetics, production facilities, and more. The machines involve turbines, fans, pistons, springs, belts, screws, hydraulics, motors, pumps, transistors, and servos, sometimes on a colossal scale. They might also involve capacitors, resistors, semiconductors, circuits, microchips, and things on a microscopic scale.

For a more exotic spin, consider machines made of unexpected materials, such as an engine made of extremely hard glass, an electronic device of flexible plastic, or an automaton made of ceramics that uses liquid or organic material for processing and storage.

Don't: Have the PCs meet a humanoid automaton who speaks their language in a funny, mechanical voice and has a shoulder-mounted cannon.
Do: Have the PCs encounter a broken and cracked woman made of ceramics and glass. Her wounds and fissures ooze a strange milky substance that, as it dries, encourages the growth of a blue fungus. Thus, she is caked with this fungus. The spores emit a high-frequency sound that can't be heard but that disrupts the synapses of humans, scrambling and ultimately frying their brains.

Don't: Have the PCs find a machine gun.
Do: Have them find an artifact that looks like a bundle of joined tubes and a wide pipe with a metal scoop in the back. When the scoop is filled with objects (small stones, bits of metal, screws and bolts, or something similar) and one of the tubes is pulled back and pushed upward into the heart of the device, the artifact sprays a burst of the objects with incredible speed and force. In other words, the artifact functions just like a machine gun, but only through trial and error (and the characters don't know what a machine gun is because that doesn't exist in the Ninth World, so they wouldn't classify it that way).

LOOKING FOR
Maintaining the Weird, page 350

NETWORKS AND COMPUTATIONAL DEVICES

This technology involves data processing and storage, computational power, and disseminating information on a worldwide level. It also includes recording and storing the data (and essence) of complex organic brains in a permanent, near-immortal state. Collectively, we use the term "datasphere" to describe the worldwide wireless network that connects a wide variety of devices, satellites, and other machines to store and exchange data. However, a number of such networks might exist in the Ninth World (and beyond—some of these networks could be connected to interplanetary, interstellar, intergalactic, or interdimensional sources).

The category also encompasses artificial intelligences, unique NPCs that are sometimes almost like spirits or gods. Their power is limited only by the technology that they can still access. Artificial intelligences could live within the datasphere itself or be confined to unconnected devices or machines. They might use holograms to project a presence into the real world or build automated bodies to interact in a physical state. (Or they could find both of those options ridiculous or abhorrent.)

An interesting concept could be that different artificial intelligences from different eras exist within the datasphere together. They would be as alien to each other as humans and extraterrestrials. The intelligences might work together or wage constant war, or they might not even be aware of each other's existence.

GENETIC ENGINEERING

Just as advanced civilizations can shape steel and glass and produce plastics and other materials, they can shape and create biological organisms. Diseases can be cured, wounds healed, and bodies rebuilt, redesigned, and repurposed. Tools and machines can be grown rather than made, and they can repair themselves when necessary. This category of technology also includes cloning, biological implants, grafts, rewriting and overwriting brains (with instincts, skills, knowledge, or memories), and drugs so advanced that they literally rewrite DNA.

Some genetic manipulation might be inadvertent. Random mutations can arise from past engineering gone bad or from unintentional sources such as radiation or chemicals in the air, ground, or water.

Leftover numenera that can do some type of genetic engineering gives us a peek at some creatures of the prior worlds. At least one of the civilizations was primarily human, and at least one was entirely nonhuman. This information reveals two things. First, some of the abhumans of the Ninth World are genetically modified humans or are the descendants of such individuals from prior worlds. And second, some of the artifacts and structures discovered don't react to humans and clearly are not intended for human use.

ENERGY MANIPULATION

The electromagnetic spectrum becomes a tool unto itself in this category, and even the fundamental forces in the universe can be made to dance at the pleasure of those who command these technologies. Obviously, this group includes destructive energies like ray or beam weapons, but it also has sonic, magnetic, gravitic, microwave, or disintegration weapons. And weapons are simply the easiest manifestation of energy manipulation. Devices in this category also include sensors, scanners, communicators, holograms, force fields, tractor beams, microwave transmissions, and sensory manipulation. It includes using magnetic fields or gravity to move, manipulate, or shape matter and other energy. It can involve telepathy, telekinesis, pyrokinesis, and other manifestations of energies within the brain (or mechanical or biological devices implanted or grown within the brain to produce similar effects). Energy manipulation can affect molecular bonds and other principles on an atomic or subatomic level to transform or transmute matter.

NANOTECHNOLOGY

Nanotechnology can change matter on its most fundamental levels. Engineered machines that exist on an atomic or subatomic scale can move, reshape, alter, or completely redesign matter—both inorganic and organic—and they can produce and manipulate energy as well. Because nanomachines often come in fantastically huge numbers, they can work at what appears to be an almost magical speed. It's no wonder that many people see nanotech as the work of invisible supernatural creatures (sometimes called nano spirits).

Nanotech involves building and repairing inorganic and organic structures. It can be used as targeted drugs and viruses that can change a creature on the cellular level, working as a cure for disease and the means to shape.

Nanotechnology also allows for the creation of things that would otherwise be impossible— materials that are super-thin, super-strong, super-resilient, or all three at once. It also might involve creating exotic materials such as liquid metal, smart fluids, shapeable gases, and stranger things.

The Ninth World is enveloped in a field of information—think of it as an area with a hundred thousand active radio stations, but almost no one has a radio. The datasphere occasionally malfunctions or interacts with the people in the world in unexpected ways, however, sending "glimmers" of information directly into someone's head. The GM should occasionally have this happen to the PCs. Not often. And the vast majority of the time it shouldn't make any sense or be relevant. Maybe once in a whole campaign, however, it is pertinent and helpful. You can plan for this or you can make it a way to send a much-needed hint or clue.

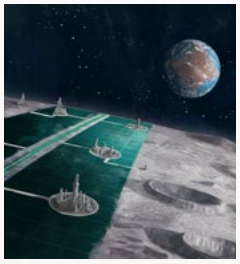


The Kardashev scale is a useful tool and a great starting point for ideas of what an advanced civilization could really accomplish. Physicist Freeman Dyson conceived of the Dyson sphere, which would be a way to surround a star to absorb all of its energy output (although it would take all the matter in the planets around the star to build it). Once you have your mind wrapped around that, an even more mind-blowing idea is a Dyson sphere around an entire galaxy.

Iron wind, page 135

At some point in the past aeons, nanotech must have gone horribly awry. Some of the humans of the Ninth World unknowingly have latent nanotech viruses that could suddenly activate and wreak changes—even drastic changes—in their physiology. Various mutants and aberrant creatures (including abhumans) are likely the result of nanotechnology.

But the worst threat of all is the so-called iron wind. These are clouds of nanomachines run amok, changing matter they come across in random and bizarre ways. Is it a force or an intelligence? The iron wind isn't a single thing— it's a phenomenon.



In less than a billion years, our sun's growing luminosity will make life as we know it impossible on Earth. The oceans will boil away and photosynthesis won't be possible. Since that isn't the case in the Ninth World, we know that at some point an extremely powerful civilization did something. The Ninth World's sun has about the same luminosity as what we are accustomed to in the 21st century.

STELLAR TECHNOLOGY

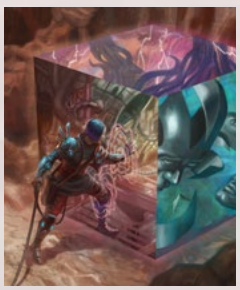
Soviet astronomer Nikolai Kardashev created a scale to measure truly advanced civilizations. He based it mainly on energy use. The scale has three types (although other people expanded it to include five). A Type I civilization is not unlike ours in the 21st century, with limited capabilities and energy use. A Type II civilization uses the energy of its star. It builds things on a mega-scale, such as a ring or sphere that encircles the sun or structures that involve the moving or dismantling of a planet. A Type III civilization begins to harness the power of all the stars in its galaxy and can even reshape things on a galactic scale.

When I talk about stellar technology, I'm talking about at least Type II and more likely Type III. This category involves technologies that allow and arise from having the ability to travel anywhere in the galaxy or beyond. It includes structures built from materials harvested from a white dwarf star; the creation and use of black holes to generate and harness energy; transplanting alien creatures, species, and materials; antimatter; dark energy; reactionless drives; and more.

It's safe to say that at one point, the earth was a crossroads in an interstellar—or even intergalactic—civilization. Many technologies, creatures, and materials now present in the world did not originate here. Do remnants of that vast civilization still exist out there in the universe, with memories of Earth? Almost certainly.

TRANSDIMENSIONAL TECHNOLOGY

In the aforementioned Kardashev scale, "transdimensional technology" likely comes from a Type IV or Type V civilization—one that can affect things on a universal scale and travel to (or create) other universes beyond our own. This category includes the use of transdimensional taps to bring in energy from other dimensions, teleportation matrixes, extradimensional spaces, the ability to change the phases of matter, and more. This is likely the strangest and most incomprehensible category of technology. It can involve rewriting the laws of physics, creating space where there was none, stopping time, time travel, and time manipulation.



ADVENTURE IDEAS

Now you understand how to use the rules, how to deal with players, and how to pace your campaign. So what do you want the characters to do? What stories do you want to tell?

In many ways, the archetypal Numenera adventure is this: the PCs are exploring the wilderness and come upon something inexplicable. They investigate and discover amazing things, not the least of which is that it's all even weirder than it first appeared. And the whole thing is, of course, laced with danger. This can take many forms:

- Beyond the rocky hills lies a ruin of iron and glass, so deeply entwined in the undergrowth that it appears to be a part of the landscape. What lies within? Treasure? Ancient horrors? Both?
- The old road leads to a mysterious tower—the home of a noble that the PCs have never heard of. The noble invites them to spend the night, but the PCs soon learn that their host hides a sinister secret. What has the noble been experimenting with? What's in the upper chamber of the tower?
- The PCs stop at a small village to resupply. The people there have stumbled upon an ancient secret. Is it a boon or a bane?
- The PCs come upon an isolated community in a desolate region and need a place to rest. The community, out of touch with the rest of humanity for years, has made alliances with or allegiances to something not human—a strange creature from the past, an intelligent machine, or something from beyond space and time. Or perhaps something stranger, or something worse?

All of these ideas and thousands of similar ones grow out of two key issues:

1. The present is built upon the mysteries of the past. Relics and ruins are everywhere, even in places no one would suspect.

2. The people of the Ninth World are isolated from each other. Much remains unknown, not just about the past, but about the present. What lies beyond those woods? No one knows until someone goes to investigate.

Obviously, the Ninth World offers many, many adventure opportunities. This section provides a brief overview of some of them, with suggestions.

CITIES

Although the cities and strongholds of the Ninth World were built by the people of the era, the influence of the prior worlds is immediately evident. Buildings or portions of buildings use objects and materials crafted or produced in the past, making each a palimpsest displaying aeons of time in each wall or archway. Roads and paths are almost all new, although here and there sections are made of the remnants of byways paved with unknowable materials.

A Ninth World structure resembles a house or castle (as we are familiar with them) only in a passing fashion. Feel free to describe them however you wish, but don't rely solely on words like "tower" or "palace" unless you intentionally want to tap into the historical imagery in the players' heads. When you say that Duchess Dethone lives in a castle, the players are likely to think of something out of a fairy tale or medieval history until you further state that the castle's trapezoidal towers are constructed of vast, translucent blue stones, each with what appears to be a fish or serpent of gold embedded in its center.

Despite the "magic" of the past that surrounds them, the lives of Ninth World humans are not unlike those of medieval commoners. They wear garments of rough cloth and wide-brimmed hats as protection from the reddish glow of the sun as they lead mule carts full of harvested turnips into town to sell at the open market. If you've ever run a traditional fantasy roleplaying game, it's not hard to portray a village or a city of the Ninth World. The trappings are different, but ultimately the core is fairly similar.

SCENARIOS

Thankfully, the politics, greed, pettiness, jealousy, love, lust, fear, and familial bonds that spur on adventures in games with more conventional settings all exist in the Ninth World as well. Nobles vie for power, kingdoms go to war, brigands raid trade caravans, kidnappers snatch children, the rich hoard wealth, lovers sneak off for clandestine meetings, thieves steal valuables, and more. The PCs could be hired or motivated to perform all sorts of duties as befit the confident and capable.

Not everything has to deal with the prior worlds or the numenera left over from the lost aeons. However, those involved in the adventures (the PCs and NPCs) will likely use the cyphers or artifacts of the past as they carry out missions of the present.

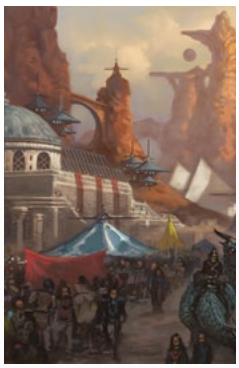
Possible scenarios set in cities include the following.

- Thieves steal a valuable piece of art.
- A noble needs attendants to escort them while they travel.
- A numenera expert needs a specific part for their work.
- A criminal boss hires the PCs to protect their child.
- Two criminal organizations go to war.
- The ruler of the town is assassinated.
- The PCs must defend a noble's home against invaders.
- Digging a foundation uncovers a mysterious machine.
- The only witness to a crime must be protected.
- A business needs help or it will fail.
- The PCs are framed for a crime.
- A noble needs envoys to attend a diplomatic meeting.
- The authorities need someone to gather information on a criminal.
- A temple needs help in dealing with an unruly member of the religion.
- The belongings of a dead numenera expert are auctioned off.
- An annual festival is held, and the fair has many interesting contests.
- An ancient structure is said to be "haunted."
- A rare but dangerous creature has escaped from a menagerie.

VILLAGES

Villages in the Beyond are usually called aldeia. They offer a very different setting for adventures than cities or towns do. These small communities exist on the edge of the wilderness and the unknown. They are isolated, sometimes with no connection to the rest of the world for years at a time. Play up the seclusion and distrust felt by residents in most villages.

The aldeia grow up around Aeon Priest claves, for they have the most knowledge. But sometimes a clave's actions, research, and experiments put the villagers in danger. In addition, once in a while, a member of a village masters some aspect of the numenera beyond anything dreamed of by the Aeon Priests. These people grant the village in which they live some advantages beyond the norm. Thus, to make each aldeia memorable and unique, give most of them at least one affliction or discovery that results from the work of the clave or a lone genius (either in the present or the recent past).



While standing in front of the tallest crystal fountain in Sada Emidu, observers can't recall anything that has to do with the color red.

In the village of Zadmus, deep in the Beyond, all the men born there look exactly identical. They have no explanation.

"You are your own best test subject, I always say."
~Sir Arthour

The residents of an aldeia may not use that term to describe it. They may refer to it as a town, village, community, or something else entirely.

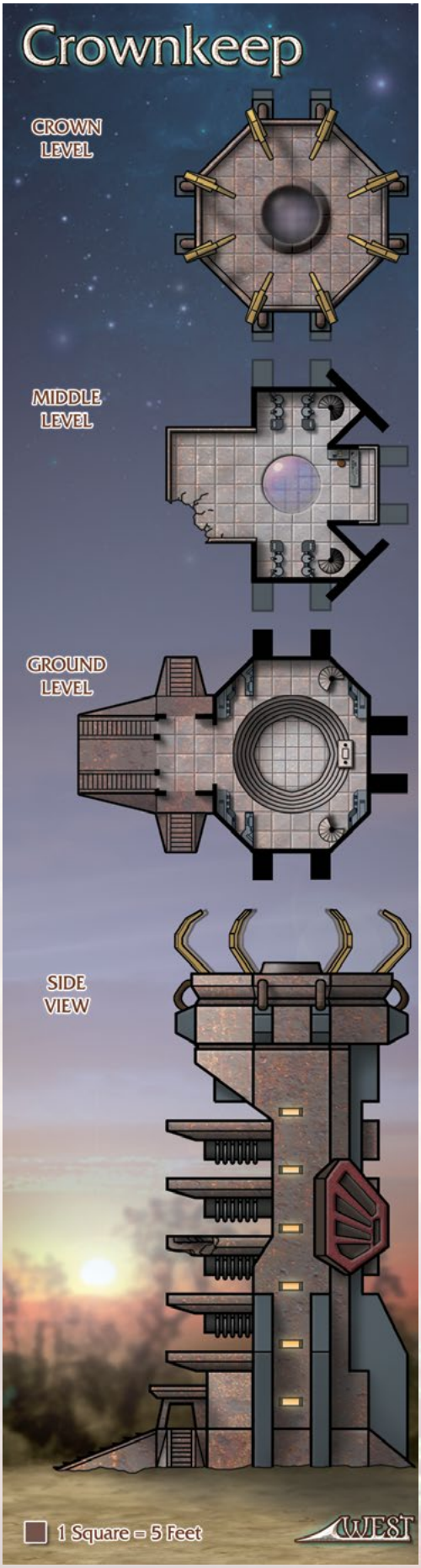
AFFLICTIONS

A mist comes in the night and steals people away.
The people must make human sacrifices to something in a nearby pit.
Spores that destroy metal fill the air.
Everyone's intelligence has been lowered dramatically.
All nearby plant life is poisonous.
Inexplicable sorrow grips everyone periodically.
All food decays within one hour.
Everyone requires twice as much sleep.
A coughing malady grips everyone.
Everyone is addicted to the same drug-like substance.
Everyone can remember only the last few days.
Radiation slowly weakens everyone.
Everyone has attractive but nonhuman features, such as golden skin or oversized, dark eyes.

Crownkeep lies in the far reaches of the Beyond and serves as an excellent example of an ancient technological structure that could easily be explored or even used by Ninth World humans. Was it an observatory? A research facility? A hospital? A home? A landing pad for a vehicle? We have no idea, and very likely the PCs won't ever have the ability to find out. Which is to say, it's not the point. Something that is understood usually isn't interesting anymore. Even if the PCs explore Crownkeep or interact with others who live there, the structure itself should never be fully understood. In fact, at least on some level, it shouldn't make sense because it was built by people (humans? perhaps not) whose lives were all but incomprehensible to Ninth Worlders.

DISCOVERIES

Defensive tower(s) with lightning emitters
Drug vastly increases lifespan
Means to telepathically lure fish into nets
Limited weather control
Mechanical harnesses grant great strength
Living, organic buildings and houses
Sonic protective field
Force bubbles used as prisons and cages
Telepathic implants
Clockwork insects for pets
A large flying vehicle
Diamonds as common currency
A large automaton servant
Music plays throughout the village
Injections or implants for teaching skills and knowledge
Genetically engineered guardian hounds
Camouflage cloaks
Mindwipe device rewrites the brains of criminals
Water purifier cleans nearby contaminated lake
Centralized device produces limitless food
Centralized device shows the location of all nearby game and threats
Mechanized farm equipment
Clock tower
Refrigerators to store food
Teleport pad connects village with nearby ruin
Huge, glow-in-the-dark moths in cages for light
Addictive injections make everyone beautiful
Crops grow extremely large and healthy
Local tree produces fruit that sustains everyone
Device suppresses anger and violence
Tracers placed on all residents
Dead people are preserved in stasis



SCENARIOS

As the last bastion of civilization before a traveler heads into the wilderness, a village is a meeting point of both aspects of the Ninth World. The unknown threatens the known here, and the scenarios you set in villages should reflect that.

- A young child has gone missing.
- The well has become contaminated.
- Strange new predators are coming out of the wilderness.
- An envoy of visitants has shown up, looking to talk.
- A monstrous mutant child has been born and is on the loose.
- The PCs must guard the only bridge into the village from invaders.
- Explorers have arrived with a strange device.
- A group of bandits has been raiding the village and must be stopped.
- An illness wracks the people, and they need a cure.
- The village holds a contest to see who can track and kill a rare beast first.
- The PCs are imprisoned for an offense they didn't even know existed.
- An earthquake uncovers an ancient ruin nearby.
- A storm passes through the village and changes everyone's personality.
- The residents use deadly force to protect the secret of their machine-intelligence deity.
- A mutant needs help coming to terms with their newly emerging powers.
- A warlord advances from deep in the wilds to conquer the village, backed by an army of abhumans with advanced weapons and a vast, city-crushing war machine pulled by a thousand chained beasts.

THE WILDERNESS

Although human history of the Ninth World extends back hundreds of years, by most standards, civilization is young. Most of the world is still unexplored. Mysteries and danger abound. Anything could be beyond the next rise, through those trees, or at the bottom of that lake.

The wilds are punctuated by weird and unexpected terrain, the intentional or unintentional result of technology of the past. Floating mountains, trees of crystal, fields of grey goo, and rolling hills glowing with strange radiation are just a few examples.

Likewise, the weather of the Ninth World is odd and dangerous. Ice-covered islands in the middle of tropical lakes, energy storms, and rains of stones or fish can and do happen.

But the wilderness is inhabited, too. Isolated villages, lonely castles, mysterious towers, hidden temples, lost civilizations, and communities of nonhuman creatures can be found amid the countryside, deep in the forests and jungles, and nestled in the mountains. Vicious tribes of cannibals, abhumans, roving bands of marauders, and insane automatons hunt in the wilds. And, of course, the ancient ruins, machines, and remnants of the past can be found as one explores the vast wilderness.

Deep in the Westwood, exiled and persecuted mutants hide in an extradimensional space that lies between two innocuous trees.

Westwood, page 137

Visitants, page 394

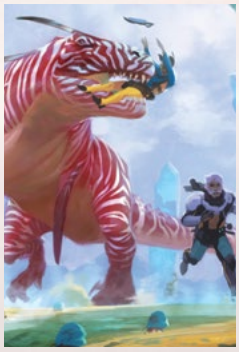
SCENARIOS

The wilderness is an enticing destination for explorers. Immense tracts of unknown lands and mystery await those who dare to enter. Few paths are available, so explorers must make their own way and be ready to encounter the strange creatures of the Ninth World. But sometimes there is more to the wilderness.

- A scholar hires the PCs to map an unexplored region.
- The PCs encounter a bizarre storm that seems to affect time.
- A merchant hires the PCs to blaze a new trade route.
- A noble needs help clearing land and building structures.
- A small group of abhumans asks the PCs for help against a marauding automaton.
- An interdimensional gateway that allows strange creatures into the world needs to be closed.
- A tiny settlement has been wiped out, but by what?
- A knight welcomes the PCs to a remote keep but forbids them from looking in the tower.
- Lost in a remote and alien region, the PCs must find edible food and a way to survive.
- A terrible swarm of deadly insects approaches, and the PCs must find shelter.
- A madman attempts to kidnap the PCs to perform experiments on them.
- A damaged automaton has valuable information if it can be repaired.
- A roguish hermit with a beautiful, steam-powered wheeled vehicle is said to have found the key to immortality.
- A small band of monks have built a temple around a self-aware machine that can see into the future.

A woman by Ledon's shipyards sells second chances for 10 shins. She congratulates customers, then warns them to beware the paradox eaters.

Ledon, page 143



Because mystery is so important to weird, the Ninth World is never about strict definitions or concrete quantifications. "Describe, don't define" might be the number one rule.



RUINS

Perhaps the archetypal Numenera adventure locale is a ruin from a prior aeon. These ruins can take on many forms. Although their original design and purpose no longer matters, sometimes it's useful to have a list for generating ideas. But keep in mind that the PCs should often have no idea what they are exploring because too much information will take away the air of alien mystery, and you always want to maintain the weird in Numenera.

Many ruins aren't actual structures but vast machines that the PCs can enter and explore, looking for devices that can be used as oddities, cyphers, or artifacts. In such a gigantic machine, corridors might be conduits, and rooms might simply be junctions, never intended for habitation—only access.

The interiors of these large complexes exist very much in three dimensions. Vertical shafts are just as common as horizontal corridors. The layout rarely makes sense to a Ninth World human (or to one from the 21st century). Explorers shouldn't try to second-guess the purpose behind everything they find. To do so would be pointless. While the PCs explore the ruin, stress the huge size of their surroundings. Often, covering the whole interior isn't possible, and it's rarely the point, so a detailed map of each nook and cranny is only occasionally useful. Most of the time, you can get by with vague descriptions, saying something like, "You pass through twisting cylindrical corridors for more than an hour, sometimes scrambling over fallen and ruined machinery, before you reach an interesting chamber . . ."

If you've played other fantasy games where the PCs explore dungeon-style environments filled with traps, puzzles, monsters, and weird, isolated locations, you can adapt many of those same principles here as well. Of course, a trap or puzzle might simply be a machine the characters don't understand. Why does the cylindrical chamber spin as it lowers into a fanlike mechanism? The PCs will never know, but it was once a normal part of a very large turbine-driven motor.

Not all ruins are in the style of machine-filled dungeons. Some are single buildings—towers, domes, or structures too strange to be given a simple name. They might be so ancient that they have become incorporated into the landscape.

Most ruins involve a great deal of metal, glass, and perhaps synth. Some are made of stone, at least in part (although it might actually be an artificial substance that only appears to be stone). Other ruins might be crystalline or even organic, made of living creatures or built from the bones, shells, or carapaces of dead ones. It's not hard to imagine ruins formed entirely of energy—planes of force, or solid light that takes the appearance and texture of another substance.

As soon as the players seem to understand something about the past, change it. While the aspects of their own world and their own civilization should be relatable and comprehensible, the prior worlds should never be—at least not completely. Keep the mystery alive. That's how you keep it feeling like magic.

POSSIBLE TYPES OF RUINS

Building (incomprehensible)
Complex of buildings (incomprehensible)
Underground complex
Large ground vehicle
Flying or space vessel
Monument
Laboratory
Warehouse
Power station
Underground transit tunnels
Airport or spaceport
Transdimensional gateway
Residential complex
Bioengineering facility
Creature menagerie/hatchery
Pipe systems
Factory
Sewer
Communication station
Processing plant
Mine
Entire city

SCENARIOS

Regardless of their size and nature, ruins are filled with dangers, including the following.

- Defense mechanisms
- Defense automatons or bioengineered creatures
- Incomprehensible technologies and machines whose original design is a mystery but now are simply dangerous
- Machines that are malfunctioning due to age or damage
- Weakened or partially collapsed structures
- Creatures that have taken up residence

A PARTING WORD

As the GM, you are the guide for the rest of the group as they journey through the Ninth World. It is a strange place, not meant to be fully understood. The feel of the setting—the dark mood, the unsolvable mysteries, the unexpected turns, the unanswerable questions, and the enormous dangers—are far more important than the details. When crafting your group's stories, focus more on maintaining this mood than on any other aspect of being a GM. The rules are important, the fun is important, and the immersion and believability are important, but they all take a back seat to the mood and atmosphere of the truly weird. Establish that first, and the rest will follow naturally.

PART 8:
ADVENTURES



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Chapter 26: Legacy 388

CHAPTER 23

ADVENTURES OVERVIEW

Part 8: Adventures presents three Numenera adventures. Each is different in topic and style as well as presentation.

GMs should feel free to modify anything in any of the adventures to make them work best with the players in their campaign.

Taker of Sorrow, page 363

Legacy, page 388

Vault of Reflections, page 376

Taker of Sorrow is meant to be a GM's first Numenera adventure. It is presented with as much advice and assistance as a new GM will need. It even comes with a flowchart that shows the course of the adventure. The flowchart is an example of how GMs might write up their own adventures—a few sentences are all you really need.

Vault of Reflections is an area-based adventure in which the PCs explore a map however they choose. It shows how a GM can set up adventures without worrying about the order in which things happen. Players can explore location-based encounters in whatever sequence they wish. "Vault of Reflections" could be expanded into a much larger adventure.

Legacy is an urban adventure with investigation, double-dealing, and criminal intrigue. It is potentially very open-ended and assumes that a GM can ad-lib NPCs and situations as they arise. It shows that not every adventure in the Ninth World must be centered around the past. The setting and game can handle all sorts of scenarios.

These three adventures are only the beginning. The best adventures will be crafted by you, with your specific players and their characters in mind.



CHAPTER 24

TAKER OF SORROW

This adventure is great for beginning characters. Given the inclusion of several optional side encounters, you could even begin a new campaign with "Taker of Sorrow." It is presented in a style that gives new GMs (or at least GMs new to Numenera) helpful hints along the way about how to run the adventure. The beginning is designed so that the PCs have a reason to join together even if their backgrounds and character types are very different.

BACKGROUND

Gram: The town of Gram lies in the wilds of Navarene. It fills a series of ancient hollows in the face of a towering angular mountain that locals call Enigram Mountain. The hollows in the metallic cliff face have been converted, for the most part, into dwellings by the town residents. Unexplored hollows and cavities are still prolific, and several passages lead deeper into the heart of the mountain. Gram inhabitants include farmers, trappers, gatherers, traders, and a handful of full-time explorers.

Gram takes its name from the structure housing it, Enigram Mountain.

The Serein and the Taker of Sorrow: Gram also hosts a community of ascetics who call themselves the serein. Decades ago, those who would become founders of the serein discovered a chamber in the heart of Enigram Mountain that contained a wondrous device. They brought it back with them to the community. Dubbed the Taker of Sorrow, this ancient mechanism grants peace to a troubled, guilty, or otherwise anguished mind. How it does so isn't quite understood, but that hardly matters, given that those who emerge from the machine do so with a smile, as if seeing the world for the first time.

All was well until about ten years ago, when an unscrupulous serein named Weymel decided to use the Taker of Sorrow to better his standing in the community. He tinkered with the machine, with only limited understanding of how it worked in the first place. He tried to modify the minds of supplicants who used the Taker so that, in addition to feeling good about other things, they would also feel good about him. Perhaps they would even look upon him with adoration and a desire to do as he suggested.

In this, Weymel was only partially successful. Supplicants left the machine with the same lightness of being as before, and with him suddenly transfigured in their minds. But a few emerged with headaches and no love for Weymel. And within just a few hours, these supplicants dissolved into lumpy, horrific animated growths—called babble mites by some, teratomas by others—that scampered off into the night.

Teratoma Packs (Babble Mites): Teratomas are also called babble mites. A teratoma pack, composed of five to ten horrific creatures, is all that remains of a single person whose mind didn't accept the mental conditioning Weymel introduced using the Taker of Sorrow. In a literal sense, their minds (and bodies) were torn apart by that conflict, though their flesh lives on. With their half-formed mouths or gaping larynxes, the creatures hum, speak nonsense, rhyme, whisper urgently, and sing with scratchy, distorted voices. These sounds are not made consciously. Mostly, teratoma packs want to hunt in darkness and bring down lone prey on which to feast in bloody secret. Though each teratoma begins its "life" as a relatively small chunk of flesh, the more one feeds, the more one grows.

Teratoma, page 367

The Cover-up: Teratoma packs and the rash of Gram citizen disappearances troubled the town for almost a full year. But the babble mites were finally expelled into the surrounding lands, and Weymel obtained the means to cast out any new packs that formed. As more and more citizens eventually

fell under Weymel's sway due to the Taker of Sorrow's influence, he was able to channel their uncertainty about disappearances into a story that reinforced his own power. He created, from whole cloth, the tale of a spiritual entity in Gram that moves against those who secretly hide sins against another. Now, if a mother, a child, a healer, or someone else suddenly goes missing with no explanation, it's because the Reaper of Sin came for them. The Reaper, Weymel teaches, is an instrument of the community's purity and continued tranquility.

As part of a shin obligation pledge, the PC gives at least 10 shins to someone they trust and respect, or to a community elder. If the PC ever returns to claim the shins, it is understood that they have made good on their obligation. Shin obligations are in large part about trust, honor, and self-discovery.

SYNOPSIS

A kind of contract known as "shin obligation" finds the PCs traveling with a philosopher, athletic performer, and teacher called Divine Nex who travels between several communities in Navarene. During the journey, side encounters are possible. Partway through the trip, the PCs' camp attracts a couple of farmers fleeing from a teratoma pack who plead for assistance (Encounter 1).

Navarene, page 137

Teratoma, page 367

If the PCs want to help, they can do so directly by backtracking and clearing out a teratoma nest or indirectly by inviting the farmers to stay with them for safety.

The farmers live in a nearby village called Vesburgh, which is where Divine Nex wants to go anyway. Vesburgh has lately come under a veritable siege from several teratoma packs. Though the PCs can probably offer short-term aid against the teratomas, characters who are determined to provide a long-term solution can track the creatures to their source, which leads them out of Vesburgh and to a different town called Gram.

GM Tip: If the PCs seem disinclined to go to Gram or become stuck in Vesburgh because they think they can find a solution there, Divine Nex—to whom they owe their shin obligation—insists that the group travel to Gram.

In Gram, the characters eventually learn its secret: an ascetic named Weymel seized control of the community using a sacred "spiritual" device known as the Taker of Sorrow, which makes subjects pliable to his will or transforms them into horrific beasts. However, by this time, a PC or perhaps Divine Nex may have already been subjected to the Taker of Sorrow themselves, which leaves them either an ally of Weymel or (if they resist the influence) possibly a new teratoma pack.

The PCs must decide whether to try to fix the Taker of Sorrow (the spiritual heart of Gram, and likely the only way to convert a teratoma pack back into the person it once was) or destroy it. Either way, there are consequences for the choice they make.

SHIN OBLIGATION

Here and there in the Steadfast, people sometimes take a pledge known as shin obligation. Pledges are predominantly taken in order to accomplish good works, though a few are made to fulfill the requirements of a legal penalty. A shin obligation commonly lasts a minimum of a few months and usually never longer than a year. While under a pledge of shin obligation, a character might work locally to build a defensive wall, a home, or another needed structure in a community; foster a stranger or child in need for some period; take on another's unfortunate debt with hard work; and so on. What's important is that the character publicly pledges to shin obligation and the general task.

Some shin obligations involve travel. Pledged characters who travel commonly do so to reach another community that has special needs where they provide resources, know-how, or other aid. For instance, it's not uncommon for someone with knowledge of metal working, numenera crafting, healing, or other specialized areas to travel to a small village or similar location to share what they know as their shin obligation pledge. And given how dangerous moving between isolated communities can be in the Ninth World, people sometimes pledge a shin obligation to provide protection to other travelers (as long as their purposes are at least somewhat noble).

The player characters become involved, and some may even meet each other, because they all pledged to the same shin obligation: to protect the philosopher and aerosaltant known as Divine Nex on their tour of several outlying Navarene communities.

GETTING THE PLAYERS INVOLVED

You can use this adventure as the scenario that starts a new campaign. If the PCs begin as strangers, give the players the background about shin obligation ahead of time, along with the fact that they've made the pledge. They'll have to integrate their characters into the adventure by deciding why they pledged.

Reasons to Pledge Shin Obligation Include the Following:

- The PC just wants to do some good.
- It's a coming-of-age activity where they grew up, something many people do as a point of honor.
- A tragedy in the PC's life made them want to find something new.
- It was either pledge to shin obligation or go to prison for a crime they were charged with (whether or not the PC actually committed the crime is another matter).

Other Reasons to Get Involved

- One character is friends with Divine Nex and wants to make sure the aerosaltant doesn't come to harm.
- One of the players decides to play the character of Divine Nex (or a similar character), in which case they likely possess the Entertains focus. The knowledge ascribed to Divine Nex in this adventure is instead available to the PC who takes on this role.

DIVINE NEX

The teacher, singer, philosopher, and inventor known as Divine Nex usually wears a brilliant red and black cloak and one of several dozen masks. Some of them are beautiful, others are horrific, and many are sculpted to display a specific strong emotion like happiness, sadness, anger, or surprise. No one has ever seen Nex not in costume, because when they are not singing, reciting sublime poetry, teaching ethics or some other kind of philosophy, dancing with amazing grace, or imbibing tea or wine while engaged in an extended conversation over a camp fire, Nex retires to a large scarlet tent that has no obvious exits or entrances. Nex makes a living moving from community to community providing knowledge, entertainment, and news of distant locations. Sometimes Nex also serves as a messenger, if the message is important.

Joining Divine Nex on the road is to briefly become part of an ever-rotating cast of companions, friends, and guardians. Those who ally themselves with the performer—or as Nex likes to say, "the aerosaltant"—for even a brief time make friends with Nex and often with each other. After that, fellow travelers typically go their own way to make room for a new entourage. In any event, they have stories likely to last a lifetime.

During the course of this adventure, the PCs are Nex's guardians and entourage; there are no others. If a fight overwhelms the group, Nex aids the PCs by providing a bit of healing to each character (up to 2 points per round) but doesn't pick up arms or attack foes.

Divine Nex's Travel Itinerary: In addition to other small villages and towns, the aerosaltant wants to visit Vesburgh. So even if strange occurrences on the road didn't lead the PCs there, the performer would insist they go there first.

ADVENTURE TIMELINE

If you like, use the following timeline to help you organize the adventure when you run it for your players.

GM Tip for Handling Days: Though the characters in the game experience each hour of each day, you and your players should not. Only handle the exciting or informational parts of each day. Then, if you know that nothing else is likely to happen for the rest of the day or night, just tell your players that another day has passed, so they break camp and travel for several hours, at which point something new or interesting happens (which you describe). You're not obligated to sketch out each day—just the exciting parts, as well as some opportunities that allow the PCs to interact with each other.

GM Tip for Downtime Scenes: Sometimes, "downtime" scenes where player characters interact with each other are just as important and fun for the game as exciting scenes. Here are several ways to facilitate downtime scenes: As the characters are setting up camp one night after a day of travel and adventure, ask the PCs what they're doing; ask them to share a story or answer a question from Divine Nex about how they became an explorer; use a GM intrusion to bring to light a relationship between two PCs that was not previously known; and so on.

Day 1 Tell the PCs their situation: They're traveling with Divine Nex as part of their shin obligation. Ask that each PC introduce themselves to the others. Describe Divine Nex as you interpret the performer.

Day 2 (Optional): Run one of the Shin Obligation encounters—maybe Taking a Toll.

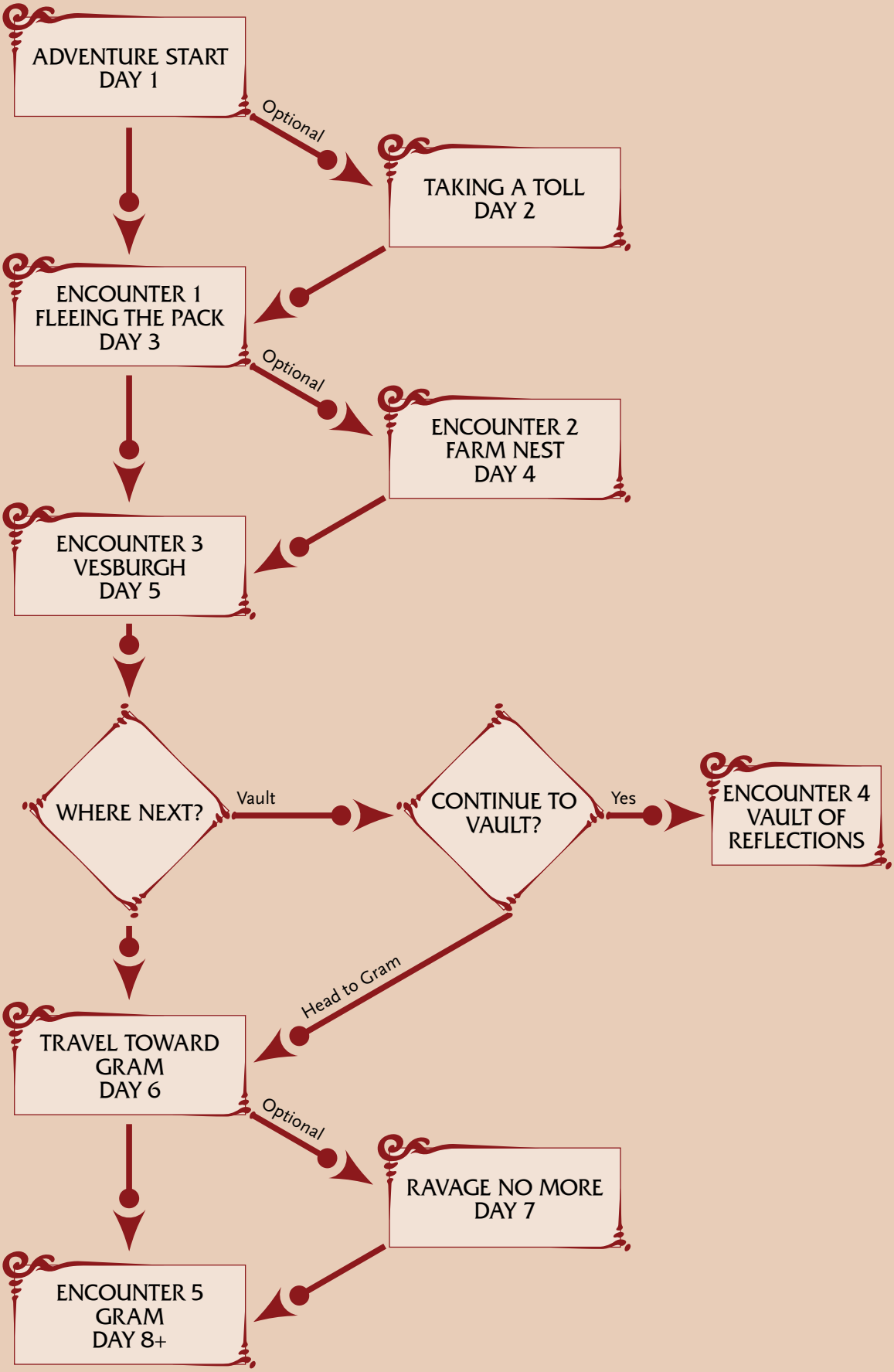
Day 3 Run Encounter 1: Fleeing the Pack, where the PCs meet farmers fleeing a teratoma pack.

Day 4 If the PCs choose to follow the farmers back to their farm, run Encounter 2: Farm Nest. Otherwise (or afterward), the PCs probably head toward Vesburgh.

Entertains, page 68

Divine Nex: *level 4; tasks related to entertainment (especially tumbling and acrobatics), healing, philosophy, disguise, woodworking, and persuasion as level 6*

Divine Nex's Scarlet Tent: *level 6; has no exits or entrances, but Divine Nex knows the secret of entering and leaving at will*


ADVENTURE START
DAY 1
Optional
TAKING A TOLL
DAY 2
ENCOUNTER 1
FLEEING THE PACK
DAY 3
Optional
ENCOUNTER 2
FARM NEST
DAY 4
ENCOUNTER 3
VESBURGH
DAY 5
WHERE NEXT?
Vault
CONTINUE TO
VAULT?
Yes
ENCOUNTER 4
VAULT OF
REFLECTIONS
Head to Gram
TRAVEL TOWARD
GRAM
DAY 6
Optional
RAVAGE NO MORE
DAY 7
ENCOUNTER 5
GRAM
DAY 8+

Day 5 The PCs probably head to Vesburgh (Encounter 3), where they likely spend some time. Here, they're asked to help with the plague of teratomas afflicting the community.

Day 6 The PCs head out and travel toward either the town of Gram or (far less likely) the Vault of Reflections.

Day 7 (Optional): Run one of the Shin Obligation encounters, potentially Ravage No More.

Day 8+ The PCs arrive at the site where they believe the teratomas originate. If that's Gram, run Encounter 5: Gram. (If it's the Vault of Reflections, refer to Chapter 26). Assuming the PCs are in Gram, they'll spend one or more days here, following up on leads described in Encounter 5, Encounter 6: Supplicant Hostel, and the adventure finale in Encounter 7: Chamber of Sorrow. Depending on how the PCs deal with the situation, they could end up spending several more days attempting to lure surviving teratomas back to be reassembled, or just destroy the mechanism they find to end the adventure.

GM Tip for Wrapping Things Up: You can play out how the PCs spend a few days attempting to lure surviving teratomas back to be reassembled in part or in whole, or you can just describe how well they succeed. However, many groups will simply destroy the Taker of Sorrow device that creates teratomas and call it a success, which is a fine way to conclude the adventure as well.

TERATOMA (BABBLE MITE)

This creature is a variably sized gobbet of animate, tumorous flesh, partly covered with mangy hair, scales, teeth, boils, and rashes. Half-formed limbs, one or more mouths, and random eyes and ears poke from the mass. Find one teratoma, and a whole pack is probably nearby. Teratomas are the accidental creation of a malfunctioning numenera device known as the Taker of Sorrow. Each pack once constituted a single normal human, but now a teratoma pack (and each individual part) is no better than a ravenous beast, each component eating and growing like a separate creature.

Behavior: Teratomas make startling statements of surprise, hunger, sorrow, and delight. They also may break into song, rhyme, or laughter. However, these utterances are mindless remnants only. Teratomas are essentially hungry animals and act like it, though faint memories may give them an edge when finding their way into communities and escaping again once they've fed.

Combat: Teratomas leap onto a foe and use their infectious bite to bring it down. Bite victims take damage and must succeed on a Might defense task; those who fail take 1 additional point of Speed damage (ignores Armor) from the infected spittle. Often, a group of teratomas acts like a pack, and when three or more of them attack a single target, they act as a level 5 creature that inflicts 5 points of damage and potentially 2 points of Speed damage that ignores Armor.

Older teratomas grow larger and, instead of being level 3, could be level 4 or even level 5.

Their one weakness is that if a pack is whittled down to just one or two teratomas, these last few may grow confused and attempt to escape rather than fight to the death.

Teratoma: *level 3; Speed defense as level 4 due to size and quickness; stealth tasks as level 5 due to remnant human memories and size; health 12; bite inflicts 3 points of damage and, on failed Might defense roll, 1 point of Speed damage (ignores Armor); when three or more attack as a single creature, treat as a level 5 creature that inflicts 5 points of damage and, on a failed Might defense roll, 2 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor)*

GM intrusion: *The teratoma says something so unexpected and shocking that the character is potentially dazed, hindering their actions for one round.*

SHIN OBLIGATION ENCOUNTERS

During this adventure, the PCs spend much of their time traveling. The characters can use the time to deepen their relationships with one another, describing their purpose for taking on the shin obligation pledge, and recounting and elaborating upon connections they may have with other PCs. The group will need to camp after each day's travel during a journey that lasts at least a week, if not more. (PCs have likely already spent a few days on the road even before the first day noted on the adventure timeline begins.)

GMs can add side encounters to the journey, if desired. These encounters can be introduced anywhere and at any time while the PCs are not staying in a village or town like Vesburgh or Gram.

TAKING A TOLL

PCs are trapped in a spatial bubble and must deal with or defeat toll-taking murdens to get free.

The characters travel across a slanting, slippery plain that is weirdly smooth and sounds almost metallic under booted feet. They find a depression a few miles across that contains a pool, some vegetation, and some small game.

The Standoffish Hermit: A hermit in a concealing black cloak also lives by the pool, but it doesn't seem to want anything to do

Taker of Sorrow, page 375

Bramble and wire thatched hut: *level 5*

with the PCs—at least, not the first time the characters pass through. The hermit retreats to its intricately woven and rounded thatched hut when the PCs become aware that it is watching them, closing the metallic door that seals the entrance to make its desire to be left alone clear. Metallic wire is cunningly wound through the bramble and thatch, which makes the hut more protective than it might otherwise seem. The hermit tries to ignore the characters even if they make themselves a nuisance; it doesn't want to reveal its true nature (see An Offer of Aid) and strategy until the characters understand that their presence by the pool is a kind of trap.

Cypher, page 272

Oddity, page 304

Spatial Redirection: While making camp beside the pool might prove to be a nice rest, at some point the characters may become alarmed when they realize that somehow they've circled back and have returned to the pool. Each time they attempt to strike out in the right direction, they find themselves back at the pool.

A successful difficulty 3 Intellect task, one that could be eased by training in understanding numenera, suggests that the depression in the landscape is some kind of spatial bubble separate from the rest of the normal world. Each time the characters attempt to leave, they are "bounced" back by the invisible walls of the reality bubble.



Abhuman, page 13

Murden, page 243

An Offer of Aid: Once the characters realize their situation, the hermit leaves its residence and approaches them. (Alternatively, the PCs may take it upon themselves to see what the hermit knows before it can emerge.) Upon closer examination, it's clear that the hermit is not human, but an abhuman female of a variety known as a murden. And she doesn't live alone; four other murdens live in the thatched hut as an extended family unit.

The Matriarch's Toll: The matriarch (the "hermit") doesn't speak, and her presence fills the air with mental static. She understands most human languages and can convey information through gestures or drawings in the drit in front of her hut. Using these methods, she conveys to the characters that she will open a way out for them, but only in return for gifts. The PCs can offer some gifts (a working cypher or something of equal value suffices), intimidate the murdens to let them go (though murdens don't scare easy), or fight them and hope that the interior of the hut will provide answers. The PCs might also decide to distract the murdens while one of their number attempts to pilfer from them.

Ravage bear, page 249



If the PCs give the murdens what they want, the matriarch indicates that the characters should wait. Then she enters the hut, uses a metallic device secreted there to temporarily deactivate the spatial bubble, and emerges, indicating (truthfully) that the PCs can go on their way. Whether or not the PCs believe her is on them.

Murden Hut: If investigated, the murden hut contains a horrific mess of random objects, bones, and colorful bits of cloth. Finding anything of value requires a minimum of ten minutes of searching and probably a successful Intellect task that is difficulty 3. In addition to a couple of cyphers, an oddity, and 4d6 shins, the characters find a smooth, fist-sized metallic device with a few depressible switches. If activated, the device collapses the reality bubble for several hours before it reforms. (The device has no particular useful function outside the area where the spatial bubble is prone to form.)

RAVAGE NO MORE

The characters discover the aftermath of a savage tussle between a ravage bear and a teratoma pack.

The characters are moving along the top of a ravine that forms an almost perfect V; the nadir of the ravine lies about 50 feet (15 m) lower than the lip. Here and there, the drit and vegetation have crumbled away to reveal an underlying crystalline surface, in which tiny lights like stars seem to dart and streak.

Along the way, they find a cavity from which a great stink wafts, smelling of rotting meat. Besides the terrible smell, the sounds of someone crying—and maybe a few other sounds like voices—emerge from the cave mouth. Characters can investigate or simply go on their way.

Teratoma-Infested Corpse: Investigation reveals a cavity about 20 feet (6 m) across that contains the corpse of a large tusked beast (a ravage bear). A pack of horrifically animated lumps of tumorous flesh feed with makeshift mouths and teeth.

Though not immediately visible, someone in the chamber is whispering "So, so good. So tasty!" and variations thereof. Another voice squalls, sounding almost like a child crying inconsolably. And a third mutters, on and on, "I was happy, once. Joyous! Without sorrow, once," and so on.

With a bit of observation, PCs determine that the human-like voices are coming from



the animate tumorous blobs as they eat the corpse. These creatures are called teratomas.

Teratoma Surprise: Unless the PCs attempt and succeed at stealthily withdrawing, the teratoma pack boils out of the corpse en masse and goes for the closest character. Attempts to communicate with the teratomas fail utterly. At this point, unless the PCs have had some previous interaction with the creatures, they likely can't discover too much more about them unless a PC brings some sort of divination ability or cypher to bear.

ENCOUNTER 1: FLEEING THE PACK

The PCs are setting up camp after a day of travel when they notice some movement. Read or paraphrase the following.

READ ALOUD

It's good to finally rest and set up camp after spending most of the day moving. The camp rests in the shadow of a copse of angular trees that reflect light as if made of smooth bronze, more like sculptures than growing things. Divine Nex's scarlet tent has already gone up, and the performer has retreated inside, despite there being no obvious entrance or exit. The weather is clear, and the last light of day sets fire to the clouds and the mountain tops to the northeast.

The peace is shattered by a man's scream that echoes from a rubble field to the south. Instants later, two people break from the field at a full run, though one trips on a stone and falls, yelling this time in surprise. The other turns and darts back to help her compatriot. The fallen one is up again, now limping, but with his arm over his friend's shoulder, they're again racing away from the rubble field, toward the camp.

The two fleeing people—a man and a woman—are dressed in simple but hardy clothing. Both are bloody, and one has several bleeding bite marks, which look serious though not immediately lethal. This is the one who fell. The other has a belt at which a few metallic tools are strapped, including a metallic scoop, a cutting implement, and a roll of tough synth tether. Both are obviously distraught, and if they spy the PCs, they immediately begin begging for help.

At first, they are a bit incoherent in their fright and exhaustion. At the very least, the noise draws Divine Nex out, who immediately sees to their wounds, keeping up a constant verbal reassurance that "It'll be all right, you're going to be all right."

Teratoma, page 367

GM group intrusion: *The ravage bear's mate returns from a hunt to find the PCs in its lair, and it attacks from the rear.*

Glister is a kind of berry that can be eaten, distilled into wine, or used as an ingredient in other foods.

Teel: *level 2*

Thosin: *level 2*

When the two are calmed down somewhat, they explain that they are glister farmers from the nearby village of Vesburgh. (Divine Nex nods, murmuring, "A place I was hoping to visit on this trip.") Called Teel and Thosin, they are newly wed, and work a plot of land south of Vesburgh left to Teel by her deceased parents. A plot of land that has come under direct attack from a newly established teratoma nest!

Seeing the PCs' weapons, Teel directly asks, "Will you help us exterminate the nest? For Thosin and I, it is too much. But for you with your bows and swords, it will be as easy as digging up weeds!" If asked to describe what a teratoma is, Thosin says "Separately, they are like horrible little lumps of nightmare. Together, they work like a pack of broken hounds to hunt. But instead of howling, they whisper or sing. No one knows why. It's horrible."

If asked what they know about teratomas, the farmers explain that predators have always been something of a problem in Vesburgh. For the last five or so years, the village has been plagued by packs of horrific creatures that the locals call teratomas. For a long time, it was only a pack here and there, but in the last few years, the teratomas have multiplied so much that Vesburgh is in real danger. Each time an infestation is burned out, a new one appears a few weeks later.

Vesburgh residents: *level 2*

Vesburgh lookouts: *level 3*

Teratomas, mature: *level 4; Speed defense as level 5 due to size and quickness; stealth tasks as level 6 due to remnant human memories and size; health 15; bite inflicts 4 points of damage and, on failed Might defense roll, 1 point of Speed damage (ignores Armor); when three or more attack as a single creature, treat as a level 6 creature that inflicts 6 points of damage and, on a failed Might defense roll, 3 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor)*

GM intrusion: *One teratoma veers from a PC to go after easier pickings: Thosin.*

PC Choice: At this point, the PCs can follow Teel and Thosin back to their farm (Encounter 2) or head into Vesburgh (Encounter 3). Divine Nex doesn't attempt to steer the characters either way.

ENCOUNTER 2: FARM NEST

The farm consists of a small two-room structure of stone and wood on a hill and a smaller separate structure for tools, including a plow that could be hooked up to an aneen. Vines on wooden X-shaped trellises surround the house and barn. There are no visible dead farm animals, because Teel managed to get them to run off when the teratomas attacked.

A pack of seven mature teratomas that have been feeding well for a few months, and thus have an average level of 4 instead of 3, has established a nest beneath the barn. However, when the PCs first arrive on the scene, they might find the pack out in the vines eating the glister berries that were about ready for harvest, and spewing a cascade of nonsense: *Are you my friend? I can't feel my hands. The fat one was my favorite, but he's gone. Where am I? Mother says don't be late. Hello?*

If the PCs defeat the teratoma pack, the grateful farmers reward them by digging up a small stash of valuables they keep and offering the PCs 30 shins and three cyphers (from a total of 60 shins and five cyphers). Assuming both Teel and Thosin are still alive after the attack, they are happy for the help, yet still apprehensive. They say that until the scourge is finally and fully dealt with, it's likely that teratomas will soon return to their farm. The Aeon Priest in Vesburgh, says Teel, has been trying to come up with a lasting solution. Prodding the PCs, she says that maybe with their help, the Aeon Priest, named Talosian, will finally succeed. Regardless, Teel and Thosin do not accompany the PCs to Vesburgh if their farm has been made safe, but instead stay behind to clean up and look for their scattered farm animals.

ENCOUNTER 3: VESBURGH

Either with the farmers' guidance or with directions provided by Divine Nex, the PCs come to the village of Vesburgh. It's composed of about a dozen multiroom wood and stone structures surrounding a central open square. However, crude palisades isolate about half the town (including the central square). It's clear that the residents have, for the most part, retreated into this protected area. The structures outside have been damaged, and two have been completely burned and destroyed. Several villagers move through the area outside the palisade, rebuilding the structures and cleaning up. As the PCs arrive, the residents take up arms, mostly bows and short swords.

A couple of humans stand on watchtowers (which are little more than tall, supported poles on which a small platform has been tied) peering over the palisades. These lookouts likely see the PCs coming unless the characters are trying to be stealthy.

A Chill Reception: As it happens, bandits have recently tried to take advantage of Vesburgh's problems, attacking the village a few times to see what they can acquire. But the PCs should be able to convince the villagers that they're not bandits; Divine Nex provides an asset to such tasks. So does offering to help rebuild after the last bandit attack.

PCs who assist the villagers in a bit of cleanup and rebuilding turn a chill reception warm. After a few hours of work, the PCs are invited inside the palisade to share a meal and conversation. Sometime during this period,

Divine Nex also offers to sing for the villagers, creating something of a spectacle in the small place. The performer also offers to provide a bit of healing for those who are suffering any ongoing issues. As it turns out, the aerosaltant is quite the hit.

If the PCs don't seem inclined to offer their aid (possibly because they don't realize it is very much needed), Divine Nex asks them to throw in and help the villagers, saying that they can consider it part of their shin obligation.

As the PCs talk to the villagers and move among them, they might meet the following people.

Keersan, Vesburgh lookout: A lanky twenty-some-year-old with fresh bandages and an irrepressible grin calls down to the PCs from a lookout tower, "What news from beyond the palisade?" and "Is that Divine Nex?" He is particularly interested in finding out when Nex will perform; it seems that news of the aerosaltant's coming has preceded their arrival.

If the PCs mention their run-in with the pack of tumorous lumps, Keersan grows solemn, nodding. He says that the scourge has only gotten worse, and he compares it to an epidemic. He says the worst is when you hear people talking outside your house, and you're terrified to go out to check because you don't know if it's your neighbors or a couple of teratomas perched on your roof, waiting to pounce.

Maxter, Teel's grandfather: If the PCs tell anyone of their interaction with Teel and Thosin, an older man with a prodigious beard and a prosthetic leg (not obviously of the numenera) finds the PCs. Maxter introduces himself as Teel's grandfather and says he is worried for their safety. If he learns that the PCs helped them in any way, even if the PCs just accompanied the two to the safety of Vesburgh, Maxter gives the characters a thank-you gift: a bottle of glister wine (it's quite good) and an open offer of a place to stay in his home, which is not yet filled with other Vesburgh residents.

He says things haven't been the same since Teel's parents (one of which was his son) were killed by teratomas. After that, he doesn't speak on that topic any further.

Talosian, Aeon Priest: Talosian came to Vesburgh only a few years ago, after the village had already repelled a few invasions of the strange new creatures that he dubbed "teratomas." He finds the PCs because he is interested to hear if they encountered any of the creatures, how they dealt with them, and if the creatures said anything of interest. If the PCs can recall anything, he pulls out a massive journal and records what they report. The book is full of similar notes of previous teratoma utterances.

If the PCs are interested (and Divine Nex certainly is), Talosian reflects on his hypotheses. "The central question that's bothered me is how these horrific beasts, so obviously unnatural and savage, can speak. Are they some breed of degenerate abhuman? But no, even abhumans cannot speak so well in the Truth. On the other hand, they don't seem to speak in a way that makes any common sense. Yet they're not mimicking what they hear from others. Each teratoma seems to have its own particular mannerisms. If one sings, it tends to always sing, and comes back to the same lyrics over and over. If another tells bad jokes, it's always the same bad jokes. It's almost as if each creature contains the seed of a splintered personality."

What does it all mean? The Aeon Priest hasn't put that together. However, Talosian does have a hypothesis that he fashioned from a recent cross-reference of all the information in his teratoma journal. The utterances, taken as a whole, seem to indicate that the teratomas have been exiled in some fashion, cast out, or driven away from their place of origin. He thinks he's narrowed it down to one of three places: another dimension entirely, a ruin (known as the Vault of Reflections) about five days' travel to the south, and a town (Gram) about a half day's travel to the northwest.

Talosian's Offer: The Aeon Priest promises to provide the PCs with a numenera trove that he keeps safe, as well as a chest filled with shins, if they get to the bottom of the teratoma threat.

PC Choice: If the PCs want to take Talosian's offer (and Divine Nex certainly does), the characters must decide their next move. They can head much farther south and check out the Vault of Reflections (Encounter 4) or travel northwest to Gram (Encounter 5).

The option of looking into another dimension is far too wide open to consider seriously, at least not without additional aid or some way to narrow things down, and Talosian can't help with that. The Aeon Priest admits he included the idea because of all the stories about creatures of various sorts being cast out of other worlds.

People in Vesburgh know a little about Gram but don't have much contact with the community. They (and Divine Nex) know that it houses a society of ascetics called the serein who practice a mental discipline designed to grant tranquility.

If asked to provide his reasoning as to why both Gram and the Vault of Reflections are implicated, Talosian says, "Beyond the general theme of exile I discovered among the years of recorded utterances, two other notable themes are obvious: a loss of happiness and joy that, perhaps, these creatures once possessed. Gram has the serein, ascetics who promise to grant tranquility to supplicants. And the Vault of Reflections, according to what little lore I know about this prior-world structure, is said to erase all one's worries merely with a look at the wonders that glitter inside."

Finally, he suggests that Gram is the more likely option because it is much closer. Creatures cast out from it might well make their way to Vesburgh, while those cast out of the Vault of Reflections might find some other community closer to it on which to predate.

Teratoma, page 367

Gate guard: *level 3; one carries a pair of devices called songbirds*

Songbirds
Level: 6
Form: *Pair of crystal rods*
Effect: *Touching the tips together produces a roar of multi-tonal music that lasts for one minute. Beautiful music to most, it is an excruciating aural attack to teratomas and select other creatures.*
Depletion: *1 in 1d20*

Chapter 25: Vault of Reflections, page 376

ENCOUNTER 4: VAULT OF REFLECTIONS

If the PCs decide to head to the Vault of Reflections, that's fine, but it isn't the source of the teratomas. That becomes obvious because the farther the characters go south (away from Vesburgh and Gram), the less teratoma activity they encounter, until it falls to nothing after just one day. However, the Vault of Reflections has its own interesting mysteries to pierce. The PCs can decide to check it out now or come back to it later.

ENCOUNTER 5: GRAM

If the PCs travel to Gram, they spy the "mountain" that hosts the community from at least 5 miles (8 km) away.

The entire slab is called Enigram Mountain; the community built upon its face is Gram.

READ ALOUD

"There, do you see it?" asks Divine Nex, pointing at a strange landscape feature. The outcrop in the distance is too regular to be a natural formation. It looks almost like a great slab of reddish metal that was dropped from the sky and landed on its edge, embedding itself in the ground before toppling over, though it leans. A community sprawls across and up the steep face of the material, which is pocked and hollowed by hundreds of small and mid-sized cave mouths. The community fills a series of these hollows, many of which have been converted into dwellings, complete with wooden and stone walls, well-lighted connecting stairs zig-zagging up the face of the formation, and dozens of wide balconies. Stretching around the slab are several acres of cultivated fields and small homes of wood.

The obvious way to "enter" the community is through a gate at the base that connects to a central stair, which ascends to the first level of connected hollows. Of course, the PCs might also decide to simply climb up the steep face, though due to its somewhat slippery nature, doing so is a difficulty 5 task.

Approaching Gram: As the characters approach, they witness an interesting sight. At least four teratoma packs (about twenty teratomas in all) simultaneously emerge from a narrow ravine and converge on the main gate, screaming, laughing, and uttering all manner of nonsense. Three of the four gate guards stationed there draw bows defensively, but don't fire. The final guard produces two golden translucent rods that flash with silver lines and switches. She raises them over her head until the tips touch. When they do, a mighty blast of multi-threaded tones that sound like beautiful music blares out. At least, it's beautiful to the PCs. But it's as if someone sprayed the teratomas with acid. They reverse course, screaming in utter anguish, and race away to the southwest. They may even pass the PCs, but unless the characters do something to interrupt their headlong flight, they ignore the characters and keep running.

Entering Gram: Ninth Worlders who've heard rumors of the tranquility offered by the serein sometimes make their way to Gram. The guards assume the PCs, being strangers, number among those seeking solace. The guards provide directions some number of flights up where the PCs can stay at the supplicant hostel to await the convenience of the serein. Alternatively, there are places to let in the Market Round, a large hollow open to the sky where food, services, and goods are bought and sold. (Divine Nex prefers the latter, because the aerosaltant wants to ask around about setting up a performance.)

If the PCs quiz the guards or random townspeople about what's been happening in Gram, they get answers that are strangely emphatic:

- "Teratomas? Oh, we call them babble mites. They're attracted to Gram because of all the places in the world, here there is no sorrow. I feel sorry for them."
- "The devices we use to drive off babble mites were crafted in a city far to the east of here, in Ballarad, fashioned by a master tinkerer who called herself a Wright. We call them songbirds."
- "No! Babble mites—or teratomas as you call them—don't originate in Gram. Don't be

ridiculous. Gram is a place of tranquility. Weymel sees to that." (When citizens of Gram speak Weymel's name, most can't help but smile at the thought of their leader.)
- "Weymel leads us. He is wise and witty. Beautiful. The best of us, and best loved. Everyone says so. He is head of the serein."
- "We don't need a patrol or city watch in Gram. If someone breaks the peace, the Reaper of Sin comes for them. And they're never seen again. Ever. Of course I don't know what the Reaper looks like. Anyone who sees the Reaper disappears, so how could anyone know?"
- "You sound troubled, as if you're not at peace. You should go to the supplicant hostel and wait for the serein. Then you can try the Taker of Sorrow, a balm for an anguished soul. Everyone here in Gram has gone to the Taker, and true to its name, it's taken our burdens from us."

Everyone in Gram is friendly and warm, almost creepily so. In fact, the PCs are invited into the Town Round (a wide, high, hollow area for socialization and celebration), there to be feted with gifts of food and craft made in Gram, and toasted many times with crisp effervescent cider.

Just by asking, the PCs can get someone to take them to meet Weymel (after the welcome ceremony). As it happens, Weymel can usually be found at the supplicant hostel, which lies ten flights up, and then down a long corridor deep into the heart of Enigram Mountain.

Divine Nex Goes on Ahead, Maybe: Divine Nex, upon hearing about the Taker of Sorrow, is strongly affected. The performer wants to visit the supplicant hostel straight away and slips away to do so if the PCs attend to other things first, such as staying longer in the Town Round, doing more investigation, or even just resting for an hour or more.

ENCOUNTER 6: SUPPLICANT HOSTEL

When the PCs go the supplicant hostel (whether that is immediately, or later), they find a wide, smooth chamber set with about a dozen low pallets, a wash basin, and a side area where one serein meditates. This is Nasi, a young woman with a shaved head, a star tattooed on one cheek, and bright green robes. A single shut door leads further into the heart of Enigram Mountain. An observant character might notice that the door has been insulated to prevent the transmission of sound.

Nasi ceases meditating to greet the newcomers. If the PCs ask about Weymel or the Taker of Sorrow, she glances at the

Nasi, serein: *level 3*

Noticing that the door has been baffled to restrict the transmission of sound is a difficulty 5 task.



sealed door. "Weymel is detained." Which means access to the Taker of Sorrow is also impossible, she further indicates. But if the PCs would like to wait, they could meditate a bit on what burdens of sorrow and concern they'd most like to give up.

While they wait, the PCs could ply Nasi with questions, which she answers in the same vein as the other residents of Gram presented earlier. She doesn't know how long Weymel will be (she glances again at the door) but expects it'll be no more than a few hours.

If Not With the PCs, Where Is Divine Nex?: If the PCs didn't immediately come to the supplicant hostel, but Nex did, the characters might be curious as to why the aerosaltant isn't waiting in the hostel. Nasi truthfully claims she has never met the performer. (Nasi wasn't here when Nex came through.)

Songbirds, page 372

Forcing the Door: If the PCs would prefer not to wait, they can attempt to break down the door. It's barred from the inside and made of the same red metal as the bulk of Enigram Mountain. If they do this in front of Nasi, her eyes grow wide and she whispers, "The Reaper of Sin will come for you!" After that, she attempts to flee, not wishing to see the Reaper in action.

Metallic door, barred: *level 5*

Waiting for Weymel: After several hours, the door is unbarred from the inside and another serein appears, who talks with Nasi and then is happy to let the PCs back into the chamber to see Weymel and the Taker of Sorrow. The new serein, a youth called Mefin, indicates that yes, Weymel finished up with whatever was detaining him. (Which, unbeknownst even to Mefin, was the latest failed application of the Taker of Sorrow, resulting in another brood of teratomas that Weymel had to flush out of Gram with none the wiser.) Neither Nasi nor Mefin follow the PCs but instead continue to meditate in the supplicant hostel.

Mefin, serein: *level 3*

ENCOUNTER 7: CHAMBER OF SORROW

The corridor beyond the door continues about 20 feet (6 m) before opening into quite a large chamber that contains the mechanism called the Taker of Sorrow (the floating metallic hoop).

READ ALOUD

This massive chamber is a hollow in the red metal and lined with streaks of glowing white that spread like veins across the floor, rounded walls, and ceiling. They all lead to a mechanism fused with the far wall that features a floating metallic hoop, suspended upright just a few inches above the floor. A man who wears a form-fitting metallic helmet and elaborate robes in every shade of green is also present, leaning over a central cavity that might well act as a drain if the entire room ever filled with water.

If the PCs Waited Until They Were Sent for: Weymel is just cleaning the last of some blood left behind when he used his songbirds on the most recent failed Taker of Sorrow supplicant. The supplicant, who disassembled into the latest teratoma pack, fled down the drain, which leads to a chute that drops those who fall in it to Enigram Mountain's exterior. (When the songbirds are used in close proximity to teratomas, the creatures sometimes bleed from various orifices as they flee.)

Divine Nex: If Divine Nex is missing, the supplicant might very well have been the performer! (The PCs might be able to capture the pack later and try to use the Taker of Sorrow to return the aerosaltant to health, as long as they don't destroy it.) Otherwise, the victim was just the latest citizen of Gram to be taken by the Reaper of Sin.

Weymel answers questions, the very soul of cordial hospitality and ascetic calm. Of course, he lies through his teeth to support the story he's created to hide the true situation in Gram. For instance, if asked about the teratomas or babble mites, he indicates that yes, the town was once troubled by the pests, but they haven't been a problem in years because of the songbirds.

Weymel offers to schedule the PCs (or Divine Nex, if the aerosaltant hasn't already had time with the Taker of Sorrow). Odds are high that if a PC uses the machine, it doesn't turn the character into a teratoma pack, but instead boosts their spirits by draining away old cares. However, that PC might also become a new ally for Weymel.

If the PCs Forced the Door: PCs who arrive in the chamber find Weymel leaning over the drain, jabbing the hands of someone who has been forced into it but is just managing to hang onto the edge. If Divine Nex preceded the characters and has gone missing, that's who the victim is; otherwise it's a random citizen.

Either way, the PCs have only a few moments to take it in before they are subjected to a GM group intrusion, as the victim disintegrates into jabbering, tumorous lumps, becoming a teratoma pack in front of their eyes.

The teratoma pack goes after Weymel, who's right there, but the serein has his songbirds ready. He uses them to drive the pack down the drain. PCs who witness this can form their own conclusions, but Weymel tries to draw on the newcomers' sympathy by yelling "Help me!" If the PCs comply, they don't need to do much because the songbirds do the job well. However, Weymel makes a big show of gratitude.

If the PCs mention that they just saw a person turn into a teratoma pack, he knows that no lie is likely to convince them to doubt the evidence of their own eyes. "You saw that, did you? I'm afraid that, very rarely, the Taker of Sorrow . . . malfunctions." With that, Weymel makes a panicked attack on them.

Each time Weymel attacks a foe, the Taker of Sorrow responds with a preprogrammed blast—a long-range psychic ray directed at another creature in the chamber. On a failed Intellect defense roll, the target takes 6 points of Intellect damage and loses their next turn.

If the PCs and Weymel Fight: If the characters see through Weymel's act and attack him, or if he panics and attacks first, it's likely that he'll lose. He's no idiot, so after a round or two of combat, he screams "Wait! If you kill me, you kill everyone who the Reaper of Sin stole away—or, as it actually happened, disintegrated into a pack of teratomas. Only *I* can bring them back. If you kill me, you consign all of them to eternal existence as mindless horrors. Swear on your honor to spare me, and I will save them!" If the PCs don't want a deal, Weymel responds in kind and fights to the end.

If the PCs are true to their word, or seem to be, Weymel helps them begin the process of reassembling teratoma packs using a modified Taker of Sorrow. As it turns out, the songbird devices can be tuned to lure teratomas as well as expel them, and the Taker of Sorrow can be further modified to reverse the process of disintegration.

TAKER OF SORROW

The Taker of Sorrow includes the entire room housing it, though its focus is the upright metallic hoop at the back of the chamber. It brings joy and lightness of being to any creature that passes through the hoop. However, thanks to Weymel's fiddling, a creature who passes through it must also succeed on a difficulty 5 Intellect defense task or become besotted with him. Those who succeed on that task open themselves to perhaps a worse fate, because they must then succeed on a difficulty 5 Might defense task or begin splintering into a pack of teratomas, a process that takes anywhere from ten minutes to an hour.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

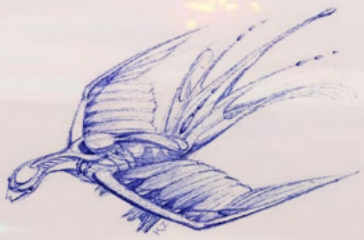
If the PCs work with Weymel instead of killing him, they probably do so grudgingly, but they can begin to use songbirds to lure and capture teratomas that have spread across the landscape. Weymel admits everything and even seems relieved that it is finally over.

If the PCs kill Weymel, they can also destroy the Taker of Sorrow and end the threat of new teratoma creation. Doing so immediately releases all those who had come under Weymel's sway, and the victims are grateful, though confused and unsure of how to proceed.

Alternatively, the PCs can kill Weymel but attempt to modify the Taker of Sorrow on their own. PCs who are versed in understanding and/or crafting numenera have a good shot at success.

Regardless of how they end the threat, if the PCs bring back a good story to the Aeon Priest Talosian in Vesburgh, he is as good as his word. He grants the PCs as many cyphers as they can safely carry, plus an artifact, not to mention about 150 shins stuffed in a chest.

If Divine Nex survives the adventure, the aerosaltant is extremely happy with the PCs and thanks them warmly. The performer eventually creates a rhyme or song that features the characters as heroes. This performance becomes part of Divine Nex's regular lineup and is eventually learned and performed by others in the Ninth World.





Weymel: *level 5; health 20; Armor 2; two melee attacks as one action with the songbirds, which inflict 4 points of damage each; the Taker of Sorrow makes a simultaneous level 6 attack*

Experience Point Awards: *If the PCs successfully protect Divine Nex over the course of this adventure and stay true to their shin obligation, they each gain 1 XP. If they protect Vesburgh, they gain 2 XP. If they destroy the Taker of Sorrow, they gain 2 XP, but if they fix it and try to convert as many teratoma packs back into people as possible, they earn 4 XP. These awards are in addition to any XP earned from GM intrusions and discoveries.*

Taker of Sorrow: *level 5; integrated machine that is fixed in place*

CHAPTER 25

VAULT OF REFLECTIONS

"Vault of Reflections" is an adventure for characters who have some experience and background in the Ninth World. It's provided as an ideal "explore an ancient ruin" adventure. Although it's set at the northern edges of the Dark Hills in Navarene, it could easily be relocated almost anywhere in the Ninth World.

BACKGROUND

A dangerous wilderness called the Dark Hills separates Navarene, Draolis, and Thaemor. Broken hounds, abhumans, and mindhunting spirits are said to roam amid them. But stories of an ancient vault filled with amazing treasures and magic of the prior worlds sometimes lure explorers to seek their fortune among these perilous slopes. Those who go looking are usually drawn by tales of a ruin called the Vault of Reflections. Stories say that the Vault can shrive pilgrims of their worries, and also grant them their hearts' most desperate desire.

The truth is, as usual, more complicated. The prior-world structure known as the Vault of Reflections is only the topmost segment of a larger entity that lies inactive, its bulk buried far deeper in layers of geological history. Inactive, though the larger form sometimes stirs as a creature in a restless sleep might, causing minor quakes in the region before it lapses back into quiescence.

The topmost segment—a massive transparent sphere and the so-called Vault—is also buried, but is nearest to the surface. Decades ago, the sphere was breached when a chunk of debris from the void fell like a star and struck the Dark Hills. The crater that remained leaked a dim, silvery light, as if it contained a piece of the moon.

The hollow in the crater center connects to the Vault. Since the breach, many creatures have tried to claim treasures of knowledge, cyphers, artifacts, and whatever else might lie inside. However, guardians, dangerous regions, rival salvagers, and psychic tide pools in the Vault have overcome most.

SYNOPSIS

The PCs decide to explore the Vault of Reflections, knowing only a little about the dangers that lie before them. They may discover that an automaton called a latos adjunct is attempting to "wake up" the Vault, while another entity—a vesied—tries to thwart the adjunct because it wants to continue to study and pilfer the treasures available while the Vault remains quiescent. Neither is immediately receptive to PCs showing up in the Vault, but the characters might try to ally with one or the other to gain a short-term advantage. Characters may also discover that the transparent sphere of the Vault and the larger body connected to it together make up a gargantuan being known as a latos, though this one is oddly inactive. They could simply explore and gather what treasure they can, though they could eventually choose to wake the latos that makes up the ruin, even though the result of doing so isn't entirely clear. In any event, the more the PCs salvage, the more they become targets for automated guardians that are roused to deal with the interlopers, which means that at some point, the PCs may be forced to escape.

GETTING THE PCs INVOLVED

The player characters hear of the Dark Hills and the Vault of Reflections via tales told elsewhere, or perhaps they come from the north, after finding out about the Vault while attending to another obligation. It's possible they don't know anything about the Vault and are simply traveling through the Dark Hills in order to quickly move between Navarene and Draolis or Thaemor.

Use one of the following additional hooks, if you wish, to further incentivize the PCs to explore the Vault.



Exterminate: The PCs are hunting down the source of nasty creatures that have been troubling small communities to the north in recent years. Information acquired by the characters indicates that the creatures might have originated in the Vault. If you're playing this adventure as part of the same campaign that includes "Taker of Sorrow," the creatures the PCs are looking for are teratomas. (However, no teratomas are found in the Vault.) If you're playing "Vault of Reflections" as a one-shot, creatures known as gazers are the ones that need exterminating.

Reward: A grieving father (and wealthy cattle baron from Kordech) named Radeerew lost his daughter a few years ago to a tragic accident. Radeerew has become convinced that the Vault of Reflections holds the answer to bringing her back. How? He paid a traveling Jack several head of shiul—massive and quite valuable "cattle" with four wide horns and meat—for the information. That information promised him that the Vault contains a prior-world mechanism that can literally bring back the dead by pulling them out of time. He insists on accompanying anyone who he hires.

Salvage: For their own purposes, the PCs need five units of a special material called oraculum, which apparently lies only within a limited number of prior-world ruins. (To make this hook work, the GM may have to decide that something the PCs already want to make, repair, or otherwise modify needs these five units of oraculum.) Thanks to interaction with the datasphere, knowledge gained from a contact, or information from some other source, the PCs learned that oraculum can be salvaged from the Vault of Reflections.

Optional: One of the PCs found, was given, or otherwise obtained an artifact specifically

ORACULUM

Oraculum is a special material that some characters can use to craft amazing numenera items. Snow-white and cold, oraculum doesn't melt in the heat. One unit is about 1 ounce (28 g).

ORACULUM DIVINER (ARTIFACT)

Level: 6
Form: 1-foot (30 cm) wide disk on a carrying strap
Effect: When activated, for the next 28 hours the diviner illuminates with an indicator that leads the user toward the nearest and largest concentration of oraculum within 10 miles (16 km). If activated while touching a salvage source thought to contain oraculum, this eases the task of extracting one unit of oraculum by two steps, as long as the salvage source is equal to or less than the level of this artifact.
Depletion: 1 in 1d10

Teratomas, page 367

Gazers, page 378

Kordech, page 147

Radeerew: *level 3; rides a shiul almost everywhere; carries a level 7 detonation cypher*

Shiul: *level 3; horns inflict 5 points of damage; can be ridden as a mount*

Oraculum—snow-white and cold to the touch, though it doesn't melt in the heat—is a special substance that some crafters use when crafting numenera devices.

The glass-like material in area 2 is far harder than glass; in fact, it's a level 10 substance.

Climbing down the fissure in area 2 safely without slipping is a level 2 task. This climbing task is hindered by two steps should a creature blindfold itself to avoid seeing its reflections in the facets.



Gazer: *level 1, perception as level 5, Speed defense as level 2 due to size; long-range focused light attack ignores cover and inflicts 2 points of damage; three gazers can act as a single level 4 swarm that inflicts 4 points of damage (even on a miss, a swarm still inflicts 1 point of damage); for more details, see* The Ninth World Bestiary, *page 56.*

designed to track and extricate oraculum from machinery of the prior worlds. The oraculum diviner leads the PCs into the Dark Hills and to the lip of the crater containing the entrance to the Vault of Reflections. Somewhere inside the Vault, there is oraculum to be salvaged.

ADVENTURE KEYED AREAS

1: CRATER

READ ALOUD

A wide crater, maybe 70 feet (21 m) across, interrupts an otherwise completely bramble-choked slope surrounded by trees with bark the color of night. Offset from the center of the crater is a hollow, from which silver light shines like a splinter of the moon. Metallic spheres, each no larger than a human head, buzz around the crater likes flies on a corpse.

The twelve metallic spheres flitting about the crater are defensive automatons called gazers. The gazers emerged from the breach to protect the Vault. PCs who have a knack for controlling or talking to automatons might be able to draw off or briefly immobilize them. Otherwise, the PCs must destroy the gazer swarm or endure their attacks for a few rounds to get past them and into the Corridor of Reflections. (Gazers don't follow PCs who leave the vicinity of the crater, or those who descend into the crack that creates the Corridor of Reflections.)

2: CORRIDOR OF REFLECTIONS

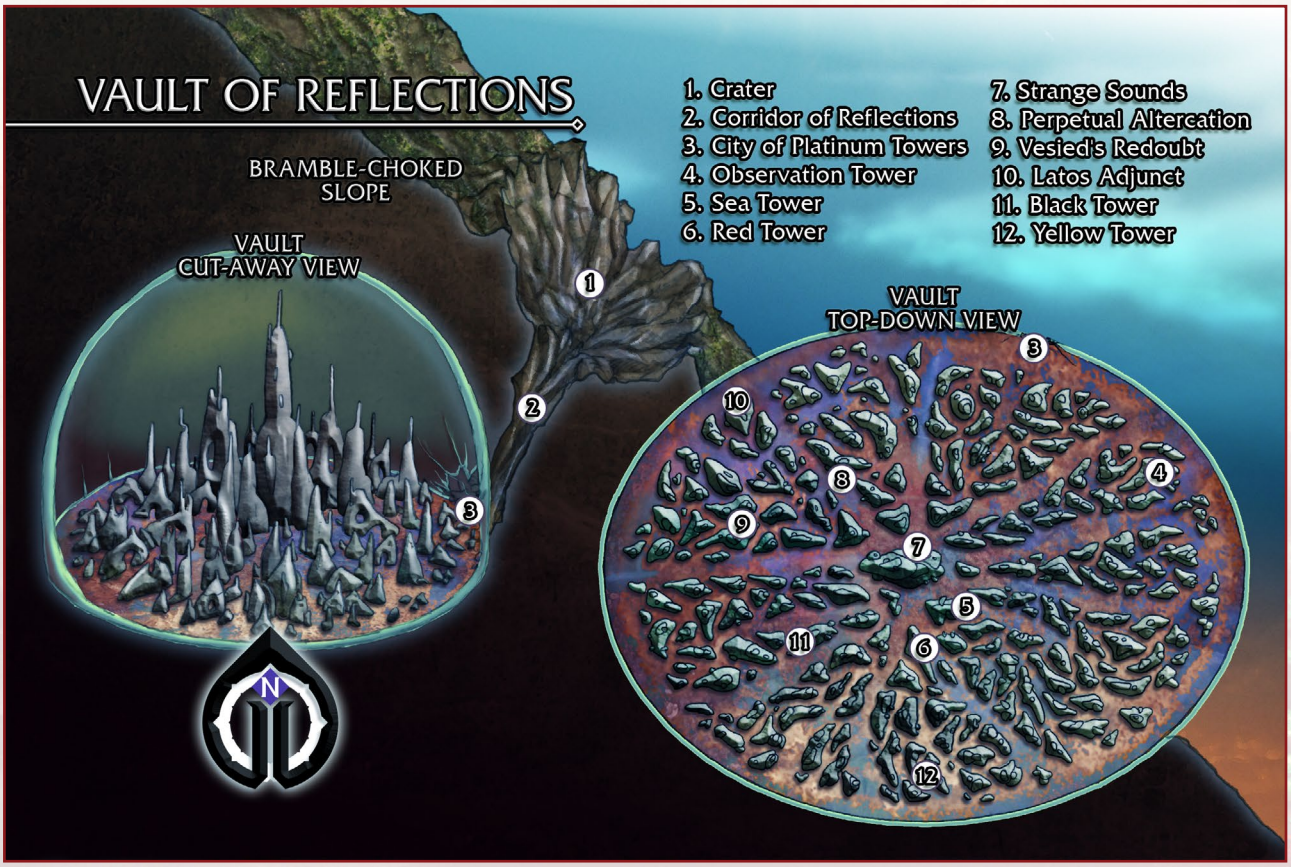
The fissure is about 50 feet (15 m) long and slopes down at a 55-degree angle.

READ ALOUD

The glow shines from a smooth plane of exposed glass-like material. The expanse is cracked, creating a narrow fissure, no more than 6 feet (2 m) long and 3 feet (1 m) wide descending farther underground at a steep slope. The interior of the fissure is faceted and is at turns opaque and completely reflective, making it impossible to see for sure how far the crack-like corridor descends.

The steeply slanted fissure is at turns easy to navigate and unexpectedly slick, which can lead to falls. Descending through the fissure without slipping and sliding the entire distance as if the fissure were a chute requires a moderate amount of attention.

Defensive measures remain active in the transparent sphere that serves as the Vault. Creatures who see their own reflection in the facets risk becoming fascinated by what they see. All their worries seem to fall away



in the blaze of beauty revealed in their own incredible, amazing, and radiant reflections. Those who become mesmerized don't move until they are physically hauled away, knocked loose from their vantage, or given a new chance to resist the effect by someone slapping them with force.

Every few days, small automatons, related to the gazers but with metallic legs, move through the fissure and dislodge any grit or bodies of creatures that died of exposure while staring in awe at their own reflection.

Avoiding becoming mesmerized by one's own reflection is a level 4 Intellect task.

Sanitation automaton: *level 1, climbs and cleans as level 6*

3: CITY OF PLATINUM TOWERS

The far end of the Corridor of Reflections opens into a space that seems too large; the tops of the towers arrayed before the PCs should have been visible sticking out of the ground above the crater and the Dark Hills, but they were not. (Space within the sphere is substantially larger than outside the sphere, thanks to a level 10 space-warping influence that the Vault generates.)

Note that PCs who fail a climbing task and fall down the corridor find themselves in open space, whereupon they fall an additional 50 feet (15 m) before landing on the talus slope of debris. (A fall of 50 feet typically inflicts 5 points of damage that ignores Armor and causes the PC to descend one step on the damage track.) PCs who reach the end of the entry fissure without falling can let down a rope and descend safely.

READ ALOUD

A city of platinum towers rises up within a vast, enclosed spherical space. The towers are apparently many hundreds or perhaps even thousands of feet tall. Most of the towers are night-black silhouettes, while a scarce handful gleam with scores of tiny lights like distant stars. Narrow, dark streets separate them all. The lighted towers are reflected above and along the sides of the enclosing sphere's interior. Breath steams in the chill air. Nothing moves. It is completely quiet.

The PCs have a wide range of possibilities before them. But of the dozens of towers, only a few are lighted (about six); the rest are dark and cold. The lighted structures give off enough illumination (mostly through reflection on the Vault's curved interior) to provide at least dim lighting throughout the entire space.

Talus Debris Slope: By the amount of debris located beneath the fissure, it seems that the entrance to the Vault has been open for many decades, if not longer. The debris is composed of rock, drit, and a lot of crumbling bones from those who became enamored of their own reflections so completely that they died, then tumbled down to rot here. The bodies have been picked clean of valuables by roving bands of small automatons (the same as those that periodically clean the fissure), but human bones and rotting garments are visible here and there.

Streets: The unlighted streets are gently, concavely curved, following the interior of the enclosing sphere. They are composed of a black substance that easily holds weight, though heavy weight causes it to deform. Over the course of a few minutes, all damage and deformities inflicted on the streets smooth out and vanish, thanks to their self-healing capacities.

Unlighted Towers: Unlighted towers are in full lockdown-stasis mode. Entering any of them—a level 10 task, regardless of the nature of the entry attempt—is nearly impossible. A failed attempt to blast into a tower, phase into one, or anything similar draws the attention of a guardian automaton, which unfolds and disengages from what seemed like a smooth expanse of the tower's exterior. The guardians attack only if attacked first, or if those attempting to break into an unlighted tower persist in their attempts after a guardian first appears.

Guardian automaton: *level 5; Armor 2; levitates up to a short distance each round; regains 2 points of health each round*

Lighted Towers: The PCs can see a few of the lighted towers from the debris slope, and indirectly they can see almost all of them from reflections on the surface of the enclosing sphere. Using that as their guide, the PCs can navigate down the dark streets. Externally, little distinguishes one from the next. The keyed entries 5 to 12 each provide encounter information for each of these lighted towers.

Accessing a Lighted Tower: If the PCs approach a lighted tower, the lights visible on the surface still appear as tiny points scattered across it like stars (not like windows illuminated from inside). Unless indicated otherwise, the "ground" floor of each tower contains at least one rectangular entrance along each street. Entering the "lobby" of each tower is as simple as walking in.

Lighted Tower Defense: The lighted towers share a common defense against interlopers and salvagers. Any time a machine, device, or aspect of a device is salvaged for shins, cyphers, artifacts, or some other kind of numenera (including oraculum, if that's what the PCs are looking for), the salvaging

The vesied (tower 9) enjoys some protection from lighted tower defenses because of a mechanism it stole from the latos adjunct (tower 10). Needless to say, the adjunct wants it back.

Vesied, page 384

Latos adjunct, page 385

PC must also succeed on a difficulty 4 task to avoid alerting a guardian automaton that folds out of the nearest wall, floor, or ceiling as described under Unlighted Towers, above. The PCs might succeed in defeating or running from such a guardian; however, each time a guardian is summoned, the difficulty to avoid summoning another guardian the next time they are not careful enough increases by one step. In addition, guardians that are not defeated continue to wander the streets looking for interlopers.

4: OBSERVATION TOWER

From the outside, this lighted tower seems to be at least 500 feet (150 m) high.

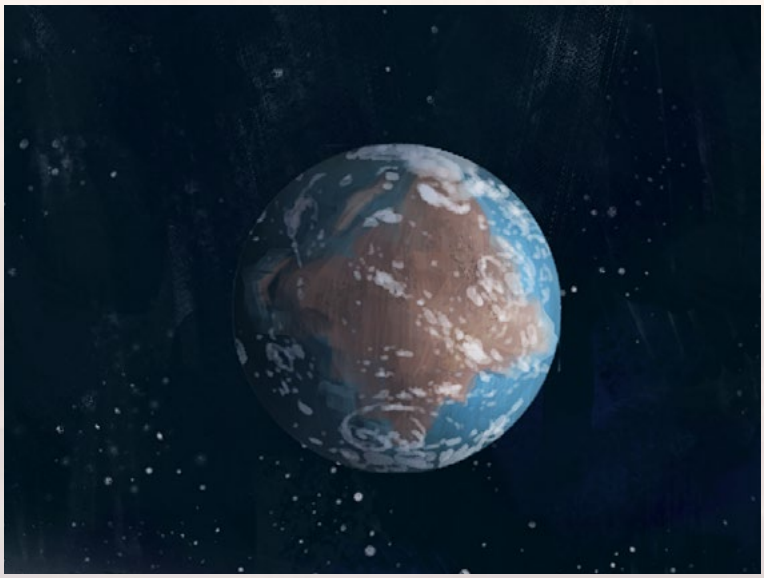
READ ALOUD

Odd devices, some only as large as a person, others as large as a small house, stud the wide expanse of the floor in this incredibly high-ceilinged chamber; it may be that the entire interior of this tower is hollow. Floating high above is what seems like a globe at least 200 feet (60 m) in diameter, hanging without wires. Its surface is like a blue and white marble, mottled with greens and browns where it's not blue beneath the drifting patches of white. Here and there, tiny objects circle the sphere, sometimes glinting with light as sharp as might be reflected from the sun itself.

Sphere Image: The sphere visible overhead is a real-time image projection of Earth, though the clouds make it difficult to see things perfectly, and the PCs may have no idea what the large central landmass looks like, anyway. That said, they can attempt to study the numenera devices in the chamber to learn that the image is indeed a realistic depiction of the world on which they were born, shown in real time. After that, the PCs can attempt to use the devices to spin the globe, focus on specific sections, and otherwise gain a god's-eye view of the world; however, each use is a separate task. If they try to resolve the focus so fine as to see individual people or see into covered structures, the task is hindered by at least two steps.

Too many failures in attempting to direct the focus of the observation sphere could result in a GM group intrusion that dangerously changes the focus.

Devices in Observation Tower: *level 5*



Salvage Prospects: Attempts to salvage the devices are possible, but many of the devices in this chamber prove resistant. If the PCs spend at least thirty minutes combing the chamber, they can attempt to salvage up to 100 shins and four cyphers. (If they are looking for oraculum, it's possible they could find up to 1 unit here.) A failed attempt to salvage cyphers could lead to a GM intrusion.

GM Group Intrusion (Optional): The image spins wildly, and stars streak by in their millions as if the viewpoint is shifting at an unbelievable speed, even as an ominous tone sounds through the chamber. Suddenly, instead of a globe floating above, the image of a gargantuan, many-limbed metallic entity with vast wings the color of burned-out stars floats overhead. Multiple eyes the size of towns rotate and shift, until it is clear that whatever the PCs are seeing, it sees them, too. At this point, half the devices in the chamber glow with warning crimson light, an alarm begins to blare, and the image cuts out.

Lockdown Initiated (Optional): Whatever the PCs touched on in the depths of space by refocusing the attention of the Observation Tower—or if they failed to salvage material from the chamber—causes the tower to go from lighted to unlighted. An unlighted tower is one that goes into lockdown stasis.

The entrances to the tower begin to slide closed. The PCs need to get out as quickly as they can if they don't want to be caught. Escaping in time is a difficulty 2 Speed task, assuming that no other complications arise.

5: SEA TOWER

From the outside, this lighted tower seems to be at least 600 feet (180 m) high.

READ ALOUD

Equally spaced machines, each about twice the size of a person, dot the floor of this wide ground-floor chamber. Each machine extends a metallic pole about 30 feet (9 m) upward, where it pierces the bottom of what appears to be a lake-sized mass of water that hovers within this incredibly high-ceilinged chamber. In fact, it may take up the entire interior of this tower. Tiny blue lights drift within the mass of water, illuminating a lush aquatic environment of strange plants and swimming organisms.

Floating Sea: The floating mass of water, like the interior of the Vault itself, is much bigger inside than the exterior suggests; it might be as large as a small sea. All kinds of life could be potentially found inside. If the PCs find a way to get up to the water, they discover that gravity reorients about 15 feet (5 m) above the floor, so that anything above that point "falls" onto the surface of the floating water above. A PC who makes this trip suddenly feels like "down" is the great mass of water beneath rather than the upside-down floor visible "above" them. A PC entering the water draws a group of octopus explorers (if they haven't arrived already).

Octopus Explorers: Disturbing the surface of the water soon brings a group of five many-armed octopuses swimming to the water interface to investigate. All carry spears, and some carry small purse-like containers. A few are telepathic enough to initiate contact. However, other than simple concepts like "hello," the octopuses look at the world so completely differently that it's difficult for the PCs to make much sense of the questions posed to them, or of the octopuses to parse what the characters say back to them in turn.

Sample octopus statements and questions include:

- How long until you shed your fingers? We would like to have them to study.
- The smell of green is sure to bring all of us long life and fortune.
- Humans are dead and gone. *Long* gone. What are you?
- We express our sympathy that you are trapped in such a limited, joyless, and waterless void.

If the PCs give a gift of one or two cyphers, the octopuses provide the characters with an artifact composed of fused shell, crystal, and lines of psychic light. This is effectively a skull blaster artifact, though rather than emitting a beam of focused light, it emits a beam of psychic distortion (that has the same destructive effect.)

If attacked, the octopuses probably chastise the PCs, then fade back up and away into their immense domain.

Salvage Prospects: Attempts to salvage the devices in this chamber are possible, but the devices along the floor maintain the sea. If the PCs spend at least thirty minutes combing the chamber, they can try to salvage up to 100 shins and two cyphers. (If they are looking for oraculum, they can find up to 1 unit here.) However, each time the PCs successfully salvage a handful of shins or a cypher, they notice a disturbance in the water overhead, and a thin streamlet of water pours down for a few rounds. Doing this more than once may cause a guardian automaton to fold out of and disengage from a nearby smooth surface to deal with the interlopers.

Skull blaster, page 301

Devices in Sea Tower: *level 5*

Octopus: *level 3; health 15; Armor 3 from psychic ability; inflicts 4 points of damage with spear or long-range force blast; has various other psychic abilities that greatly increase its capabilities*

Guardian automaton: *level 5; Armor 2; levitates up to a short distance each round; regains 2 points of health each round*





If the PCs press their luck (or attempt to wantonly destroy the machines here), they could trigger a massive leak that could eventually threaten to flood all of the Vault. However, long before that happens, either the vesied (tower 9) or the latos adjunct (tower 10) intercedes and repairs the damage, each for their own purposes.

6: RED TOWER

From the outside, this lighted tower seems to be almost 1,000 feet (300 m) high. Gaining entry is easy.

READ ALOUD

Strips of glowing red light along the ceiling provide illumination. Devices in this 30-foot (9 m) wide chamber beep, whine, and emit other sounds too unfamiliar to categorize. Several exits lead to similar-looking adjoining chambers.

Multistory Machine: This red-lit, multilevel tower is essentially one massive integrated machine whose "insides" are laid out in room-like sections. The machine's purpose isn't immediately clear. PCs can move between sections on the same floors through wide openings, and between floors via gravity-nullifying lifts that propel them to higher or lower floors, depending on how a simple control surface is activated.

Multilevel integrated machine: *level 6*

Characters attempting to understand the purpose of the machine find it to be an intimidating task. Even if successful, they discern only that the vast array's purpose is somehow related to maintaining linkages between cause and effect, whatever that means.

Gravity lift control surface: *level 3*

Additional Interesting Content: Though things look generally the same from one room to the next, explorers may find interesting and perhaps dangerous differences in some sections. Each time the PCs enter a new area, you can choose from the table below or roll one of the following results. Not every section contains unique content. Once a particular result has been used, cross it off and ignore it if it comes up again.

Red shard: *level 3; flies a short distance each round; stab attack inflicts 4 points of damage and embeds itself in target*



d10	Additional Interesting Content
1	Psychic compulsion (level 4) instructs those who enter to stand quietly facing a blank screen showing only static.
2	At regular intervals, a 3-foot (1 m) tall crystal cylinder appears on a platform. A telescoping arm immediately snatches the cylinder and feeds it into a nearby machine.
3	An automaton guardian was defeated here, and its burned and dented carapace lies in the opening between two room segments.
4	Voices in an unknown language constantly speak (Arguing? Instructing? Warning?) from a device in this chamber.
5	Yellow gas drifts from a grille on the ceiling (level 4) that causes some to become giddy and others to fall asleep.
6	An opening leads to a random floor much higher in the tower.
7	A floating device (level 4) opens over the course of three rounds when sung to, but snaps shut again when the sound stops. Inside is a philethis in stasis, which awakens and emerges if the device is fully opened. It follows the PCs around for a while, remaining enigmatic, then departs.
8	A chunk of yellowish stony material is kept behind a force field (level 7). If brought out of the field, the stone doesn't seem to have any immediately obvious properties, though strange fossils are petrified into the rock.
9	A device composed of several overlapping disks of dark metal (level 5), each spinning in a separate direction, whirs here. PCs with metallic equipment feel those objects strain toward the spinning device.
10	A shard of red synth, about the size of a finger, is contained in a transparent glass cylinder (level 3). Touching the shard causes it to attempt to embed itself in the head of whoever disturbed it. If it succeeds, the target takes damage, but after the shard becomes dormant, the target gains an asset on all tasks related to navigation or understanding spatial relationships (assuming they don't remove the shard).

Philethis, page 247

Salvage Prospects: Attempts to salvage the devices in this tower are possible. If the PCs spend at least thirty minutes combing through a particular section in the tower, they can attempt to salvage up to 100 shins and two cyphers or, 10 percent of the time, one artifact. (If they are looking for oraculum, they can find up to 1 unit in any given section.) However, each time the PCs successfully salvage anything, they notice a fluctuation in all the nearby devices, and possibly incur one or more GM intrusions involving a breakdown of cause and effect.

Repeatedly salvaging from the same section (more than four times) or salvaging one unit of oraculum from any section causes a guardian automaton to fold out of and disengage from a nearby smooth surface to deal with the interlopers. If the PCs have previously dispatched a guardian automaton, this time one additional automaton appears.

GM Intrusion (Causality): Reality seems to glitch for a moment. The character finds that when they move their legs, they go nowhere. Or when they speak, no words form. Or if words form, no meaning can be gleaned from the noises. And so on. The glitch reverses after a few rounds, but additional glitches are possible if the PCs attempt to salvage too much from the tower.

7: STRANGE SOUNDS

READ ALOUD

As you approach this intersection, a sudden clatter rings out like the banging of metal striking metal, echoing from farther along one narrow street beneath the platinum towers. After a few moments, the sound ceases.

If the PCs wait for about a minute, or if they move to a nearby tower, they hear a similar sound again. And then a minute later, it happens again. And so on, at very similar intervals. Without too much effort, the PCs can follow the intermittent sound to its source, which lies about five blocks deeper into the Vault (8: Perpetual Altercation).

8: PERPETUAL ALTERCATION

When the PCs approach the sound's source, they witness the following quick altercation, which repeats about every minute, ending more or less the same way each time.

READ ALOUD

From the eaves of a distant lighted tower comes a low hum, which quickly climbs in pitch. The sound heralds the emergence from the same tower of a long, low mechanism that darts out onto the street. It immediately turns and races toward you, either moving on hidden wheels or hovering just above the surface. Accelerating, it moves closer rapidly, a red light blinking to aggressive life. Then a blast of green light emerges from the eaves of the unlighted tower immediately to your left, which shatters the racing mechanism into burning debris.

Optional Variation: Instead of seeing both the launch and the destruction of the racing attack mechanism, the PCs might initially see only one side of the altercation. In this case, if they're closer to 10: Latos Adjunct, they'll have to follow the attack mechanism—or at least the path it took—to see what happens to it. If they're closer to 9: Vesied's Redoubt, they'll have to trace the apparent route of the attack mechanism back to its source if they're interested.

Debris Field: If the PCs look around, they discover a loose scatter of burned mech fragments in the area where the racer was destroyed. There are many more pieces than could have come from just one, or even ten such mechanisms. About every nine hours, a guardian automaton or two activates from the road and cleans up the most recent accumulation of debris (by "melting" it with a touch of a lighted tendril) before folding back into a nearby surface.

Attack and Defense: The continual attack and defense has reached an uneasy level of detente between the vesied in the nearby unlighted tower (9: Vesied's Redoubt), which emits the defensive blasts, and the more distant lighted tower (10: Latos Adjunct), which keeps launching fresh attacks.

9: VESIED'S REDOUBT

If the PCs have tried to gain entry to unlighted towers before now, they may be surprised to discover that the entrances to the lobby of this unlighted tower are wide open. A machine about twice the size of a person (the defensive turret that keeps each new attack from the adjunct at bay) stands ominously just inside the opening.

Racing attack mechanism: *level 5; moves a long distance each round*

Defensive turret: *level 5; long-range energy blast inflicts 5 points of damage (and has been tuned to destroy the racing attack mechanism)*

Guardian automaton: *level 5; Armor 2; levitates up to a short distance each round; regains 2 points of health each round*

Vesied: *level 5; tasks related to the numenera as level 5; Might defense tasks as level 9; health 25; Armor 1; long-range radiation blast inflicts 5 points of damage that ignores Armor every few rounds; can command automatons and machines for several rounds with a touch; for more details, see* the Ninth World Bestiary 2, *page 173*

Suborned guardian automaton: *level 4; Armor 2; levitates up to a short distance each round; does not regain health*

Cognition annealer: *level 10*

READ ALOUD

Inside, most of the wide expanse that is the ground floor of this tower is dark, except for a structure of cobbled synth, wires, and scavenged metal that stands beneath a handful of tall poles. Each pole tip provides illumination in various intensities. Several guardian mechanisms stagger and plod about the periphery of the area, as if in a half-hearted patrol. Floating above a disk of undulating fluid is a weird humanoid, oddly proportioned, with disturbing facial features and several implanted devices studding its body.



Vesied Backstory: The creature floating above the fluidic disk is a vesied. Almost every other member of its strange species is long gone. This survivor is a castaway from a prior age that most have utterly forgotten. Part biological and part mechanical, vesieds have a way with machines of all kinds. This one has suborned the five guardian automatons that shamble through this area.

Interacting With the Vesied: Thanks to a few previous visitors from outside the Vault, this vesied has learned the Truth, which it uses to warn off any PC interlopers it detects:

"This cache is mine. I claimed it decades ago when my craft struck and holed the head. Leave, or die."

The PCs can depart, fight the vesied, or talk to it. It turns out the creature isn't hard to convince to talk, as it is somewhat lonely. It explains that ever since it arrived in the Vault (which it calls the "latos"), it has been under constant attack from an entity the vesied calls "the adjunct."

If the PCs explain their purposes (salvage, oraculum, finding a special mechanism to bring back a dead person, and so on), they may find a seemingly sympathetic ear in the vesied, given that guardian automatons have also likely attacked the characters when they've attempted to salvage too much from any one tower. In fact, if the PCs don't suggest an alliance, the vesied does, telling them that if they can neutralize the adjunct, it will give them whatever they seek. (A mechanism to restore a dead person might be found in 11: Black Tower.)

The Vesied's Advantage: The vesied keeps a device—called a cognition annealer—that it stole from the adjunct. The adjunct desperately wants it back. As long as the vesied retains it, the adjunct can't do much but apply low-level pressure. The vesied keeps the annealer in its makeshift shelter. The annealer appears as a crystal globe about 1 foot (30 cm) in diameter in which tiny glows dart and swim. It is not really an artifact, but someone controlling it can access various functions and abilities in the Vault, which is how the vesied is keeping the unlighted tower open and from going into lockdown.

10: LATOS ADJUNCT

This is the tower that periodically launches the racing attack mechanism at the vesied's tower. It is one of the few lighted towers in the Vault.

Two entrances, each on the same side of the building's base, gape wide.

Battle Entrance: One of the two entrances at the base of this tower is the mouth from which new attack mechanisms emerge. The interior is a machine that fabricates new attack mechanisms in an assembly-line sort of way. PCs who attempt to destroy, salvage, or interfere with the machine draw the attention of the latos adjunct and a guardian automaton.

Main Entrance: The other entrance at the base of the tower opens into the adjunct's command center.

READ ALOUD

Banks of strange, smooth machines line the floor of this wide area, glowing and humming. Floating overhead is a wavering, flickering image of a humanoid entity at least 50 feet (15 m) tall made of a greenish alloy with a transparent sphere for its head. The interior of the entity's head is mostly dark, save for a handful of glowing columns amid a much larger forest of dark pillars.

Latos Adjunct: If the PCs haven't already met the latos adjunct, it is beneath the flickering image, moving about the banks of machines the line the floor. It is a humanoid automaton with a metallic body and a transparent sphere for a head. Within the sphere is a misty face, one that each PC recognizes as their own.

The Real Story: The Vault of Reflections is actually the head of a mostly inactive entity known as a latos, a real-time image of which floats in this tower. The PCs, the adjunct, the vesied, and all the towers are inside that head. (The head is much bigger on the inside than the outside.) The latos adjunct spent millennia searching for this buried latos, and recently found it. Its attempt to repair the quiescent entity was stymied by the appearance of the vesied, which stole the final component the adjunct needs to bring the latos back to "life."

Interacting With the Adjunct: The latos adjunct communicates telepathically. It psychically warns off characters who are salvaging the interior of the latos:

"Thieves will not be tolerated. That which is kept safe in the latos is sacred."

The PCs can depart, fight the adjunct, or talk to it. Despite its strong words, it is willing to negotiate. It explains the full story to the PCs and indicates that if they reclaim the cognition annealer stolen by the vesied, the adjunct not only will allow the PCs to retain what they've salvaged but also will provide them with some other reward, depending on their need (cyphers, artifacts, oraculum, a mechanism that might bring a dead person back, and so on).

11: BLACK TOWER

From the outside, this lighted tower seems to be almost 800 feet (240 m) high. Getting inside is simple.

READ ALOUD

Strips of glowing dark purple light along the ceiling provide illumination. Devices in this 30-foot (9 m) wide chamber beep, whine, and emit other sounds too unfamiliar to categorize. Several exits lead to similar-looking adjoining chambers.

Attack mechanism fabricator: *level 7*

Latos adjunct: *level 5; health 25; Armor 3; melee attack inflicts 6 points of damage; mental attack within short range gives it control of target while target is psychically caged in adjunct's body, unable to act; can summon one guardian automaton every few rounds; for more details, see* the Ninth World Bestiary 2, *page 91*

Guardian automaton: *level 5; Armor 2; levitates up to a short distance each round; regains 2 points of health each round*





Guardian automaton: *level 5; Armor 2; levitates up to a short distance each round; regains 2 points of health each round*

Experience Point Awards: *If the PCs successfully gain whatever salvage or other result they were hoping to find in the Vault, they each gain 2 XP. If the PCs ally with the vesied and aid it, they each gain 1 XP. If they ally with the latos adjunct and the latos is roused, they each gain 3 XP. These awards are in addition to any XP earned through GM intrusions and discoveries.*

Multistory Machine: The dark purple light in this tower is actually black light in that it emits a lot of UV light invisible to the human eye, but which causes many items to glow. This multilevel tower is essentially one massive integrated machine whose "insides" are laid out in room-like sections.

The machine's purpose isn't immediately clear, though PCs who try to gain a general feeling believe that the tower's purpose is somehow associated with "maintaining time-lock synchronicity."

Use the material provided under 6: Red Tower for general guidance and salvage prospects if PCs wish to explore this tower, as well as for generating additional interesting content.

GM Intrusion: Reality seems to glitch for a moment. To everyone else, the character disappears for a few rounds (or more), during which time they seem to not exist. When they reappear, it is as if no time whatsoever has passed for them.

Temporal Caller: If the PCs entered the Vault because they want to help a father "revive" his dead daughter by pulling her out of time from before she was killed, this bulky mechanism (that spans the 345th through the 414th floor of the Black Tower) is their best shot at doing so. However, operating the mechanism is not easy. A failed attempt leaves a would-be operator stuck in "slow" time for minutes, hours, days, or even longer. If the PCs succeed, they might just pull the girl from instants before her death several years ago.

Either way, any time the machine is used, guardian automatons appear to prevent further usages.

12: YELLOW TOWER

From the outside, this lighted tower seems to be almost 500 feet (150 m) high. Getting inside is simple.

READ ALOUD

Strips of glowing yellow light along the ceiling provide illumination. Devices in this 30-foot (9 m) wide chamber beep, whine, and emit other sounds too unfamiliar to categorize. Several exits lead to similar-looking adjoining chambers.

Multistory Machine: This multilevel tower is essentially one massive integrated machine whose "insides" are laid out in room-like sections.

The machine's purpose isn't immediately clear, though PCs who try to gain a general

feeling believe that the tower's purpose is somehow associated with "maintaining spatial cohesion."

Use the material provided under 6: Red Tower for general guidance and salvage prospects if PCs wish to explore this tower, as well as for generating additional interesting content.

GM Intrusion: The fabric of space in which the character exists begins to fray. This has the unfortunate effect of causing the PC to "melt" for 6 points of damage (ignores Armor) each round until they succeed on a difficulty 5 Might defense task.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

Eventually, it's time for the PCs to leave the Vault.

No Alliances: Sooner or later, guardian automatons likely chase the PCs from the Vault if the characters don't find and come to some sort of accommodation with either the vesied or the latos adjunct. Alternatively, the PCs might get what they want and leave of their own accord.

Vesied Alliance: If the PCs work with the vesied to eliminate the latos adjunct, they gain the reward they ask for. Afterward, the vesied asks them to leave because it wants everything in the area for itself. With the adjunct gone, the vesied can suborn the guardian automatons to its own use with as much facility as the adjunct once could.

Adjunct Alliance: If the characters work with the adjunct to reclaim the cognition annealer stolen by the vesied, it's not long before the adjunct uses that device to "wake" the inactive latos of which the Vault is only the head. In this case, the PCs are given enough warning to get out so they don't become trapped. Mere minutes (or less) after the PCs vacate, the latos emerges.

READ ALOUD

The earth shakes and rumbles. Rising up from the crater, smashing through the drit and rock, is something enormous. As more and more emerges, it is revealed as a humanoid entity at least five stories tall made of a greenish alloy with a transparent sphere for its head. The sphere's interior is alight with a fully lighted city of platinum towers. Once fully clear of the earth that had entombed it, the vast creature strides away, each foot a thundering boom, heading toward the horizon and the Beyond.



CHAPTER 26

LEGACY

"Legacy" is an urban adventure with investigation, double-dealing, and criminal intrigue. It is potentially very open-ended and assumes that a GM can ad-lib NPCs and situations as they arise. Although it's set in the Navarene city of Charmonde, it could easily be relocated to any large city in the Ninth World.

"Legacy" uses an abbreviated adventure format. The meat of the adventure is found on the two-page spread that begins on the next page. Use the information presented under Starting Encounter to begin the scenario and use Ending the Adventure to wrap things up. If PCs want to explore further, refer to More Details on page 392.

Navarene, page 137

Charmonde, page 138

Iron wind, page 135

Once a person is named a teacher at Asaranti University, the appointment is normally valid for life, unless the teacher is found to be guilty of breaking Navarene law.

BACKGROUND

In the city of Charmonde, Asaranti University is a bastion of scholarship, philosophy, and art. Faculty positions are fiercely contested, and are awarded by Provost Daroon.

Five weeks ago, a woman named Uala Sav approached the provost. Sav is a master of the numenera and claims to have a technique for taming the iron wind to make it not only harmless, but a tool that humans can use to reshape the world around them. She offers to share this technique if Provost Daroon makes her a teacher at the university.

However, this is not the first time someone in her family has been part of the university. Uala Sav's mother, Uala Ren, was a teacher at Asaranti a couple of decades ago. Uala Ren was dismissed when her association with a criminal group in Charmonde called the Chaincutters was discovered. The university does not want Ren or her daughter Sav back.

Uala Sav sincerely wants a spot in the university, but if that won't be allowed, she instead intends to intimidate the provost into doing as she asks—or, if necessary, to destroy the university in vengeance for how they treated her mother.

As an added wrinkle, the Chaincutters still operate in Charmonde. Though it's true that the Chaincutters are criminals, that wasn't originally true; the founders were all about freeing slaves. Of course, freeing slaves is against the law in Navarene. Since that time, the Chaincutters' motivations have become less pure, though they continue to rally behind the claim of freedom. The group has disrupted the city with their raids and hurt people in their demonstrations. And like mother, like daughter: Sav is also associated with the group.

Gireth: *level 4, tasks related to deception as level 6*

SYNOPSIS

An associate of Sav's named Gireth finds the PCs and asks them to retrieve "materials" from the university workshop where Sav's mother Ren once worked. Lying, he tells them that the materials will clear Sav's name and allow her to join the university, but the real truth is the materials will allow her to intimidate the university or even destroy it.

PCs enter the university, potentially posing as students, looking for the workshop that houses the materials they seek. They can try to gain the materials by deception, in trade, or by force. While on the university grounds, they may also be asked to deal with a threat from a "radical" group known as the Chaincutters.

If the PCs bring the materials to Gireth, he might ask for even more help on Sav's behalf, working with the "freedom-fighting" group known as the Chaincutters. However, at some point—from some source—the PCs learn that Uala Sav's materials are live samples of the iron wind. Worse, like her mother, Sav is associated with the Chaincutters. At that point, the PCs need to decide if helping Uala Sav is the right thing to do or if they should help the university instead. If they turn against Sav, they discover that their task is dire: they need to stop her from detonating an instance of the iron wind in Charmonde.

STARTING ENCOUNTER

Gireth finds the PCs wherever they are—in Charmonde or perhaps nearby—and asks for help. He tells them the true tale of Uala Sav being denied a position at Asaranti University. He asks them to retrieve special materials from the lab where Sav's mother worked. The



materials, he lies, will prove that Sav's mother wasn't associated with the Chaincutters and didn't deserve to be ousted from the university and hounded out of Charmonde. (In truth, the materials are what Sav needs to loose a wave of virulent iron wind in the university's heart. Also, Sav's mother *was* associated with the Chaincutters.)

Gireth says that Sav wants to prove her mother's innocence, even if Sav herself isn't admitted to the university. For their help, he offers each PC a cypher and (on Sav's behalf, should she succeed) associate faculty status at Asaranti. He also offers the group two artifacts: a force dome and a liquid sword.

The Asaranti University workshop is in the Elerum building. Gireth describes the materials (a couple of red synth capsules fused to the face of a metallic sheet about 1 foot [30 cm] in diameter) and makes it clear that the PCs should not damage, activate, or tinker with them in any way. The materials are fragile and very important. He provides clear directions on how to find the Elerum building and Workshop Red inside, as well as credentials that should get them onto university grounds without any issue.

The credentials are writs of passage on paper stamped with the official university seal, naming each PC as a Rank 1 (brand new) student.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

Depending on the actions the PCs take, the adventure might seem to be over, then pick up again as the results of their actions bear fruit.

For instance, the PCs might take Gireth at his word, steal the materials from Workshop Red, and give them to Gireth later. Afterward, while the PCs are resting or doing something else, they learn about the threat that the crazed leader of the Chaincutters, Uala Sav, has leveled against the university, using the very materials they provided to deploy the iron wind in Charmonde. At this point, the PCs may decide to get involved again since they have inside information and can likely act quicker than anyone else in the city. They might take the fight to Gireth, the Chaincutters, and Uala Sav in their secret "street behind the streets" lair.

The PCs could also decide to take on the Chaincutters if they meet with Provost Daroon before or after they deliver the materials. In this case, they might use Gireth's trust in them as a way to get access to the "street behind the streets."

Of course, it's possible that the PCs meet Uala Sav after they give Gireth the materials because they want to help her overcome an injustice. If so, she is grateful and rewards them. However, after spending a bit of time

Force dome, page 296

Liquid sword, page 298

The fake credentials, which are forgeries, are good enough to get the PCs past unsuspicious proctors and university minders, and ease deception tasks by two steps for a PC pretending to be on university grounds for legitimate purposes.

ASARANTI UNIVERSITY GROUNDS

Asaranti University spans an area in Charmonde roughly a half mile (800 m) in diameter and contains all manner of stately buildings. Over each of the two main gates into the walled university grounds is a floating solid shape approximately 40 feet (12 m) across that constantly changes the number of visible sides. The gates are open during the day and closed at night. PCs with credentials can easily pass through during the day. The walls provide some security, as they're guarded by groups of five minders who walk their length day and night. The university used to have a problem with thieves, but no more. If minders catch the PCs trying to sneak across the wall, a general alarm goes up, the floating solids begin to blare and strobe alarmingly, and the characters will likely have to go to ground or leave and try another tactic to gain entry without notice. In addition to the minders, several Aeon Priests also work at the university, and they respond to an alarm.

Walls: *level 5*

Minder: *level 3, tasks related to perception as level 5*

Aeon Priest, page 264

STARTING ENCOUNTER

PROCTOR SIDURAS

At some point while entering the university grounds, either at one of the gates or after the PCs gain access in some other fashion, the characters are approached by Proctor Siduras. Siduras is an elderly man in university blue robes followed by a flock of bird-like creatures, each of which wears a pack. He is eager to meet fresh-faced new students, as he assumes the PCs to be. He asks about their courses of study, how they came to the university, and what their plans are. He is also happy to give advice about various teachers and other aspects of university life.

If the PCs mention the name Uala Sav (or Uala Ren), Siduras shakes his head in disapproval, lamenting how sad it is that Sav, like her mother before her, is associated with the dangerous and outlaw Chaincutter group. Given that both women were brilliant at crafting the numenera, it's doubly unfortunate. Siduras doesn't know anything about the materials the PCs were asked to secure, but he knows enough to cast doubt on the full veracity of what Gireth told them.

Alternatively, if the characters don't mention Sav or Ren, Siduras explains that Provost Daroon is looking for someone to help with a delicate situation regarding a threat to the university, and by the looks of the PCs, they might just be the perfect fit. (Siduras doesn't know the specifics.)

GM Intrusion: The character says or does something that makes Siduras suspicious.

Proctor Siduras: *level 4, general knowledge tasks as level 6*

Locks: *level 5*

ELERUM BUILDING

This three-story building has four entrances, all normally locked at night and open by day. The building also features several sealed windows. Students and teachers are busy in the various workshops, meeting rooms, and the single large lecture hall all day and often into the night. About ten minders patrol the building, checking students and teachers against an approved list of people with permission to be inside. They also unlock the doors at night to provide access to the building for qualified personnel. They challenge anyone not on their list who tries to gain entry or who they see in the halls, because priceless numenera artifacts are kept in the building. The PCs aren't on the list, but characters good at deception might be able to fake it (or they can try to sneak in or, if worst comes to worst, fight their way in).

Loot: Six discrete workshops, including the one the PCs seek, contain oddities and other devices. If the PCs pilfer a workshop, they find 1d20 shins, 1-2 oddities, and 1-2 cyphers, and they have a 20% chance to find an artifact.

WORKSHOP RED

Workshop Red is supervised by Proctor Durdas, who wears university blue robes and a metallic helmet that covers his entire head. The reflective surface shows Durdas's surroundings as well as fleeting figures that aren't actually in the room.

Durdas knows about the materials that the old teacher Uala Ren worked on, and that they're kept in a special safe. He might be willing to give them to the PCs rather than fight, especially if they give him a cypher or an artifact in return. Even so, he warns them that the materials are dangerous; he's pretty sure that they contain a live sample of the iron wind kept in stasis. If they can be "tamed," that's worth some risk. Either way, Durdas has a soft spot for Ren because he was her tutor twenty years ago. And, he says, the Chaincutters were not always so radical; they've just become more desperate.

GM Intrusion: A nearby staff Aeon Priest senses the materials being removed from the safe and appears to make sure everything is all right.

Materials safe: *level 6*

Aeon Priest, page 264

Proctor Durdas: *level 5*

Materials: *level 8*

CHAINCUTTERS' HIDDEN LAIR

The Chaincutters have a secret lair in a limited dimension that echoes a single street running the length of Charmonde. To enter, someone with the right kind of key (a glass orb oddity in which red light swirls) must walk down any street in Charmonde holding the key so that it can absorb ambient light. The user (and anyone moving next to the user) then simply walks onto the "street behind the streets." Leaving is accomplished in a similar manner.

The buildings along the narrow street are mostly empty replicas of real buildings in Charmonde. Traveling down unlit side streets is supposedly dangerous because "shadow beasts" reside there. The Chaincutter headquarters is a wide, squat stone structure about midway along the street. Outside, two trained reptile-like watch beasts with red feathers and heads that split open to reveal a massive maw stand guard with their tamer.

The occupied structure's interior is mostly one large room used as a barracks, a communal area, and a storeroom (filled with all manner of expensive wine, food, art, and other valuables stolen from Charmonde).

A dozen Chaincutters dwell here currently. Each has a melee weapon and a ranged weapon, as well as a handful of shins. They're more like bandits than freedom fighters these days, but they could be rallied to a better cause under a new leader. Five freed slaves also dwell here for the time being. They worry that these people who so recently freed them from bondage might be little better than their former masters.

Two chambers are set aside as the Chaincutter leader's quarters and a reception room where she meets with the PCs if they come to the tower peacefully (probably with Gireth). The leader is none other than Uala Sav.

Watch beasts: *level 3; Armor 2; inflicts 6 points of damage*

Watch beast tamer: *level 4, perception tasks as level 5; Armor 1; crossbow attack inflicts 6 points of damage*

Chaincutter member: *level 2; Armor 1; melee attacks inflict 3 points of damage*

Freed slave: *level 1*

UALA SAV

Uala Sav seems gracious, scholarly, and humble. It's all an act, though she's not initially hostile unless attacked. (If she's attacked, the Chaincutters in the main area intercede, as do the watch beasts and their tamer, and possibly Gireth if he's around.) If the characters provided her with the materials, she is grateful and tells them that with their help, a great injustice will soon be overturned. If the PCs ask about freeing slaves, she blinks, and says that too will be seen to after she clears her mother's good name at the university. However, Sav is lying—she doesn't care about freeing slaves. She does it now and then to keep up appearances and to placate those among her group for whom that's still important. Since taking leadership of the Chaincutters a few years ago, Sav has started to turn the organization into little more than radicals intent on enriching themselves.

If the characters seem eager to help free slaves, she has them join the Chaincutters in the main area, who are planning a raid on a royal caravan due to move through the streets of Charmonde in a few days. In the meantime, she retreats to her room to examine the materials. If she has a few days' time, she tinkers with them until she creates a sort of extreme cypher, one capable of detonating an iron wind outbreak within a limited area.

GM Intrusion: Sav produces a cypher that summons a shadow beast to aid her, a blot of snarling horror.

Uala Sav: *level 5; Armor 3 from a cypher; level 6 ray emitter artifact produces a long-range energy blast at up to two targets as a single action, inflicting 6 points of damage (depletion: 1 in 1d10)*

Uala took a ray emitter cypher and modified it into an artifact to get more uses out of it.

Shadow beast: *level 6; attacks inflict 3 points of Speed damage that ignores Armor*

Extreme cypher: *level 10; handheld; detonation inflicts 10 points of damage to everything in immediate range, instigating an iron wind episode that eventually affects an area 1 mile (1.5 km) across if not suppressed*

GIRETH

Gireth waits for the PCs at a pre-arranged location in Charmonde. He pays them what he initially offered, including a promissory note to provide each PC with associate status should Uala Sav eventually be named a teacher. If the PCs broach the topic of the Chaincutters or of helping Sav further, he might take them to the group's hidden lair, where Sav can attempt to recruit them into providing more assistance. If the PCs don't bring it up, he does so himself. Gireth has an oddity (a glass orb in which scarlet light swirls) that works as a key to gain entry to one of the many entrances to the Chaincutters' hidden "street behind the streets."

GM Group Intrusion: The PCs were secretly followed by members of the Charmonde city watch because someone saw them make off with the materials and reported them. If the PCs turn over the materials to Gireth, six members of the city watch order them all to surrender. Gireth immediately flees, and they attack. If the PCs don't want to fight, they can follow Gireth as he flees using his key, or they can flee in their own fashion and try to get away.

Glass orb key: *level 6; allows passage into the "street behind the streets" for up to ten people per use*

City watch: *level 5; Armor 2; melee attacks inflict 6 points of damage*

PROVOST DAROON

This stately woman in blue university robes has skin as dark as midnight except for a bright blue tattoo covering half her face. Her eyes seem to be mechanisms. Thanks to whispered rumors and secret sources, Provost Daroon has come to believe that the Chaincutters are secretly plotting an attack on Asaranti University. She isn't sure why, but she wants to find a group capable of putting an end to the threat quickly and quietly. The PCs might just be that group. She offers them a reward of as many cyphers as they can carry and one artifact. She also provides a key to the "street behind the streets" that serves as the Chaincutters' hidden lair. The key is a glass orb in which scarlet lights dance.

Provost Daroon: *level 4, general knowledge tasks and tasks related to the numenera as level 7*

Experience Point Awards: *If the PCs extract the materials successfully from the university, they each gain 1 XP. If the PCs provide Gireth with the materials, later realize their error, and decide to work against Uala Sav, they each gain another 1 XP. If the PCs defeat Uala Sav and prevent an iron wind episode in Charmonde, they each gain 3 XP. Finally, if they find a way to rededicate the Chaincutters to their original cause, they each gain 2 XP.*

Shadow resident: *level 2; touch inflicts 2 points of Speed damage (ignores Armor); shadow residents can't perceive or be affected by creatures that are illuminated*

Extreme cyphers have a larger effect than their level would indicate. They are not usually found through regular salvage tasks, but instead are gained through extraordinary means.

in the secret lair and talking to some of the slaves, or actually seeing the Chaincutters in action (action which is little better than bloodthirsty banditry under Sav's command), they likely realize the error of their ways. In this case, the PCs might change allegiance and put Sav down before she deploys her iron wind extreme cypher.

If the PCs turn against Uala Sav (or work against her from the start) and prevent her from gaining her ends and killing thousands in an iron wind outbreak, Asaranti University is grateful and rewards them with honorary associate status. This provides several perks, including access to knowledge, lodging, food, and contacts.

MORE DETAILS

If the PCs want to explore other elements of this adventure further, refer to this section.

OFFICIAL HELP?

If the PCs try to get help from official Charmonde sources, given that the Chaincutters are outlawed, they might have some success. However, Uala Sav has informants in the city bureaucracy and quickly learns of any movement against her. When she does, she moves up her timetable to demolish the university with her iron wind detonation, which means the adventure might become something of a race against time.

STREET BEHIND THE STREETS

The limited dimension that the Chaincutters use as their secret lair is a location that could be explored and potentially exploited, if the PCs are willing to enter the darkness beyond the illuminated street, where the shadow beasts lurk. In this case, they find that the dimension extends to the edges of what would be Charmonde, if not farther. However, the farther one moves into the darkness, the more twisted and unlike the host dimension the limited dimension becomes.

Eventually the buildings and structures become completely alien and unlike anything that humans might build. At this point, the PCs discover that the residents of this dark city are wispy shadow beings that ignore the characters and any other creatures who carry illumination. However, the shadow residents flock to visitors who lack light because they want to absorb the heat of living creatures. Explorers who brave these dangers can find loot in the buildings similar to numenera objects they'd find elsewhere, but whether they find shins, cyphers, or artifacts, this loot quickly degrades and evaporates if brought out of the limited dimension and into light.



PART 9:
BACK MATTER



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APPENDIX A

SPECIES OPTIONS

The default assumption is that all player characters are human. However, the Ninth World is a strange place, and other options are available, although they should be extremely rare.

Varjellen and lattimors are not the only visitant species in the Ninth World, but they are the most common. Others live in more isolated or far-flung areas and are not as well known.

VISITANTS

Visitants hail from . . . elsewhere. They are the descendants of travelers who came to Earth during a prior world, when interstellar—perhaps even intergalactic—travel was commonplace. At some point, the travelers were marooned here, perhaps because the civilization that supported their technology collapsed or disappeared. Sometimes visitants, particularly the varjellen, suggest that the Earth once served as the hub of a vast empire of thousands of worlds. However, there's no way to be certain of that, and it hardly seems relevant now, a hundred thousand or even a million years later.

Regardless of how they got here, visitants now call the Ninth World home. They have dwelled on Earth for a thousand generations or more and have long forgotten any useful knowledge their ancestors may have had about science, technology, or the universe. Instead, they have adapted, biologically and culturally, to survive in their new home. They know no other life and no other place, but they remain keenly aware that they are at best transplants and at worst castaways.

Visitants sometimes integrate into human societies in the Ninth World, but more often they keep to themselves in their own small communities. They are relatively rare compared to humans. In fact, many humans have never encountered a visitant, and some don't believe they exist, dismissing them as tall tales or the result of numenera-based deformities or transformations. Although visitants and humans differ greatly in outlook and personality, dwelling on the same world, facing the same dangers, and having the same experiences has made it possible for them to understand each other and get along. Most visitants speak the same language as the humans that live in the same region, although particularly isolated communities have their own language, just as remote human groups do.

Visitants can't interbreed with humans or with visitants of another type.

Players can create visitant characters if the GM allows it. A visitant's species is their descriptor, but they can choose any character type and focus desired.

For example, a player might create a varjellen Glaive who Works Miracles or a lattimor Jack who Wears a Sheen of Ice. Because visitant characters gain more benefits from their species type than they would from a conventional descriptor, each carries more disadvantages as well. Visitant characters also present roleplaying challenges, so it's recommended that new players do not create visitant PCs.

Works Miracles, page 92

Wears a Sheen of Ice, page 87

A visitant's species is their descriptor. Instead of a normal descriptor, a character chooses a species option.

VARJELLEN

Tall and angular, the varjellen would never be confused with humans. They have a violet-red hue to their flesh; bulbous, yellow-cast, contralateral eyes; a tall, thin crest atop their head; and a broad chest with two limb-like structures that open a cavity within their chest. This cavity protects their heart and gives them access to it and other internal organs. Humans have likened a varjellen's chest to a cage with doors that can open and close. The varjellen call this protected cavity their "crucible." Having access to their own internal organs provides them with a unique benefit. By gently massaging and subtly rearranging their organs in a manner understood only by the varjellen brain, they gain control over their entire physical structure, modifying their bodies on a cellular level as needed.

In other words, a varjellen can make itself faster, stronger, and even smarter when it needs to. But there is a price. To increase musculature of one kind, another must be

Examples of varjellen names:

Vestiai
Lagim
Malianoke
Visixtru
Thrianelli
Lieos
Kel
Palianeir
Strolrushi

diminished. To improve brain structures, tissue from elsewhere in the body must be sacrificed. When a varjellen becomes smarter, it becomes slower or weaker. When it becomes faster or more graceful, it becomes less hardy or less intelligent, and so on. The process of alteration is called reforging. Varjellen can reforge themselves a maximum of once each day, and the process takes almost an hour. Young varjellen who have just learned to reforge can do it in half the time, but as the body ages, the process takes longer, so an hour is average.

Varjellen are sexless until they wish otherwise, at which point they can adapt their organs to take on either a male or a female gender for reproductive purposes. Obviously, once a varjellen becomes pregnant, she retains female characteristics until she gives birth approximately six months later. Humans are incapable of discerning any difference between the varjellen who take on gender and those who do not.

Varjellen live 250 years or more and typically reproduce only once, always giving birth to twins. Like humans, they breathe oxygen, require food and water, and so on. However, they are herbivorous and cannot digest meat. By human standards, they prefer particularly spicy food and very strong liquor. Most viruses and toxins that affect humans affect the varjellen as well, although there are rare differences. Their eyesight is at least half again as good as a human's, but their hearing is a bit worse. They have no sense of smell.

Aside from these physical characteristics, the varjellen share some general personality traits (though individuals obviously differ). Humans often find them cold, ponderous, and unemotional most of the time, but they can be unpredictably warm, impassioned, or erratic. Guarded around strangers, the varjellen are freer with information and casual behavior among those they trust. But often, a varjellen's trust is difficult to win.

Many varjellen enjoy working with tools and are fascinated by devices of the past, though they care little for history in general, preferring to focus on the present and the future. They are drawn to mystery and exploration. The varjellen enjoy visual arts and music, but they have no concept of poetry or prose and don't care much for stories. Although they are reluctant warriors, the varjellen do what they must to protect themselves. They are almost never the aggressors in physical situations, but if necessary, they can be as devious or ruthless as any human (again, this varies from individual to individual). They value equality and fairness but may define these concepts differently than humans do. The varjellen need for justice gives them a deep desire to right wrongs—vengeance is well known among their kind.

Varjellen wear clothing not unlike human garments, always covering their crucible. Individuals typically paint, tattoo, or otherwise decorate their crest and head to express their own personality.

VARJELLEN ABILITIES

All varjellen characters in Numenera have the following abilities:

Diminished: At first tier, you have 3 points, not 6, to divide among your stat Pools.

Reforging: You can take an hour during the day to rearrange your current stat Pools as you desire, trading points between them freely. You have no maximum in any Pool, but lowering a Pool to 0 moves you down the damage track as normal.

Slow to Recover: Each recovery roll you make suffers a –1 penalty.

Skill: You are trained in understanding numenera.

Skill: You are trained in visually perceiving.

Inability: Tasks you attempt involving history are hindered.

Inability: Tasks you attempt involving poetry or oratory are hindered.

Inability: Tasks you make to hear are hindered.



Damage track, page 110

Recovery roll, page 111



LATTIMOR

A lattimor is the result of a symbiotic union of two different creatures: a bursk (a large, muscular, hairy biped) and a neem (an intelligent fungal creature). They come together in synthesis to form a new being. Effectively, a lattimor is two creatures with one body.

A typical lattimor stands about 7 feet (2 m) tall, with broad, sloping shoulders, powerful arms, and short legs. It has two large and widely spaced eyes, plus four smaller eyes positioned high and close together. Although its entire body is covered in brownish-blond, black, or white hair, the back of a lattimor has a flat, discolored area, almost like a massive bruise. Humans often think the area vaguely resembles a bat or an owl with outstretched wings. Closer inspection of the area reveals tiny waving hairs that are almost threadlike—very different from the hair on the rest of the creature's body. These small hairs are the outer manifestation of the neem, although by adulthood, the fungus has worked itself into the cellular structure of the main body of the bursk.

The synthesis of bursk and neem is imperfect. The symbiosis results in a single creature with a single mind, called the fugue state. While the bursk and the neem are enhanced by the union—the whole is far greater than the sum of the parts—sometimes the two creatures operate independently. In other words, the lattimor exists in a fugue state most of the time, but sometimes either the bursk or the neem is in control. From a human's point of view, this can seem like a psychotic malady akin to multiple personality disorder, but to a lattimor, it's simply normal life. The bursk and neem each have individual names, with the union taking on both names. For example, a neem called Narlyen and a bursk called Fesh might combine to create a lattimor called Narlyen-Fesh.

In lattimor naming conventions, names are typically hyphenated, with the first half being the name of the neem and the second the name of the bursk.

Examples of lattimor names:

Narlyen-Fesh
Gravish-Morel
Margel-Mes
Zester-Dolin
Carstol-Reg
Ungeym-Werl
Hanlan-Jorum



At any given time, a lattimor might be in a bursk state, a neem state, or (most commonly) a fugue state. Typically, a bursk state is more prone to aggression, combat, and physical activity. A neem state is contemplative and conversational. Shifting from state to state sometimes happens unexpectedly. When the lattimor wishes to change state, the shift requires careful concentration. The bursk state, being more aggressive, is harder to shift out of than the other two states.

Lattimors are strong creatures with keen senses. They breathe nitrogen but need only a small amount, so they can hold their breath for up to ten minutes without issue. Most inhaled toxins that would bother a human have no effect on them. Lattimors are omnivorous and can digest organic material that a human almost certainly could not.

Lattimors have male and female genders, but only because bursk do—the neem reproduce asexually. When two lattimors mate, the result is a bursk who is immediately joined with a neem so they grow together. If the union cannot be established within the first few weeks, it is unlikely to happen successfully. Male lattimors are typically larger than the females and walk a bit stooped.

An average lattimor's lifespan is approximately fifty years. Usually, when one part of the combined creature dies, both die. However, there are reports of a neem being "burned out" of a bursk, reducing it to a bestial creature that can never again form the synthesis of a lattimor.

Without a neem, a bursk is little more than a beast, about as intelligent as a smart, well-trained pack animal. Without a bursk, a neem is aware and intelligent, but not nearly at a human's level; it's not capable of using tools and is barely mobile.

The outlook of a lattimor depends on its current state and can vary from individual to individual. In its fugue state, a lattimor is careful but curious. Most humans would find it to be self-aggrandizing but not offensive.

In a bursk state, the creature is easily bored and focuses mainly on eating and proving its prowess (and worth) through physical acts, such as combat, feats of strength, or contests. These extroverts can be quite rash at times. In a neem state, the creature is timid, thoughtful, and introverted. It likes to talk but probably would rather just think.

Not all lattimor pairings are harmonious. Rarely, a neem and bursk grow to hate each other and vie for control when not in a fugue state.

Playing a lattimor as a PC species can be difficult, as it is one character with three personalities and strengths. For an extra challenge, two players could play a single lattimor character together, with one in control when the creature is in bursk state, the other in control when in neem state, and the two working together when in fugue state.

LATTIMOR ABILITIES

All lattimor characters in Numenera have the following abilities:

Strong: Your Might Pool increases by 4 points.

Change State: The fugue state is the default. It is your state when you awaken. You can change your state by attempting an Intellect task with a difficulty of 4. The GM can modify the difficulty depending on the circumstances; stressful situations increase the difficulty. Changing state is an action, and once attempted (whether successful or not), you cannot try again for at least an hour afterward.

FUGUE STATE

Skill: You are trained in perceiving.

BURSK STATE

Skill: You are trained in attacks made with one weapon type chosen at character creation.

Skill: You are trained in breaking things.

Skill: You are trained in perceiving.

Inability: You cannot take time to think. Tasks involving lore, knowledge, or understanding are hindered.

Inability: You cannot take time to talk. Tasks involving interacting with others in a pleasant manner are hindered.

Inability: You cannot take time to contemplate. Tasks involving concentration or study—including using type abilities—are hindered.

NEEM STATE

Skill: You are trained in all interactions with others.

Skill: You are trained in tasks involving study, contemplation, or mental concentration, including esoteries.

Inability: You have no taste for fighting. Tasks involving combat—including attack and defense rolls—are hindered.

Inability: You are wholly focused. Tasks involving perceiving anything unexpected are hindered.

MUTANTS

Some characters have been affected by mutation. Mutants are not visitants. They are humans who have changed over time, either through natural forces of evolution or through an unnatural manipulation—intentional or not—to an individual or their ancestors. Unnatural manipulation could mean exposure to mutagens, genetic engineering, or the result of genetic engineering gone wrong.

In the Ninth World, mutants sometimes band together. Those with hideous deformities face discrimination and derision. Some are outcasts, and others are revered, flaunting their mutations as a sign of superiority, power, and influence. Their mutations are seen as a blessing, not a curse. Some people believe them to be divine.

Five categories of mutation exist. Two of them—beneficial mutations and powerful mutations—bring about changes that are neither physically obvious nor extraordinary. Powerful mutations are more potent than beneficial ones. Harmful mutations are physical changes that are usually grotesque and somewhat debilitating. The fourth category, distinctive mutations, also provides significant abilities, but they mark the character as an obvious mutant. Last, cosmetic mutations bring no special capabilities at all and are merely cosmetic (although sometimes dramatically so).

In theory, there is a sixth category that might be called crippling mutations, but characters never have this kind of mutation. Mutants with crippling mutations might be born without limbs, with barely functional lungs, without most of their brain, and so on. Such mutations prevent a character from being viable.

If you want to play a mutant, you have special abilities, but they come at a cost. In lieu of a descriptor—or rather, by choosing mutant as your descriptor—you gain two beneficial mutations. If you opt to take a harmful mutation as well, you can have three beneficial mutations, or one powerful mutation, or one beneficial and one distinctive mutation. You can also have from zero to four distinctive mutations, which is up to you. Mutations are always rolled randomly, although the player and GM can work together to ensure that the resulting character is one that the player wants to play.



Might Pool, page 22

By choosing mutant *as your descriptor in lieu of anything else, you gain two beneficial mutations.*

Some of the most infamous mutants in the Ninth World are the Fahat of Nihliesh, page 203.

The Angulan Knights (page 217) see mutants as a true threat to humanity and hunt them down mercilessly.



Mutants are not abhumans. Abhumans are creatures whose ancestors—perhaps through mutation—became something other than human in the distant past, and rejected their humanity. Now they breed true, bestial offshoots that have become a distinct species.

BENEFICIAL MUTATIONS

The following mutations do not require any visible changes or distinctions in the character. In other words, people who have these mutations are not obviously recognized as mutants. Using beneficial mutations never costs stat Pool points and never requires an action to "activate."

01–05 Strengthened bones: You gain +5 to your Might Pool.

06–10 Improved circulation: You gain +5 to your Might Pool.

11–15 Improved musculature: You gain +5 to your Might Pool.

16–20 Improved nervous system: You gain +5 to your Speed Pool.

21–25 Improved neural processes: You gain +5 to your Intellect Pool.

26–30 Thick hide: You gain +1 to Armor.

31–33 Increased lung capacity: You can hold your breath for five minutes.

34–36 Adhesion pads: Your hands and feet have naturally adhesive pads and thus are assets in tasks involving climbing, keeping your footing, or retaining your grip.

37–39 Slippery skin: You secrete a slippery oil, giving you an asset in any task involving slipping from another's grip, slipping from bonds, squeezing through a small opening, and so on.

40–45 Telekinetic shield: You reflexively use telekinesis to ward away attacks, giving you an asset in Speed defense tasks.

46–50 Suggestive voice: Your voice is so perfectly modulated that it is an asset in all interaction tasks.

51–53 Processor dreams: When you sleep, you process information so that after you wake, you have an asset in any Intellect actions held over from the previous day. For example, if you have to determine whether an unknown plant is poisonous, you could "sleep on it" and make the determination the next day with an asset on the action.

54–60 Poison immunity: You are immune to all poisons.

61–65 Disease immunity: You are immune to all diseases.

66–70 Fire resistance: You have +3 to Armor against damage from fire.

71–75 Cold resistance: You have +4 to Armor against damage from cold.

76–80 Psychic resistance: You have +3 to Armor against Intellect damage.

81–85 Acid resistance: You have +5 to Armor against damage from acid.

86–88 Puncture resistance: You have +2 to Armor against damage from puncturing attacks.

89–91 Slicing resistance: You have +2 to Armor against damage from slicing attacks.

92–94 Bludgeoning resistance: You have +2 to Armor against damage from crushing attacks.

95–96 No scent: You cannot be tracked or located by scent, and you never have offensive odors.

97–99 Scent: You can sense creatures, objects, and terrain by scent as well as a normal human can by sight. You can detect scents with that degree of accuracy only in short range, but you can sense strong odors from much farther away (far better than a normal human can). Like a hound, you can track creatures by their scent.

00 Sense Material: You can sense the presence of any single substance within short range, although you don't learn details or the precise location. You and the GM should work together to determine the substance: water, iron, synth, granite, wood, flesh, salt, and so on. You do not need to concentrate to sense the material.

HARMFUL MUTATIONS

Unless noted otherwise, the following mutations are visible, obvious, and grotesque. They offer no benefits, only drawbacks.

01–10 Deformed leg: All movement tasks are hindered.

11–20 Deformed face/appearance: All pleasant interaction tasks are hindered.

21–30 Deformed arm/hand: All tasks involving the arm or hand are hindered.

31–40 Malformed brain: All memory- or cognitive-related tasks are hindered.

41–45 Mentally vulnerable: All Intellect defense tasks are hindered.

46–50 Slow and lumbering: All Speed defense tasks are hindered.

51–60 Sickly: All Might defense tasks are hindered.

61–63 Horrible growth: A large goiter, immobile tendril, or useless extra eye hangs from your face, hindering all pleasant interactions (with most creatures, particularly humans).

64–66 Useless limb: One of your limbs is unusable or missing.

67–71 Useless eye: One of your eyes is unusable or missing. Tasks specifically involving eyesight (spotting, searching, and so on) are hindered.

72–76 Useless ear: One of your ears is unusable or missing. Tasks specifically involving hearing are hindered.

77–84 Weakness in Might: Any time you spend points from your Might Pool, the cost is increased by 1 point.

85–92 Weakness in Speed: Any time you spend points from your Speed Pool, the cost is increased by 1 point.

93–00 Weakness in Intellect: Any time you spend points from your Intellect Pool, the cost is increased by 1 point.

POWERFUL MUTATIONS

The following mutations do not require any visible changes in the character until used. People who have these mutations are not obviously recognized as mutants if they don't use their powers. Using some of these mutations costs stat Pool points. Some are actions.

01–05 Darksight: You can see in complete darkness as if it were light. Enabler.

06–10 No breath: You do not need to breathe. Enabler.

11–15 No water: You do not need to drink water to survive. Enabler.

16–20 Chameleon skin: Your skin changes colors as you wish. This is an asset in tasks involving hiding. Enabler.

21–24 Savage bite: Your mouth widens surprisingly, and hidden, pointed teeth emerge when you wish it. You can make a bite attack that inflicts 3 points of damage. Enabler.

25–26 Gluey globs: You can produce gluey globs at your fingertips. This is an asset in tasks involving climbing or keeping your grip. You can also fling these globs in immediate range, and if they hit, they hinder the target's physical tasks for one round. Enabler to use in a task; action to use as an attack.

27–30 Face dancing: You can alter your features enough to give you an asset in all tasks involving disguise. Enabler.

31–35 Sense numenera: You can sense the presence of a functioning numenera device or special ability within short range. You do not learn details or the precise location. Action.

36–40 Stinger in finger: You can make an attack with your hand that inflicts 1 point of damage. If you make a second successful attack roll, your stinger also injects a poison that inflicts 4 points of Speed damage. Action.

41–44 Stinger in elbow: You can make an attack with your elbow that inflicts 2 points of damage. If you make a second successful attack roll, your stinger also injects a poison that inflicts 4 points of Speed damage. Action.

45–47 Spit needles: You can make an attack with immediate range. You spit a needle that inflicts 1 point of damage. If you make a second successful attack roll, the needle also injects a poison that inflicts 4 points of Speed damage. Action.

48–50 Spit acid: You can make an attack with immediate range. You spit a glob of acid that inflicts 2 points of damage. Action.

51–53 Spit webs: You can make up to 10 feet (3 m) of a strong, ropelike material each day at the rate of about 1 foot (30 cm) per minute. The webbing is level 3. You can also spit globs of webbing in immediate range, and if they hit, the target's physical tasks are hindered for one round. Action.

54–59 Filtered lungs: You have an asset to Might defense actions against vapors or noxious gases. You can survive in a hostile breathing environment (such as underwater or in a vacuum) for up to ten minutes. Enabler.

60–62 Disruptive field (electronics) (2 Intellect points): When you wish it, you disrupt devices within immediate range (no roll needed). All devices operate as if they were 3 levels lower while in range of your field. Devices reduced to level 0 or below do not function. Action.

63–65 Disruptive field (flesh) (2 Intellect points): When you wish it, you disrupt flesh within immediate range. All creatures within range of your field take 1 point of damage. If you apply a level of Effort to increase the damage rather than affect the difficulty, each target takes 2 additional points of damage. If your attack fails, targets in the area still take 1 point of damage. Action.

66–68 Disruptive field (thoughts) (1 Intellect point): When you wish it, you disrupt thoughts within immediate range. Intellect actions for all creatures within range are hindered. Action.

69–70 Magnetic flesh: You attract or repel metal when you desire. Not only do small metal objects cling to you, but this mutation is an asset in tasks involving climbing on metal or keeping your grip on a metal item. This mutation is an asset to Speed defense tasks when being attacked by a metal foe or a foe with a metal weapon. Enabler.

71–73 Gravity negation (2 Intellect points): You float slowly into the air. If you concentrate, you can control your movement at half your normal speed; otherwise, you drift with the wind or with any momentum you have gained. This effect lasts for up to ten minutes. Action to initiate.

Action and enabler, page 27

Most of the mutations in this section are far too radical and specialized to be natural products of evolution, unless the mutant is the most recent in a long line of deviant humans that have carried and perfected a particular trait. For example, a mutant with claws and sharp teeth came from a family line that stretches back before recorded history, with ever-developing claws and teeth for a specific adaptation. Far, far more likely, the mutant has some genetic engineering in their ancestry that has produced a particularly bizarre, random effect, or the mutation is a latent strain designed to emerge generations after the manipulation occurred.



Recovery roll, page 111

74–80 Telepathy (2 Intellect points): You can speak telepathically with others who are within short range. Communication is two-way, but the other party must be willing and able to communicate. You don't have to see the target, but you must know that it's within range. You can have more than one active contact at once, but you must establish contact with each target individually. Each contact lasts up to ten minutes. In addition to the normal options for using Effort, you can choose to use a level of Effort to increase the duration of contact to 28 hours. Action to establish contact.

In the Ninth World, the difference between a mutant and something that was genetically engineered, redesigned, or tinkered with is likely entirely misunderstood. To the common person, anyone who looks strange or deformed might get labeled as a mutant, and in most communities, that label brings at best derision and mistreatment and at worst exile, imprisonment, or death.

81–85 Pyrokinesis (1 Intellect point): You can cause a flammable object you can see within immediate range to spontaneously catch fire. If used as an attack, this power inflicts 2 points of damage. Action.

86–90 Telekinesis (2 Intellect points): You can exert force on objects within short range. Once activated, your power has an effective Might Pool of 10, a Might Edge of 1, and an Effort of 2 (approximately equal to the strength of a fit, capable, adult human), and you can use it to move objects, push against objects, and so on. For example, you could lift and pull a light object anywhere within range to yourself or move a heavy object (like a piece of furniture) about 10 feet (3 m). This power lacks the fine control to wield a weapon or move objects with much speed, so in most situations, it's not a means of attack. You can't use this ability on your own body. The power lasts for one hour or until its Might Pool is depleted, whichever comes first. Action.

91–92 Phaseshifting (2 Intellect points): You can pass slowly through solid barriers at a rate of 1 inch (2.5 cm) per round (minimum of one round to pass through the barrier). You can't act (other than moving) or perceive anything until you pass entirely through the barrier. You can't pass through energy barriers. Action.

Beneficial mutations table, page 398

93–94 Power device (1+ Intellect points): You can charge an artifact or other device (except a cypher) so that it can be used once. The cost is 1 Intellect point plus 1 point per level of the device. Action.

95–96 Drain power: You can drain the power from an artifact or device, allowing you to regain 1 Intellect point per level of the device. You regain points at the rate of 1 point per round and must give your full concentration to the process each round. The GM determines whether the device is fully drained (likely true of most handheld or smaller devices) or retains some power (likely true of large machines). Action to initiate; action each round to drain.

97–99 Regeneration: In addition to regaining points through normal recovery rolls, you regain 1 point of your Might Pool or Speed Pool per hour, regardless of whether you rest, until both Pools are at their maximum. Enabler.

00 Feed off pain: Any time a creature within immediate range suffers at least 3 points of damage (after Armor subtraction) in one attack, you can restore 1 point to one of your Pools, up to its maximum. You can feed off any creature in this way, whether friend or foe. You never regain more than 1 point per round. Enabler.

DISTINCTIVE MUTATIONS

The following mutations involve dramatic physical changes to the character's appearance. People who have these mutations are always recognized as mutants. Using some of these mutations costs stat Pool points. Some are actions.

01–04 Extra mouth: You have an extra mouth on your hand, face, or stomach. This mouth is filled with razor-sharp teeth and, if used to attack, inflicts 3 points of damage. You can also speak with two voices at once. Enabler.

05–08 Snakelike arm: One of your arms ends in a fanged mouth. You can use it to attack, inflicting 3 points of damage. If you make a second successful attack with the arm, you also inject a poison that inflicts 4 points of Speed damage. You can't use the snakelike arm for anything other than biting. Enabler.

09–12 Tendrils on forehead: Four to six tendrils, each 12 to 24 inches (30 to 60 cm) long, come out of your forehead. They can grasp and carry anything that your hand could, although a large object would block your field of vision. Also roll on the beneficial mutations table. Enabler.

13–16 Tendrils instead of fingers: Your fingers are tendrils 12 inches (30 cm) long. They are an asset to any task involving climbing, grasping, or keeping your grip. Further, you can effectively pick up and hold two objects in each hand rather than one. You can't wield more than one weapon per hand. Also roll on the beneficial mutations table. Enabler.

17–20 Tendrils instead of arms: Your arms are tendrils 6 feet (2 m) long (or only one arm is a tendril, if you prefer). Although you lose the fine manipulative ability of fingers and a thumb, you can still grasp objects, have a much longer reach, and have an asset for all tasks involving grappling or wrestling. Also roll on the beneficial mutations table. Enabler.

21–23 Tendrils instead of eyes: You are blind, but each eye socket has a retractable tendril that is 10 feet (3 m) long. These tendrils can feel around rapidly to give you a physical sense of everything within immediate range. Further, they can be used to manipulate very light objects, activate controls, and so forth. Also roll on the beneficial mutations table. Enabler.

24–26 Tendrils instead of legs/feet: Your legs or feet are tendrils that are 6 feet (2 m) long (or only one leg or foot is a tendril, if you prefer). You can still walk and move normally, and you have an asset for all tasks involving grappling or wrestling. The tendrils are prehensile enough to grasp large objects. Also roll on the beneficial mutations table. Enabler.

27–32 Scaly body: You gain +2 to Armor. Enabler.

33–36 Covered in spiny needles/spikes: Any creature striking you with its body automatically suffers 1 point of damage. Enabler.

37–39 Quills: You have quills that you can launch from your body to attack a foe within short range. This attack inflicts 4 points of damage, and you never run out of ammo. You can also use this attack in melee. Action.

40–44 Carapace: You gain +2 to Armor. Enabler.

45–49 Chlorophyll: You gain nutrients from the sun and don't need to eat or breathe if you have daily exposure to sunlight. Your skin, not surprisingly, is green. Enabler.

50–54 Extra joint in arms: Your arms are long and jointed so that you have two elbows in each. You have a long reach and can strike foes from unexpected angles. This mutation is an asset when making melee attacks. However, you can modify your attacks only by using Speed, not Might. Enabler.

55–59 Extra joint in legs: Your legs are long and jointed so that you have two knees in each. You have a long stride, and this mutation is an asset for all running, climbing, jumping, and balancing tasks. Also roll on the beneficial mutations table. Enabler.

60–62 Spider legs from torso: In addition to your normal limbs, six or eight spiderlike legs, each 6 feet (2 m) long, extend from your sides. They are an asset in any task involving running, keeping your feet, standing your ground, and climbing. Also roll on the beneficial mutations table. Enabler.

63–67 Extra arms: You have one or two extra arms. They can hold objects, wield weapons, hold a shield, and so on. This mutation does not increase the number of actions you can take in a round or the number of attacks you can attempt. Enabler.

68–70 Extra legs: You have two extra legs. They are an asset in any task involving running, keeping your feet, and standing your ground. Also roll on the beneficial mutations table. Enabler.

71–73 Spider legs: Instead of normal legs, you have a wide torso with six or eight spiderlike legs. They are an asset in any task involving running, keeping your feet, standing your ground, and climbing. Also roll on the beneficial mutations table. Enabler.

74–78 Snake tail: You have a prehensile tail that is 6 feet (2 m) long. It is an asset for all tasks involving grappling or wrestling. The tail can grasp large objects. Also roll on the beneficial mutations table. Enabler.

79–80 Snake tail instead of legs: Instead of legs, you have a snaky tail that is 8 feet (2.5 m) long. You move at the same speed and have an asset for all tasks involving grappling or wrestling. The tail is prehensile enough to grasp large objects. Also roll on the beneficial mutations table. Enabler.

81–85 Stinging tendril: You have a prehensile tendril (or tail) that grows from some part of your body and ends in a poisonous stinger. You can make an attack with your stinger that inflicts 2 points of damage. If you make a second successful attack roll, the stinger also injects a poison that inflicts 4 points of Speed damage. The tendril (or tail) can't be used for anything else. Action.

86–90 Eyes on stalks: Your eyes are on stalks and can move in any direction, independently of each other. You can peek around corners without exposing yourself to danger. This is an asset in initiative and all perceiving tasks. Also roll on the beneficial mutations table. Enabler.

91–92 Extra eyes on hands/fingers: You can peek around corners without exposing yourself to danger. This is an asset in initiative and all perceiving tasks. Also roll on the beneficial mutations table. Enabler.

93–97 Aquatic: Your body is streamlined and finned, your fingers and toes webbed. You gain two assets in swimming, and you can see perfectly underwater (as if above water). Although you have lungs, you also have gills, so you can breathe underwater. Enabler.

98–00 Wings: You have feathered or fleshy wings on your back that allow you to glide, carried by the wind. They are not powerful enough to carry you aloft like a bird's wings. Enabler.

Mutants, of course, aren't just mutated humans. Animals and creatures of all kinds could have mutations in the Ninth World. Very rarely, these mutations could make a nonhuman creature more like a human—with opposable thumbs, greater intelligence, and so on.





COSMETIC MUTATIONS

Cosmetic mutations affect nothing but the appearance of a character. None are so pronounced as to make a character decidedly more or less attractive. They are simply distinguishing alterations.

01–02	Purple skin
03–04	Green skin
05–06	Red skin
07–08	Yellow skin
09–10	White skin
11–12	Black skin
13–14	Blue skin
15	Purple hair
16	Green hair
17	Red hair
18	Yellow hair
19	White hair
20	Blue hair
21	Striped hair
22	Horns
23	Antlers
24	Extremely hirsute
25	Entirely hairless
26	Scaly skin
27	Leathery skin
28	Transparent skin
29	Skin turns transparent in sunlight
30	Skin changes color in sunlight
31	Very tall
32	Very large
33	Very short
34	Very thin
35	Very long neck
36	Hunched back
37	Long, thin tail
38	Short, broad tail
39	Long arms
40	Short arms
41	Long legs
42	Short legs
43	Bony ridge on face
44	Bony ridge on back
45	Bony ridge on arms
46	Purple eye(s)
47	Red eye(s)
48	Yellow eye(s)
49	White eye(s)
50	Black eye(s)
51	Large eyes
52	Bulbous eyes
53	Two pupils in one eye
54	Large ears
55–56	Pointed ears
57–58	Webbed fingers
59–60	Webbed toes
61–62	Four fingers on each hand
63–64	Six fingers on each hand
65	Long fingers
66	Purple nails
67	Green nails
68	Yellow nails
69	White nails
70	Black nails
71	Blue nails
72	Odd lumps on flesh
73	Useless antennae (like an insect)
74	Extra useless limb
75	Extra useless eye
76	Fleshy frills or useless flagella (small)
77	Useless tendrils (large)
78	Mandibles
79–80	Pointed teeth
81	Tusks
82	Black teeth
83	Red teeth
84	Purple teeth
85	Green teeth
86	Purple lips
87	Green lips
88	Yellow lips
89	White lips
90	Black lips
91	Blue lips
92	Purple spittle
93	Red spittle
94	Yellow spittle
95	White spittle
96	Black spittle
97–98	Distinctive odor
99	Feathers
00	Head crest

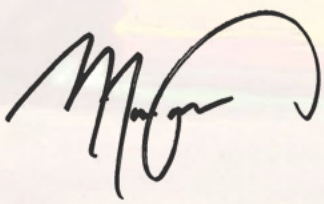
APPENDIX B

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RESOURCES

While creating Numenera and the Ninth World, I consulted a lot of sources. Much of this research was done online, but there are some amazing books out there discussing things of interest to Numenera GMs—ideas on cutting-edge technology and, even better, speculation on what that technology could look like in the far, far future. Reading about such wild ideas will inspire the discoveries that Numenera PCs can make, the cyphers and artifacts they can find, and so on.

Additionally, there are novels, stories, comics, TV shows, and movies that have greatly influenced Numenera. I want to not only credit them as such but also share them with you so that you can be inspired by them as well. Sometimes the inspiration they provide is mood or setting, sometimes it's a lot of wild technological ideas, and other times it's just the look or feel of something that might fit well into a Numenera game.

Enjoy.



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Indistinguishable From Magic, Robert L. Forward
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Samurai 7
Stalker
Thundarr the Barbarian





APPENDIX C

BILLION AND FIVE CLUB

We appreciate everyone who's ever supported one of our crowdfunding efforts, but we feel a special debt to the people who supported the original Numenera Kickstarter and then, five years later, the Numenera 2 project as well. We honor those people who backed both projects with membership into what we call the Billion and Five Club.

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Peter Sinkis
Peter Stocking
Phil Binkowski
Phil Hobson
Philip Coffey
Philip Groff
Philippe Daigneault
Philippe Marcil
Philippe Niederkorn
Phillip Bailey
Phillip McGregor
Picard Jean-Vincent
Pol Stafford
poolsofradiance
Preston Poland
Psybernary
Quasi
Raf Bressel
Randy White
Ranneko
Ray Karnes
Raymond Chan
Redfuji6
Rey
Rhel
Rich Howard
Richard Fannon
Richard Flanagan
Richard Hirsch
Richard Libera
Rick Blair
Rick Harrelson
Rick Stringer
Rick Wendorf II
Rob Donoghue
Rob Hobart
Rob Malo
Rob Nadeau
Robert
Robert Biskin
Robert Freeborn
Robert G. Male
Robert H. Mitchell Jr.
Robert Huss
Robert J. Guadagno
Robert N Emerson
Robin Stirzaker
Rod Shelton
Ron Lipke
Ron Searcy
Ronald Hopkins
ronald robinson
ronan LAMONT
Ross Shaw
Ross Williams
Roy Grantham
Roy Zemlicka
ruemere
Russell Hoyle
Ryan Gigliotti
Ryan Hart
Ryan M.
Ryan McRae
Sam Driver
Sam Hillaire
Sam Hock
Sam Stoute
samalander
Sameer Yalamanchi
Sami Lehtinen
Samuel Ward
Sarah Kelley
Saurbaum
scantrontb
Schnuffel
Scott
Scott C. Bourgeois
Scott C. Farrell
Sean
Sean Brady
Sean Gibb
Sean K Reynolds
Sebastian Perez
seravin
Sergio Silvio Herrera Gea
Seth Thomson
sev
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Shadowsmith
Shane Blake
Shane Driskell
Shannon Prickett
Shaun Burton
Shaun Gilroy
Shawn P
Sherman Sheftall
shoggothic
Shon'Ai
Simmy Sims
Sleepy Shade
Somnium
Space_Titanium
speedknob
Stefan Radermacher
Stephan Szabo
Steve Acheson
Steve Arensberg
Steve Dodge
Steve Salem
Steven Bakker
Steven Helberg
Steven Lau
Steven Lord
Steven Richards
Steven Roman
Steven Warble
Steven Watkins
Stonegolem
Stormkitten
Stormquiss
supernath
Sylvain Pronovost
Takyan
Tam and Danks
Tara Cameron
TBD Roberts
Ted Gellar-Goad
Teemu Korkeakoski
Terry McKelvey
Thaddeus Ryker
The Captain
Thomas Biskup
Thomas Brown
Thomas Ladegard
Thomas Siemens
thompgc
Thorsten Feichtner
Thorwan
Tiago Arantes
Tim E Werner
Tim Watkins
Todd Branch
Todd Christopher
Todd Rafferty
Tom
Tom Dullemond
Tom Fleming
Tom Lommel
Tom McCarthy
Tom McVey
Tom Smurdon
Tom Van Wassenhove
Tone Berg
Tracy Gosell
Travis Howell
Travis Miyashiro
Tristan Smith
Troy Larson
Troy Pichelman
TurboGuy16
TVB
Tyson Neumann
Umberto Lenzi
Vincent Arebalo
Vojtech Pribyl
W Ryan Carden
W Wyse
Wajanai Snidvongs
Walt
Wayne Reid
Wes
Will Edgington
Will Triumph
William A Burns
William Flickinger
William McGrath
William Nabors
William Tinnin-Timm
X-W Z
xiavn
Yannick Men Huon
Young Rocket Samurai
Zach Shepherd
Zalzator
ZeroTau
Ziffy "zifnabbe"



APPENDIX D

CHARACTER CREATION WALKTHROUGH

Follow these steps to create your Numenera character.

0 GET PREPARED

If you're using the character sheet in the back of this book, make a two-sided photocopy and then fold it in thirds like a pamphlet so the Numenera logo is on the top of the front panel and SPECIAL ABILITIES and SKILLS/INABILITIES are folded back.

When the pamphlet is closed, you'll see a place to write your character's name, descriptor, type, and focus. When you open the left panel, you'll see space for your Special Abilities and Cyphers. When you open the right panel, you'll see spaces for your Skills/Inabilities, Equipment, and Attacks.

1 CHOOSE YOUR DESCRIPTOR, TYPE, AND FOCUS

Starting on the front panel, write your character's name and the descriptor, type, and focus to complete the sentence.

For this example, let's say I am a Graceful Glaive who Bears a Halo of Fire.

2 FILL IN YOUR STAT POOLS, AS DETERMINED BY YOUR TYPE, DESCRIPTOR, AND FOCUS

First, take a detailed look at your type, because that's where you'll get your Pool starting values. Fill in those values.

For my Glaive, my starting values are Might 11, Speed 10, and Intellect 7, plus 6 additional points to spread between the Pools. I'm going to add 3 points to Might, 1 to Speed, and 2 to Intellect, for totals of: Might 14, Speed 11, and Intellect 9.

Your descriptor might also add to your Pools. Feel free to check your descriptor now to see if it gives you additional points, and, if so, add them to the appropriate starting Pool.

My descriptor of Graceful gives me +2 to my Speed Pool. This increases my starting stat Pool numbers to Might 14, Speed 13, and Intellect 9.

Your focus might add to your Pools. Feel free to check your focus now to see if it gives you additional points, and, if so, add them to the appropriate starting Pool.

My focus of Bears a Halo of Fire does not add to my Pools.

3 FILL IN YOUR EDGE STATS, AS DETERMINED BY YOUR TYPE

My Glaive has a Might Edge of 1, a Speed Edge of 1, and an Intellect Edge of 0.

4 FILL IN YOUR SKILLS AND INABILITIES FROM YOUR TYPE, DESCRIPTOR, AND FOCUS

In the Skills/Inabilities section, write down the skills you get from your type, and whether you are trained (T), specialized (S), or have an inability (I) in that skill. Also write down what kind of armor and weapons you can use from your type.

My Glaive gets to choose one physical skill to be trained (T) in. I choose jumping and write that down. Glaives also have an inability in crafting numenera, salvaging numenera, and understanding numenera, so I write down those inabilities (I).

Glaives are trained in all weapons and armors.

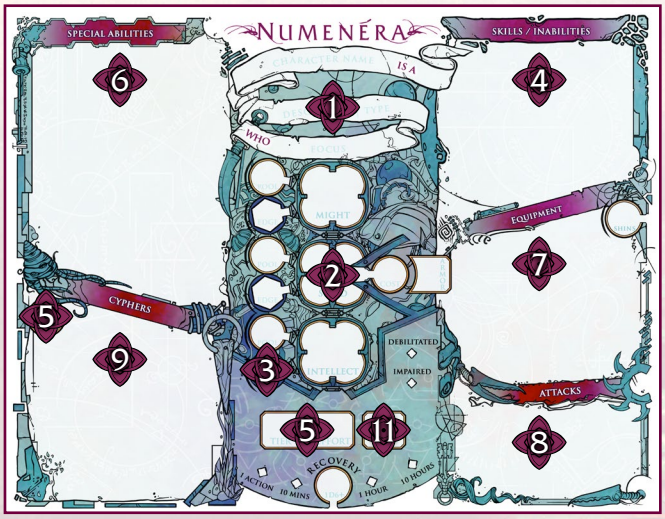
Add in any skills from your descriptor and focus, and any weapon or armor training from your descriptor or focus.

My descriptor of Graceful makes me trained (T) in balance, careful movement, physical performing arts, and Speed defense.

5 WRITE IN ADDITIONAL STATS

Write down your character's tier, Effort, and cypher limits in the appropriate boxes. These stats come from your type. Your descriptor and focus might change your Effort and cypher limit.

My Glaive is tier 1 (like all starting characters), has an Effort of 1, and has a cypher limit of 2.



6 WRITE IN SPECIAL ABILITIES

Write down any special abilities provided by your type, descriptor, and focus in the Special Abilities box. These include esoteries (for Nanos), fighting moves (for Glaives), and tricks of the trade (for Jacks). Be sure to write down the cost (if any) of any special abilities. You don't have to write out the description of the ability—just the name, cost, and (optionally) page number is fine.

In the Special Abilities box I write that my Glaive has Combat Prowess for extra melee damage. I also get to choose two fighting moves, so I'll write Fleet of Foot (1+ Speed) and Impressive Display (2 Might) in the Special Abilities box.

My focus of Bears a Halo of Fire gives me an ability called Shroud of Flame (1 Intellect), which I write in the Special Abilities box.

7 WRITE IN EQUIPMENT

Write in the starting equipment from your type. The starting equipment list includes cyphers and an oddity, but skip those for now.

If your equipment includes armor (or if you spend shins to buy armor) write down how many points of Armor it gives you in the small box in the left side of the Equipment box. Write the Speed Effort cost for your armor in the Cost box to the left of the Armor box.

As a Glaive, I start the game with clothing, two weapons (or one weapon and a shield), light or medium armor, an explorer's pack, and 5 shins. For my weapons, I choose a broadsword and a bow (which includes 12 arrows).

For my armor, I choose a fringed beastskin jacket (medium armor), which gives me 2 points of Armor. Medium armor normally has a Speed Effort cost of 2, but because I am a Glaive, my Trained in Armor ability reduces that to just 1.

Your descriptor and focus may give you additional equipment or shins.

Bears a Halo of Fire gives me an artifact—a device that can be used to spray inanimate objects to make them fire-resistant.

8 LIST YOUR ATTACKS

Attacks are based on your chosen weapons, and you may have special abilities that you can use as attacks. List them here, write down how much damage they do, and include any special modifiers.

I chose a broadsword for one of my weapons, which inflicts 4 damage, and my Combat Prowess ability adds +1 to damage from attacks with melee weapons. My other weapon is a bow, which inflicts 4 damage, and has a range of "long."

My special ability Shroud of Flame isn't something I actively use to attack with (like I do with my sword), but it hurts enemies who hit me, so I write it in the Attacks box so I remember to use it.

9 ADD CYPHERS AND ODDITY

Ask your GM if you should write down the default starting cyphers and oddity for your type or if they are going to choose them for you. Write down the cyphers and oddity you get in the Cyphers box. (If you don't know who your GM is going to be, go ahead and write down the default cyphers and oddity, since you can always change them if the GM wants you to.)

My GM says to use the default starting cyphers and oddity, so my Glaive's cyphers are a density nodule and a rejuvenator, and the oddity is a blob of clay that takes on various mysterious shapes when left alone.

10 INCLUDE YOUR BACKGROUND

If you wish, each one of the three aspects of your character can help define your background. Your type gives you a connection to the world, your focus gives you a connection to one other player character, and your descriptor gives you a connection to the first adventure. Write these down in the Background section of your character sheet (it's on the back).

For my Glaive connection, I'm going to choose a past as a bouncer in a local bar. My focus allows me to choose a PC in the group who isn't harmed by my fire. Last, my descriptor connects me to the current adventure, and I'll choose that I joined the other PCs because I saw they were in danger.

11 DURING PLAY, NOTE DAMAGE TRACK, RECOVERY ROLLS, XP, AND ADVANCEMENT

During gameplay, keep notes of how many recovery rolls you've used each day and where you are on the damage track. (If you're hale or dead, you won't need to mark anything, so there aren't spots on the damage track for those; otherwise, it's important to make a note of your status on the damage track.) The 1d6+ box is for writing down the amount that you add to your recovery rolls; this number is usually your current tier, but you might have a special ability that changes it.

Additionally, write down how many experience points (XP) you currently have.

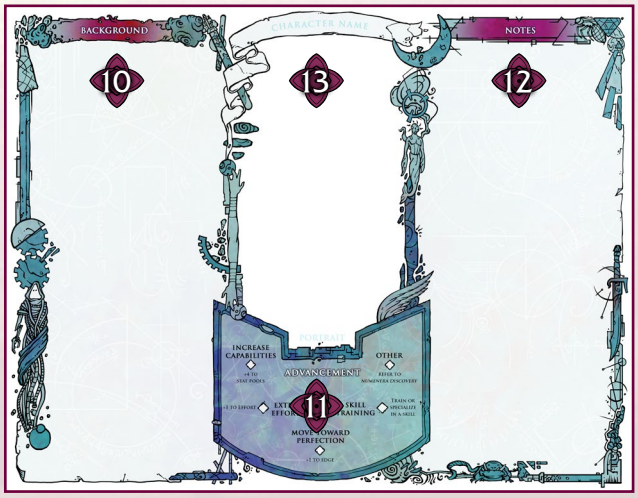
As you spend XP on advancing your character, mark which advancement options you've chosen (it's on the back of the character sheet).

12 KEEP GOOD NOTES

The notes section is designated for events and experiences that happen to your character once the game begins.

13 PORTRAIT

On the back of the character sheet is a place to draw, sketch, or paste an image of your character.





APPENDIX E

GLOSSARY

Abhuman: Creature whose ancestors became something other than human in the distant past and rejected their humanity. Now they breed true, bestial offshoots that have become a distinct species.
Adventure: A single portion of a campaign with a beginning and an end.
Amber Pope: The leader of the Order of Truth.
Artifact: Numenera device that typically can be used more than once to produce the same result.
Asset: Anything that helps a character with a task.
Beyond, the: A section of land outside the Steadfast, where villages and communities are isolated and rare.
Campaign: A series of sessions strung together with an overarching story (or linked stories) with the same characters.
Character: Anything that can take actions in the game. Includes PCs and human NPCs, as well as creatures, aliens, mutants, automatons, and animate plants.
Character descriptor: Defines your character.
Character focus: What your character does best.
Character type: The core of your character, similar to a class, such as Glaive, Jack, and Nano.
Clave: Small cloistered group of Aeon Priests in the Beyond around which many communities grow.
Creature: Anything that can take actions in the game.
Cypher: Minor numenera device that most characters can coax a single effect from before it is depleted.
Cypher System: The game system of Numenera.
Damage track: A system for tracking a PC's health. It has four states: hale, impaired, debilitated, and dead.
Dead: The worst state on the damage track, beyond debilitated. Dead is dead.
Debilitated: A critically injured state on the damage track, worse than impaired, but not dead.
Difficulty: How easy or hard any given task is, as determined by the GM (on a scale of 1 to 10).
Drit: The fine, artificial soil of the Ninth World, reworked many times in past ages and ground into dust by time.
Ease: A decrease in a task's difficulty, usually by one step. If something doesn't say how many steps it eases a task, it reduces the difficulty by one step.
Edge: A stat that reduces the cost of using points from your Pool.
Effort: A stat that can be applied to lower the difficulty of a task.
Esotery: An ability that is specific to Nanos.
Experience points (XP): Awarded during gameplay for discoveries and GM intrusions. Can be used for a variety of things, including purchasing character benefits.
Extraterrestrial: A creature from another world.
Fighting move: An ability that is specific to Glaives.
Game master (GM): The player who doesn't run a character, but instead guides the flow of the story (and runs all the NPCs).
Glaive: One of the character types in Numenera.
GM intrusion: A game mechanic that allows the GM to slightly alter events in the game for the betterment of the story.
Hale: The normal state for a character—not impaired or worse.
Health: The statistic an NPC uses to track damage instead of stat pools.
Hinder: An increase in a task's difficulty, usually by one step. If something doesn't say how many steps it hinders a task, it increases the difficulty by one step.
Human: The dominant intelligent species of the Ninth World.
Impaired: A wounded or injured state on the damage track, worse than hale but not as bad as debilitated.
Inability: The opposite of trained—you're somewhat inept at this kind of task. An inability is worse than not being trained at all.
Intellect: This stat determines how smart, knowledgeable, and likable your character is.
Jack: One of the character types in Numenera.

Lattimor: A visitant extraterrestrial species that is a symbiotic union of a large, muscular, hairy biped called a bursk and an intelligent fungus called a neem.

Major effect: A strongly beneficial outcome for a character when a player rolls a natural 20 on a d20.

Might: A stat that defines how strong and durable your character is.

Minor effect: A slightly beneficial outcome for a character when a player rolls a natural 19 on a d20.

Mutant: A human (or other creature) changed through evolution, genetic manipulation, or exposure to a mutagen. Their mutations can be anything from cosmetic and harmless to useful and dangerous.

Nano: One of the character types in Numenera.

Ninth World: Where the game of Numenera is set. There have been eight prior worlds.

Nonplayer character (NPC): A character run by the GM. Think of them as the minor characters in the story, or the villains or opponents.

Numenera: A collective name for cyphers, artifacts, and oddities.

Object: Anything that isn't a creature—rocks, trees, water, and so on. An automaton is a creature, not an object.

Oddity: Relic that is neither a cypher nor an artifact. Oddities serve no obvious purpose but have strange, curious functions.

Order of Truth: An organization of Aeon Priests that reveres the people of the past and their knowledge.

Party: A group of player characters (and perhaps some NPC allies).

Player: A person who runs a character in the game.

Player character (PC): A character run by a player rather than the GM. Think of them as the main characters in the story.

Recovery roll: A d6 roll that allows you to regain points in one or more of your stat Pools.

Session: A single play experience, usually lasting a few hours.

Specialized: Having an exceptional amount of skill in a task. Specialized is better than trained.

Species: A distinct biological classification of living things. Any creature (animal, plant, or other) is a member of a species. Examples: human, varjellen, aneen, laak, margr.

Speed: A stat that describes how fast and physically coordinated your character is.

Stat: The three defining characteristics of a player character, including their stat pools.

Stat Pool: The most basic measurement of your Might, Intellect, and Speed stats.

Steadfast, the: A cluster of settled lands in the Ninth World.

Synth: Plastic in all of its varieties (hard, soft, rigid, flexible, transparent, opaque, and so on).

Target number: The number you're attempting to get or beat on a roll, based on the difficulty of the task. The target number is always three times the task's difficulty.

Tier: A measurement of a character's power, toughness, and ability.

Trained: Having a reasonable amount of skill in a task.

Trick of the trade: An ability that is specific to Jacks.

Ultraterrestrial: A creature from another dimension. Sometimes called an ultradimensional creature.

Varjellen: A visitant extraterrestrial species that can rearrange their internal organs to become faster, smarter, or stronger at the expense of other attributes.

Visitant: A humanoid species not native to Earth but who now calls the Ninth World home.



TALK LIKE A NINTH-WORLDER: A SAMPLING OF COMMONLY USED WORDS AND PHRASES

Brehm-brained: Someone or something that is dull or stupid. "Did you see that? That brehm-brained guard just fell off the wall!"

By the Black Three: A common oath or prayer. The name refers to Kalaghat Anvor, Vostuleh Lo, and Ogesti tel Kotu, the three most feared leaders of the former army known as the Tabaht.

Calaval's eyes!: A common curse or exclamation of surprise, often used when something is particularly scary or dangerous.

Cark: To disturb or make uneasy. "That glowing ball carks me" or "It's giving me the carks." Also "carker," an insane person, one who has been cypher-poisoned.

Chagan: A low-level gang warlord. "The chagan here kicks up his take to the Memovira."

Crail: An epithet akin to "skist." Used as an exclamation of vexation, frustration, or annoyance.

Creft: Junk.

Draff: Dregs. Sometimes used by the upper class to refer to lower classes or places. "You want to go down and mingle with the draff?"

Drit: A fine, artificial soil made from microscopic pieces of ancient, unknown technologies and structures.

Fierce/Temperamental/Belligerent as a cragworm: Something that is strong, ferocious, or otherwise tenaciously tough.

Gallowglass: A term mostly used by law enforcement to talk about mercenaries. "That gallowglass Tybir is back in town. Time to corral that laak-nibber!"

Iadace (pronounced *yay-da-cee*): A shibboleth that is used among Aeon Priests as a sign of shared understanding, namely to mean, "I am one who understands, and I recognize that you are also one who understands." It is also commonly used when a traveler comes upon a village or encounters a stranger on the road. Sometimes used as a greeting, but also later in the conversation if you suddenly suspect the person that you're speaking with is an enlightened mind. It can also be used as a farewell.

Iron-winded: When something has been changed or dramatically altered, often for the worst. "Looks like you got iron-winded in that fight last night; I can barely recognize you."

Jaekels take you!/Jaekels take them!: A commonly used curse to express anger, disdain, or disgust, particularly at someone's actions.

Laak-nibber: An epithet similar to "son of a bitch." Most common among the lower classes.

Look to the future, forget the past: A lesser-known farewell that is used mostly in the Beyond. Also sometimes used as a condolence for those who have experienced recent death or other tragedy.

May your cyphers never malfunction: A common farewell that is used to denote goodwill and safe travels.

Peregrine: One who follows the Wandering Walk for religious, spiritual, or other reasons. Sometimes called Birds, usually derogatory.

Plod: Hard work. Also used as "plodder" to mean someone who has a hard or boring job.

Scholarch (also empiriarch): Headmaster, librarian, or lead-reader. "If you seek answers, ask for the empiriarch at the Library."

Shine: Good, great, admirable. Also a term for comprehension among the lower classes. "You shine what I say?"

Shukkered: Stabbed. "Interrupting a chat's a good way to get shukkered down here."

Skist: An epithet similar to "shit." "What a load of skist wafts from your tongue, friend."

Slying: A term used to convey a combination of lying and sly. While mostly derogatory, it also carries a hint of respect for someone's skills at deception.

Spiderjack: Thief. "You want to pull the job right, you'll need a spiderjack to get you in."

Tert: Territory. "That's the Memovira's tert, friend. You don't want to go there."

Trips your cypher: Something that makes you happy or excited, or otherwise is good for you. "You attack a hundred chirogs if that's what trips your cypher, but I'm staying right here, where there's warm dinner and a drink."

Tulk: Runoff, infectious ooze from human/machine interface.

Tusked like a grorthas: Used when some part of a creature, structure, or building is ridiculous, overly large, or otherwise doesn't seem to fit with the rest of it.

Wealthy as a Navarene merchant: Someone with great amounts of money (or sometimes power). Also used sarcastically to mean someone who has nothing but acts as though they are rich.

You slying seskii: A show of respect (sometimes reluctant) for someone who pulled off something particularly scheming or underhanded. Occasionally used as a congratulatory statement for a job well done.

NUMENÉRA

SPECIAL ABILITIES

SKILLS / INABILITIES

CHARACTER NAME

IS A

DESCRIPTOR | TYPE

WHO

FOCUS

POOL

EDGE

MIGHT

POOL

EDGE

SPEED

POOL

EDGE

INTELLECT

EQUIPMENT

SHINS

ARMOR

COST

CYPHERS

LIMIT

DEBILITATED

IMPAIRED

ATTACKS

TIER

EFFORT

XP

RECOVERY

1 ACTION

10 MINS

1D6+

1 HOUR

10 HOURS

BACKGROUND

CHARACTER NAME

NOTES

PORTRAIT

ADVANCEMENT

INCREASE CAPABILITIES
+4 to stat pools

OTHER
Refer to *Numenera Discovery*

EXTRA EFFORT
+1 to Effort

SKILL TRAINING
Train or specialize in a skill

MOVE TOWARD PERFECTION
+1 to Edge

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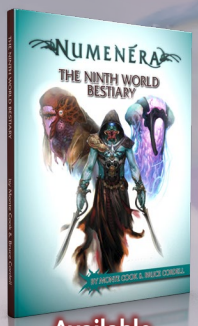
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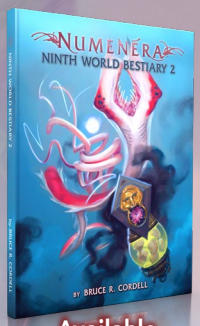
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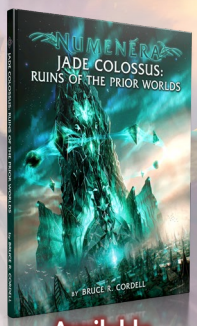
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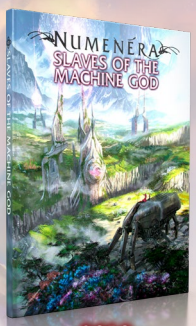
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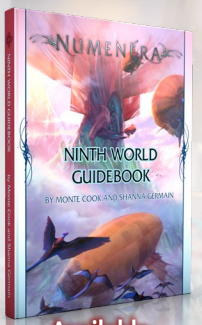
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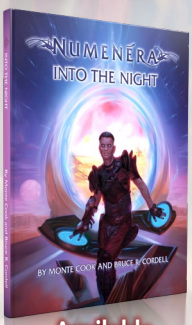
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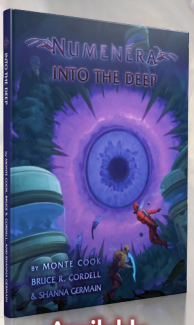
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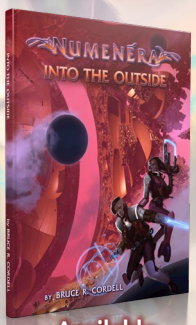
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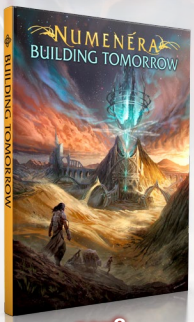
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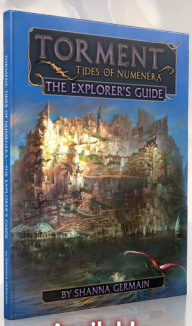
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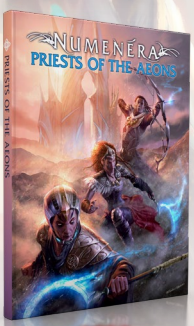
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