



RUST HAVEN

AN IRON WIND SOURCEBOOK FOR NUMENERA

Requires the Numenera corebook from Monte Cook Games

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The Iron Wind isn't merely a force for destruction, but a force for life. For creation! For change! All progress is a form of change, all growth a form of transformation. The Iron Wind isn't the harbinger of our destruction, but the shepherd of our fate, guiding us, evolving us, and teaching us a new way. A better way.

The Iron Wind bears no hate. The Iron Wind bears no malice. There is only change, for all, no matter your creed or code. Embrace the remaking and discover your becoming.

—EXCERPT FROM A VASHIVOK SERMON



A TWIST IN THE RUST

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INTRODUCTION

The Ninth World is full of sights both terrible and wonderful. Impossible things are everyday occurrences and strange discoveries await around every corner. When I first read the Numenera rule book, and later the Ninth World Guidebook, I was excited by all the strange and wonderful things inside, the ideas and horrors that awaited me as I ventured into the Ninth World, and the tools at my disposal to guide my own players there. One of those ideas in particular grabbed me though. That idea was the Iron Wind.

The Iron Wind in the official books is described only in passing, not more than a few hundred words dedicated to it. A terrible storm of ancient nanites that twist and corrupt anything they come across, rebuilding things into whatever their mad programming instructs them to do. Flesh subliming into gas, the air itself transmuted into living insects, the sand beneath your feet turned into screaming, sentient glass. Such pure chaos, such destruction wrought through random creation - the idea captured my brain.

This book explores the Iron Wind, and in particular, it explores the larger consequences of such a thing existing in the Ninth World. Within these pages you will learn more about the Wind, about the people who live and die chasing it (or running from it) and about the broken people it leaves behind. This book isn't a bunch of new rules to follow though, it's a set of tools and inspiration for running a game focused around the weird and terrible chaos that only an Iron Wind can provide. If the Iron Wind is anything, it is pure imagination made manifest.

I hope you enjoy this book and find it a great inspiration for using the Iron Wind in your games. The Iron Wind inspired me, now I'm paying that forward.

Iadace,

Andrew Montgomery-Hurrell



Paying it forward

If you have any ideas or create any awesome artwork, campaigns, monsters or other content based on any of the works herein, I fully encourage you to share them with the rest of the Numenera community, be that by creating your own supplement to sell or releasing content for free under the Numenera Fan-use License. The Numenera community is such a great bunch of people - it's great to try and give something back.



HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Rusthaven is first and foremost a source of ideas, not rules. You should use this book as a source of inspiration for weird and terrible things. Everything you see written in these pages isn't set in stone and I encourage you to twist, warp and rewrite these words just as the Iron Wind rewrites matter. The creations in this book are not here to replace your imagination, but to ignite it.

With all that said, there are a lot of rules, mostly in the form of descriptors and foci - abilities and powers and the limitations upon them. Due to the nature of the Iron Wind, once again, these rules should be considered fluid and malleable. No two 'Iron-touched' are alike, even if they might have the same corruptions. I encourage you to add a personal spin on every rule, an unexpected exception, a surprising limitation or a shocking revelation. The Iron Wind is chaos made manifest - go a little crazy.

While Rusthaven is the name of this sourcebook, its main subject is the Iron Wind. Rusthaven is a focal point for all the content, the eye of the storm. You don't have to use the town of Rusthaven at all, or you can use it without any of the other Iron Wind content herein. Rusthaven is a showcase for everything Iron Wind related, from corruptions and chaos, to exile and fear. You might find elements of Rusthaven scattered across all the settlements of the Ninth World.

Many of the descriptions of people and attitudes circle back to a common theme in Rusthaven: exile, survival, community. Not all of these subjects are easy to grasp or convey during a game and you shouldn't feel pressured to try. Rusthaven works just as well for high adventure as it does for melancholy social commentary. To reiterate, Rusthaven is a source of ideas for **your** game. As long as you are having fun, you are doing it right.

Throughout this book there will be several callouts to other pages or even other books to help you cross-reference ideas and feed your imagination.

LOST IN THE MEAT

Einaln took off his hand, and put it down on the ground. It looked up at him for a few moments, the white knuckles seemed almost like eyes on the back of the hand. Then it scurried down the hallway, and Einaln sat down to wait. He was one of the lucky ones, he knew that. The Iron Wind had scarred his body horribly but it was otherwise functioning normally, all except for his hands. The Iron Wind had given them sentience of their own. Usually he was their master, and if he wanted to he could detach them and they would scurry about like rats, following his commands. It was a useful ability to have, but it came with certain side effects. Sometimes he could feel their minds inside his. Their thoughts were alien, and he sometimes thought they might be more intelligent than they let on. Also, they sometimes had nightmares. Many nights he had awoken, finding himself under attack by his own hands. At least he hoped they attacked him because of nightmares.

When he had first arrived at Rusthaven, he had been treated unkindly. Compared to the other rustwalkers, his affliction seemed easy to bear, and perhaps even an advantage. That was until someone saw him being choked in his sleep for the first time; after that, he was accepted into the community. He was glad he was, it was the only safe place he knew. Unlike many others in Rusthaven, he had never sought the Iron Wind. He had been a villager, a simple peasant, when the Wind had claimed him and his entire village. It had been swept away in an instant, with only a moment of forewarning. He still remembered the sight, smell and sounds of the Iron Wind, so easy to mistake for something else. First everything had gone quiet, then the dust and dirt on the ground had risen up. He had started to sneeze then, as he inhaled the dust. Next, he heard the soft rustling of nearby trees. And then, everything started to warp and change. The unnatural sound of his wife's body breaking up, and the very natural sound of her screaming.

The only place the Iron Wind would never come was Rusthaven. Here, it would never touch him again. So he did everything he could to help, and to be an accepted and valuable member of the community. He understood that supplies were the lifeblood of Rusthaven, and therefore volunteered to work in Bluestock as a butcher. He was unafraid of grisly work, and with his two detachable hands, he was able to go much further into the bulk than others. While others feared getting lost, Einaln could send out his two hands to find the quickest route back outside. That was his predicament now. He had worked for several hours on a water

sack, draining it into several large water skins that were now strapped across his back. When he was done, the path he had used to get there had closed, but new ones had opened, and his hands were exploring them, trying to find a safe passage to the outside. With no hands, there was little he could do other than to sit and wait.

He was thinking, looking directly into the wall opposite of where he was sitting, when he saw it change and take shape. It was not uncommon that the bulk of Ellod would mold itself temporarily into faces. Sometimes it was people who had lived there and died, other times it was someone unknown. It was an unpleasant sight, a human face created by the flesh of Ellod, but after a few times it lost some of its effect. Einaln stood up to get a closer look. The face took shape, and Einaln could see his own features. The face that was visible in the wall was his own. It looked at him blindly, the eyeballs featureless blobs of flesh. It was hard to determine if the face looked at him, or could even see him. Since coming to Rusthaven, Einaln had seen his fair share of disgusting wonder. This fresh one made his heart beat a little faster, but just barely. The face opened its mouth, almost like it was trying to speak, but no words came. As Einaln lifted his hand to touch it, it sunk back into the wall. Taking a breath, Einaln sat down again.

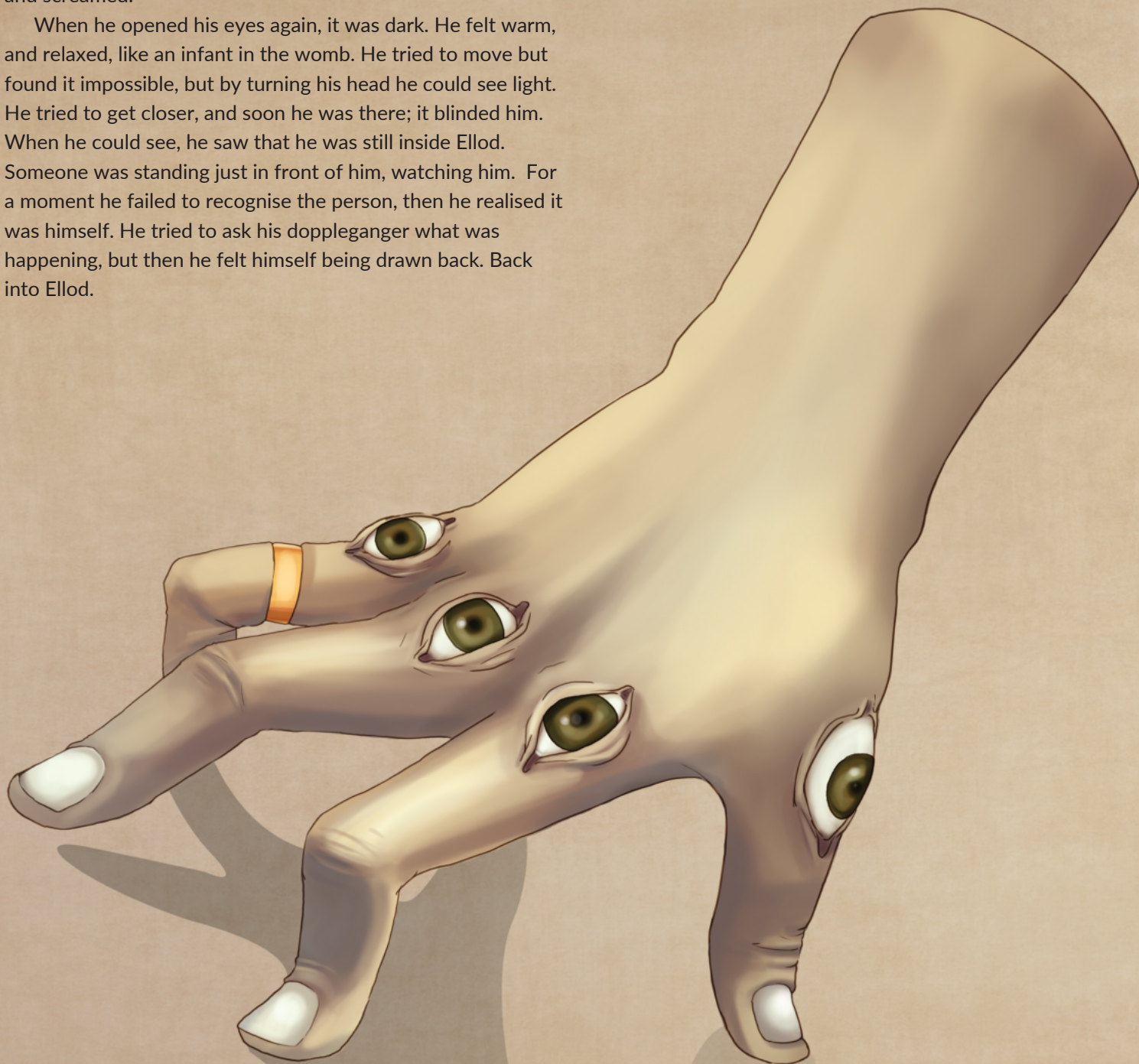
A few minutes later, his left hand returned, and then his right. They both pointed down one of the paths nearby, and Einaln stood up and followed them. They passed three forks in the tunnel, twice going right, once going left, the hands were both backtracking from where they came with confidence. Einaln followed them with quick steps. On his back the water sloshed back and forth in the water skin, making him a little more unbalanced with every step. A few times he had to stop, so as to not tip over. The hands looked at him with their eight eyes, impatient. The crew on the outside was probably impatient too, Rusthaven was low on water, and his fresh supply would be a welcome relief. They would probably expect him to return inside as quickly as possible to fetch more water, right after he could get some sleep.

As he walked around a corner, he saw that he was in a dead end. His two hands ran ahead of him, and stopped in front of the flesh wall that ended the corridor. First they looked at each other, before they turned back to look at Einaln. The thumb and pinky curved under the palm, making them look both sad and subservient. It was the first time this happened, that they had failed to lead him out on their first attempt. But Einaln was not worried, he was surprised it hadn't happened before. Ellod

was always twisting and changing, the path could have closed just seconds before he arrived.

Einaln was about to send them out again to search for a new exit when he heard the sound of rustling trees. It was an unexplainable sound, since he was in a narrow tunnel and barely able to stand upright. But still, high above him, leaves were rustling. Then the air started to smell polluted. The dirt on the ground rose up. It was in his eyes, mouth and nose. Unable to hold it back, he sneezed. Then he closed his eyes and screamed.

When he opened his eyes again, it was dark. He felt warm, and relaxed, like an infant in the womb. He tried to move but found it impossible, but by turning his head he could see light. He tried to get closer, and soon he was there; it blinded him. When he could see, he saw that he was still inside Ellod. Someone was standing just in front of him, watching him. For a moment he failed to recognise the person, then he realised it was himself. He tried to ask his doppelganger what was happening, but then he felt himself being drawn back. Back into Ellod.



*There's a voice in the Wind and it's crying
And a face on the rocks with tears in its eyes.
A twist in the Rust took my lover from me
And I'll not have no rest till the Wind sends 'em home*

*Oh wind, cruel wind, will you bring me my love
I still feel their heart in what you leave behind
Oh wind, cruel wind, will you bring me my love
No cypher can replace this true love o' mine*

*I'll chase you across all of the Steadfast
And out 'cross the wastes of the barren Beyond
My life, my lover, I will see them again
Ye can touch me with Iron, but I'll still carry on*

EXCERPT FROM "THE RUSTCHASER'S LOVER",
A RUSTCHASER FOLK SONG



PART I: THE IRON WIND

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WHAT IS THE IRON WIND?

The Iron Wind,
Numenera
corebook, page
135

In the Ninth World no weather phenomenon is more terrifying than the Iron Wind. A cloud of nano-spirits borne on the air, whatever they touch is warped beyond recognition. Matter is re-written in crazy new configurations or transmuted into rocks, fluids or even pure energy. Sometimes new things are created out of the very air itself, materialising into terrible being, sometimes alive, sometimes a twisted relic of distorted technology, a half-remembered thing created by the broken forces that make up the Iron Wind.

Such a destructive force would scour even the most resilient civilisation from the world, and perhaps in a previous world it did, but in the Ninth World Iron Winds are thankfully rare. Even so, their effects are often so horrifying that tales about them are everywhere, from the largest cities of the Steadfast to the smallest aldeia of the Beyond.

The Steadfast,
Numenera
corebook, page
136

Most people live their lives having never seen an Iron Wind or those affected by one. Still, those people consider themselves lucky, the stories themselves so terrible that just the thought of an Iron Wind is scary enough to contemplate.

The Beyond,
Numenera
corebook, page
174

When an Iron Wind comes, it is heralded by dark, rust-coloured clouds or, more rarely, it comes with no warning at all. Just as suddenly as they can appear, an Iron Wind may fade away over the course of days, blown away by the wind, or it may stop instantly, vanishing from the area without any indication as to why. Inherently unpredictable, Iron Winds are particularly terrifying because at any moment one might appear around you, consuming everything you know and love to fuel their mad chaotic processes.

Aeon Priests,
Numenera
corebook, page
269

Iron Winds might come from a number of sources. Most people assume they are enraged nano-spirits driven mad and Aeon Priests tend to agree, theorising that the Iron Winds are tiny machines with instructions that are broken, missing or corrupted by time. As with all things in the Ninth

World though, the truth is often stranger than can be imagined:

NANITES: The most common form of Iron Wind is nanites. Clouds of microscopic machines blown by the wind swarm over and into everything they touch, rebuilding them at the atomic level into new and chaotic forms. Nanite-based Iron Wind might be subject to machine interfacing. Unfortunately, these nanite swarms are rarely of a single technology, but a mish-mash of different nanites from across the prior worlds, the Ninth World and even beyond. Their separate languages and communications systems all interfere and interact with each other in unpredictable ways making any kind of control, even for a moment, nigh impossible. Those that dare risk exposing their minds to such a broken network might be able to learn something before it scrambles their brains.

ULTRA-DIMENSIONAL ENERGIES: Some Iron Winds are not machines at all, at least not as the people of the Ninth World understand them. Encoded into the very structure of reality itself, these perturbations in space-time cluster together like a shoal of fish. They warp things in chaotic and terrible ways as they expose them to other dimensions and realities, reshaping matter and energy by warping the very laws of physics themselves. It is possible some ultra-dimensional creatures and artifacts might be able to affect these kinds of Winds, but like nanite-based Winds, these ultra-dimensional disturbances are not all from the same source and may have spent ages mixing and blending with others from prior worlds and even other realities entirely, rendering such attempts dangerous and any benefits momentary at best.

BIOLOGICAL: Just as machines can be smaller than is visible to the human eye, so too can living creatures. These Iron Winds, sometimes called Blood Winds after their common reddish hue, spread across the land like an infection, twisting

and warping organic matter with terrible mutagenic properties. Non-organic matter is not safe either and materials of all kinds may serve as food for at least some of the microscopic menagerie of creatures, whilst new deposits of strange, harmful materials might be dispersed through the air like dust, excretia from the cloud. Those with strong psychic abilities over creatures might find themselves able to attune to the cloud, but the primitive, alien processes that govern them, as well as their sheer number, often prove overwhelming for even the strongest mind and even then, don't last more than a fleeting moment.

ALL OF THE ABOVE: The Iron Wind is rarely a clear cut phenomenon and more often than not will be a combination of one or more of the above types. Infact, due to the chaotic nature of the way matter is created and transformed by the Wind, an Iron Wind of one type might even transform itself into another during the course of a storm.

CAUSE & EFFECT

The Iron Winds are beyond prediction or logic, but there are some patterns in the chaos. Like all things related to the Wind, there are as many exceptions to the rules as there are cases that conform to them, but it cannot be denied that lives have been saved by watching for these signs.

RHELTER SCHRIS, IRON WIND SCHOLAR

Aeon Priests have been trying to determine the patterns governing the movements and effects of Iron Wind for generations, but the rare occurrences coupled with the dangers of being anywhere near one have made any studies extremely difficult.

Through countless hours of research, collecting data, rumours and first-hand survivor accounts, Aeon Priests have managed to piece together some theories about what causes an Iron Wind to show.

DATASTORMS are to the datasphere what the rumblings of the skies are to us. Just as thunder and lightning rolls across the plains we walk, so too do storms roil across the place we call the datasphere, where ancient gods and knowledge sleep. Whether it be the will of angry gods, or the fevered dreams of their creations within that place, when a storm approaches in the datasphere, often it is echoed on the lands by an Iron Wind. Those attuned to the datasphere should take heed of these warnings from that strange place-but-not-a-place. A storm in

the datasphere might not be echoed in the real world for many weeks, but the Iron Wind will come. Those not attuned to that world can look for signs of it in the machines and cyphers they see around them. Often a datastorm will affect automatons and devices in strange ways, making their actions and behaviours distorted and confused. Such signs may indicate that a Wind will scour the lands in due course, but the accuracy of these methods is less reliable than direct attunement with the datasphere.

MIGRATIONS of certain animals seem to coincide with the Iron Wind. While not every specimen of a species draws out the Wind, some herds, perhaps through contact with dangerous numenera, may inadvertently bring about the Wind with their migratory patterns in ways not well understood. Father Mayfiel traced the path of a particular pride of calyptors for 7 months after hearing of an Iron Wind that soon followed. Even though the pride mingled with other prides during that time, Father Mayfiel recorded 4 separate occurrences of Iron Wind that followed the specific pride he was tracking a few short days after they would gather to perform one of their curious musical performances.

THE WATCHERS, also known as Philethis, come and go as they please. Sometimes they watch from afar, just out of the corner of your eye, sometimes they watch up close, their silent glass discs staring at you from their red-grey cowls. Where watchers appear, events beyond the mundane are sure to follow, the Watchers waiting to bear witness to some coming change. It is possible, however, that the Watchers are not merely content to be observers. They ask questions, nonsense mostly. Some do inexplicable things. It is not too far a leap of imagination to suppose they sometimes bring about the changes they wish to witness, for whatever enigmatic purpose they have. If you see a Watcher, there may soon be an Iron Wind nearby.

NUMENERA can summon an Iron Wind or even conjure one up from nothing. The exact nature of the numenera that does this is yet to be determined, but be wary of large artifacts. The greater the power, the greater the chance of drawing the attentions of an Iron Wind.

Datasphere: a web of knowledge encompassing the whole of the Ninth World, and perhaps even containing entire worlds within itself. To many it is the realm of ghosts and dreams. Technology Compendium, page 24

Calyptor, The Ninth World Bestiary, page 27

Philethis, Numenera corebook, page 252

The Numenera, Numenera corebook, page 275

Rustchasers, pg. 25

The Aeon Priests keep a library in Navarene dedicated to chronicling information about the Iron Wind. The journals and reports of the travelling priests and scholars are filed away into vast shelves grouped by the four categories, though the librarians often argue over which section a report belongs in.

Drit, Numenera Corebook, pg. 411

When an Iron Wind arrives, its effects can be devastating. Even after the Wind has long since faded away, the scars on the land can be just as dangerous. While it is impossible to catalogue all possible effects of the Wind, Aeon Priests and Rustchasers have created a basic categorisation system of the types of things you might expect.

The effects of an Iron Wind comes in four basic forms. Creation, Transformation, Destruction and Communication. An Iron Wind can cause all of these, sometimes all at once, sometimes one at a time. In any event the results are often terrifying beyond imagination.

CREATION effects are new creatures, objects and energies created by the Wind from nothing. As it sweeps through an area, entirely new things may pop into existence, conjured by the Iron Winds chaotic nature. Strange, malformed beasts are brought into existence; twisted structures rain from the air, glowing softly with ethereal light; bursts of light and sound echo out of nothingness as an Iron Wind passes through. Rustchasers are particularly fond of creation-heavy Winds, due to the abundance of cyphers and other valuable objects they can leave behind.

TRANSFORMATION effects are what the Iron Wind is most feared for. As a Wind coils its way across the land, it plucks up creatures, objects and people alike, twisting and warping them into terrible new forms, or even transforming them into energy. A persons lungs could be turned into flowers or their face converted into pure radiation. Mutations and corrosions are the most common things survivors of an Iron Wind's transformations can expect, though Rustchasers often hunt Winds that are heavily transformative due to the larger numbers of cyphers and oddities left in their wake.

DESTRUCTION effects are often the most brutal, but in many ways are viewed as a blessing when compared to the twisted horrors that 'survive' the more transformative Winds. As the Iron Wind moves through a place, the chaotic forces can destroy matter and energy. Mountains, homes and families are carved away as if they were nothing, leaving no trace at all. Worse, the Wind can destroy only parts of them, leaving whatever remains to try and survive without body parts or vital components.

COMMUNICATION effects are the strangest of the actions performed by the Iron Wind. Sometimes as a wind passes through, people feel a pressure in their heads, then messages beamed into their minds from within the storm. Sometimes the Wind will create text and images, sounds and words echoing from the rust. Scholars theorise these may be the memories of its victims, trying to escape or fragments of ancient, vast knowledge lost to time. Some Iron Winds might be entirely focused on communication effects, a storm of ghosts and sorrow.

PROTECTION

Iron Wind is a force of nature that cannot be stopped or dealt with. However, those enterprising or stupid enough to try, and survive, have learned a few tricks that will keep them from becoming Iron-touched, though stopping a Wind entirely is impossible.

BUNKERS: The most common form of defense against the Iron Wind is to seal yourself off from it. Bunkers at least several meters underground can provide enough of a barrier between a person and the Wind that its warping touch never reaches them. What lies in wait when they emerge after it has passed is another matter. Some larger cities may have evacuation shelters below the surface for such an event, but typically this can not be relied on. The materials these bunkers are made of rarely matters, since an Iron Wind can carve through metal, synth, stone and drit all alike.

FLIGHT: For those with access to either the numenera or the shins to pay for one, airships, flying mounts and floating vehicles can provide safe harbour from the Iron Wind. While not guaranteed to keep people safe (as Iron Winds can happen anywhere, even in the skies), a flying contraption or creature can keep people out of reach of a ground-based Iron Wind. Some novel uses of floating numenera have saved the lives of many people, one tale tells of a small aldeia built around a large stone tower atop which sat a seemingly mundane numenera chamber. When the Iron Wind hit their small settlement, people sought shelter in the tower, hiding in the chamber. The thin tower walls were no match for the Wind however, and were turned to gas. Much to the people's joy and relief the chamber remained floating in mid-air, unaffected by gravity. When the Wind passed, they

lowered themselves down on ropes tied from their clothes and thanked the ancients for their salvation.

BARRIERS: Like bunkers use the drit above them as a barrier, some people prefer to stay above-ground and instead create thick barriers of stone walls or piled drit. The downside to such an approach is that they take much longer to build and face the full fury of an Iron Wind, rather than allowing one to 'blow over' the top of them. Such barriers can serve extra utility as city walls and defenses against invaders and bandits, but to hope to be effective against an Iron Wind, they must be many meters thicker than even the most sturdy battlements. Sometimes barriers are not built around cities at all, but are constructed as wind-breakers to try and alter the course of an Iron Wind away from a larger area.

NUMENERA: Most commonly used for personal protection are the numenera. While some powerful numenera surely exists that could protect an entire town or perhaps even a city, most numenera protections come in the form of cyphers. The most popular and effective cyphers are ones that produce fields of force that keep the Iron Wind at bay, shielding the user in a protective bubble of safety. Other prized abilities are phase-shifting, though it is not always effective against Winds with ultra-dimensional properties, and teleportation cyphers that allow the user to evacuate the area instantly. Rustchasers in particular highly value force field cyphers and are often willing to pay large sums to acquire them. Such protections allow Rustchasers to face a storm head on, or wait for one to rush over them in relative safety, meaning they are first on the scene to start salvaging and collecting the leavings of the Wind.

Rhelter Schris became a well known name among Aeon Priests after she used a force field cypher to remain in the heart of an Iron Wind for almost 4 hours. During that time she gathered invaluable data about the Iron Wind and its effects, making her one of the preeminent Iron Wind scholars of her time.

WARNING SIGNS

Over time, the people of the Ninth World have picked up on a few warning signs of an Iron Wind. While rarely completely accurate, they are accurate enough that people have come to take them as truth.

RUSTING SKIES, DAYLIGHT DIES

As day comes to an end, if the skies take on a rust-coloured hue, it is a sure sign an Iron Wind is due soon. Unlike the beautiful reddish-orange hues of sunset, the rust-stained skies fading into the nights black are just a taste of the ugliness to come.

HOLES OF NIGHT, WIND'S IN SIGHT

Sometimes a Wind will be foreshadowed by holes in the fabric of reality itself, the air seemingly speckled with tiny black pits small enough to fit a finger in, that seem to lead nowhere. While harmless, these omens herald the approach of an ultra-dimensional Iron Wind.

STUMBLETONGUE WARNINGS, RUST ON THE RISE

One of the most disturbing warnings of an Iron Wind is a condition known as Stumbletongue. If an Iron Wind with a strong communications component is coming, people on its path find they lose the ability to speak properly, babbling nonsense. Aeon Priests have learned that Stumbletongue is actually a misnomer, those affected don't lose the ability to speak, but the ability to understand and process language. In some experiments, it has been proved that those affected by Stumbletongue also can not read or write, both seeing and hearing words as nonsensical gibberish.

HEAD OF FIRE, FEET OF FROST, WIND BLOWS IN AND ALL IS LOST

In the height of the hottest times of year, if a strange frost comes in that chills the feet even whilst the sweat stains the brow, this is the sign of a Wind soon approaching. Other strange and contradictory weather phenomena can also be signs of an impending Wind.

TRACKING

Forewarned is forearmed, so tracking the Iron Wind is a good way to avoid being caught by surprise. However, tracking Iron Winds is more difficult than what one might expect for a storm that twists and warps the landscape as it passes through it. While Iron Winds will warp everything they touch until they are no longer recognisable, the end results can often be indistinguishable from normal weather due to the speed and number of times transformations occur. Equally, the Iron Winds are rare enough and the Ninth World large and sparsely populated enough to make finding the trails of an Iron Wind quite difficult, even before factoring in weathering the trail through normal means.

Rustchasers make their living from finding and following such trails. Some of the Iron-touched that have found a place amongst them have an innate ability to sense the Winds and their passing, but for normal folk there are signs to look out for.

TRANSITIONS: The clearest signs of an Iron Wind having blown past are sudden transitions in the landscape. If rolling plains suddenly and abruptly change to a patchwork of broken and twisted materials, partially covered in drit and local flora, it's possibly the site of a recent Wind. Abrupt changes in height and shape of the ground should stand out more than an odd spire of twisted bone in the wilderness - the Ninth World is a mysterious place after all, littered with strange wonders, but more mundane changes that don't seem to belong can be a clear sign that an Iron Wind has passed through.

DENSITY OF WEIRDNESS: Iron Winds are strange and do weird, terrible things. If there is a dense cluster of highly varied, weird artifacts, landmarks, and other features of the landscape, a Wind is likely to have been through.

STRANGE CREATURES: Unusual creatures not normally native to an area, especially if they exhibit mutations or other deformities, can be a strong sign of a recent Wind's presence. They may have been twisted from existing matter or conjured up out of nothing by the Wind. However, creatures move of their own accord and so unless the Wind is already very nearby, it is likely any beasts encountered have long since dispersed from where the Iron Wind originally passed. A skilled animal tracker may be able to backtrack the creature's steps though,

leading them to the place where the Wind created them.

NUMENERA: The Iron Wind can create many great and terrible wonders, not least of those complex and deformed cyphers and artifacts, strewn around the landscape and even embedded into it. While the Ninth World has an abundance of cyphers throughout, a particularly high concentration in an area might be evidence of an Iron Wind.

The numenera trails are why most Rustchaser hunt the Winds at all, salvaging the cyphers to sell or use. The rarity and peculiar composition of cyphers created by the Winds makes them highly prized, especially amongst agents of the Order of Truth and other organisations wishing to understand more about the Winds.

SEASONS & CYCLES

The Ninth World has its own seasons that change from region to region. Some Iron Winds follow their own patterns, but like all patterns, no matter how complex, they can be predicted. Of course, not all Iron Winds obey such patterns and for every Wind predicted, there are more exceptions that come out of nowhere. Nothing can be done about those random Winds, but while at least some can be predicted, there is hope to avoid them.

In the Steadfast the last season of the year, the Tempest, brings with it the harshest storms and the worst Iron Winds. It is a dark time that can be counted on to bring at least one Iron Wind in the short time the season lasts.

Beyond the Steadfast, weather patterns are not nearly so well documented and seasons are measured differently, each place having its own weather that is sometimes unique to the specific region. One constant is that the Iron Wind leaves no place unscathed, blowing through the Steadfast, the Beyond and elsewhere alike.

As well as the patterns in the seasons and the weather they bring, there are also cycles that some Winds go through. There is no singular Iron Wind, but several occur all at different times across the globe, much like any other weather. However, there are some that always appear at the same times, or always have the same effects, appearance or warning signs. These patterns have given rise to some 'recognised' Iron Winds that have earned themselves names.

*The Steadfast,
Numenera
corebook, page 136*

*The Beyond,
Numenera
corebook, page 174*

*Order of Truth,
Numenera
corebook, page 222*

THE COLLECTOR is an Iron Wind known for its ferocity and size. Unlike most Winds, it never seems to fade away and roams a fixed path across the Steadfast, Beyond and further afield, repeating its course every 14 years. This particular Wind gets its name from its terrible effects. When it swarms past, twisting the landscape, people caught in it just disappear, erased from the world without even a chance to scream. Their voices can sometimes be heard in the Wind or in the minds of those nearby, murmurs and cries of a person eternally lost in the Wind, carried with it on its journey across the Ninth World for all eternity.

Many a Rustchaser has been lost to the Collector. Some were lost due to getting too close to the predictable and profitable path of destruction the Wind takes but most due to their attempts to rescue their loved ones from the storm. The hope that with just the right cypher, or by the whims of the storm itself, a person could save their loved ones trapped within has caused many people to fall to the Collectors power.

Curiously, the Collector avoids all major population centers, winding a circuitous route through The Steadfast from the mountains beyond the Cloudcrystal Skyfields, crossing through Navarene and Thaemor, sinking into the Voil Chasm in Malevich to then across the Black Riage, clipping the Ba-Adenu Forest as it makes its way across the dusty desert area above Seshar and across the Beyond to the Sere Marica and the Amorphous Fields before being lost beyond the edge of the known world.

THE BIRTH PYRE is a curious Iron Wind that blows into an empty patch of land near an aldeia in the Beyond. The Wind came first, the aldeia growing later due to the Birth Pyre's unusual properties.

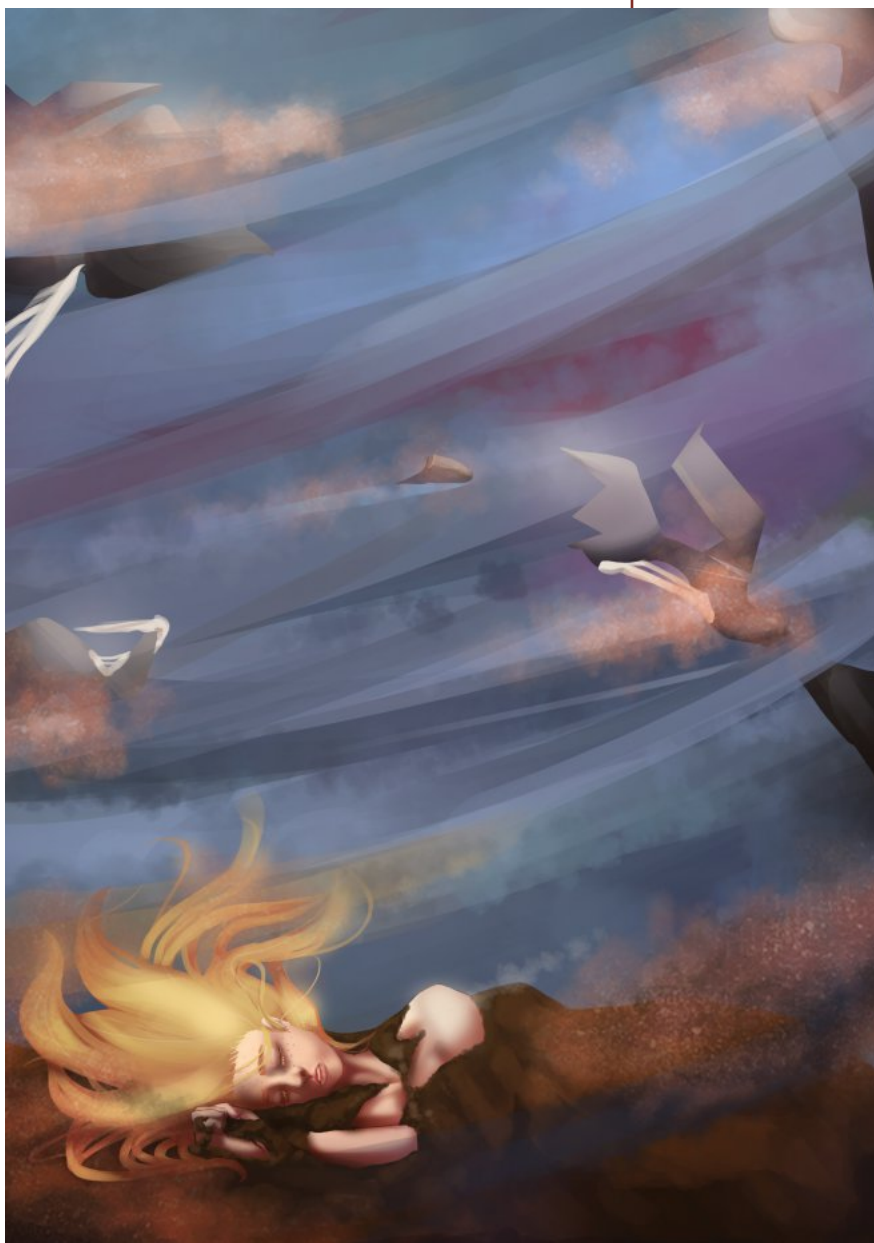
Every 5 years, when the moon is at its greenest, a Wind blows in from the East and twists into a great spout of dust. The storm is very violent, sucking in anything loose nearby and arcing out bolts of violent energies. Nothing that enters the Wind survives, but when it dissipates, the empty area is covered with a mound of strange, deformed numenera and twisted, impossible shapes. Buried underneath a few inches of drit inside the mound, a teenage girl is found with no knowledge of her past or how she got there. It is the exact same girl each time, and so the aldeia has grown to be populated

almost entirely by her incarnations, now in various stages of aging as time has passed. The numenera left behind are most often sold to Rustchasers due to their often unpredictable and dangerous effects. Many of the girls leave the aldeia to become Rustchasers, keen to learn about who they are and where they come from.

CHORUS is a peculiar Iron Wind identified by Father Mayfiel, a travelling Aeon Priest recording his findings of the Beyond. He noted that a particular pride of calyptors were always soon followed by an Iron Wind after one of their performances. He recorded this strange behaviour four times before naming the Iron Wind "Chorus" after its strange musical properties.

When Chorus begins to form, motes of rust rise

*Calyptor, The Ninth
World Bestiary,
page 27*





from the former performance area of the calyptor pride until they swirl into a storm. Keening, ethereal music then begins to ring out as much in the mind as in the ears. The sounds sweep through hundreds of harmonies like a thousand voices all singing in unison. It is disturbing as much as it is beautiful, and those that hear it often experience a sense of rising excitement and profoundly nauseating discomfort all at once.

Chorus seems to have a penchant for glass, which makes it extremely dangerous. The Wind spins glass structures from nothing, filling the air with shards of whirling glass that cut anything to ribbons. Living things caught in the Wind may sometimes be spared a grisly fate being shredded by flying glass, but they are not the lucky ones. Instead they find whole parts of their bodies replaced by fragile glass renderings of deformed organic structures that are not mere artificial body parts, but living glass, growing seamlessly into their flesh. Most survivors do not last very long, their delicate new forms smashing easily or even cooking their innards under the harsh glare of a hot sun.

THE STARPATH changes every few months to match the shiftings of a distant star constellation in the night sky. From a particular point in the Cold Desert, you can observe the constellation's stars and use their positions to predict the paths of three separate Iron Winds over the course of the next few months.

Why these Iron Winds seem to obey the motions of these stars no-one knows, but people trust in their predictability ever since one of the worst Iron Winds in recorded history, almost 400 years ago in the times of the founding of the Order of Truth. One of the stars in the Starpath turned red for 4 solid days and soon after the worst Iron Wind that had even been seen appeared along the route right where the Starpath predicted.

IRON WIND IN NINTH WORLD SOCIETY

The Iron Wind? What a crock o' drit! I ain't never seen no Wind, I ain't never met no-one who did. Them rustdevils? Bedtime stories for naughty children. Them the only ones stupid 'nuff to believe it. You got buyers for your fancy Rust-bunker? Y'all welcome to fleece 'em, but I ain't giving you a single shin.

—CUSTOMER-RECORDING BY A NAVERENE BUNKER SALESMAN

ATTITUDES

The residents of the Ninth World have an odd relationship with the Iron Wind. On the one hand the Iron Wind is a terrible nightmare story, told to children to scare them into obeying their elders. On the other, it's always somebody else's problem. The Iron Wind is so rare and the Ninth World so large that most people live their entire lives without having met someone who has seen one. The Iron Wind is a terrible thing indeed, but it's an abstract thing and the Ninth World is full of enough real dangers for people to worry about before they begin to dwell on abstract ones.

IGNORANCE

The average person in the Ninth World knows very little about the Iron Wind beyond tales they've heard over campfires by travellers passing through. To most people in the civilised parts of the Ninth World, the Iron Wind is a horror story, disasters that happen to people far away and not something they ever expect to see on their own doorsteps. For those people that live in isolated communities far out in the Beyond, some of them have never even heard of the Iron Winds, nor ever met anyone who has.

As a result, most people carry on living ordinary lives, unconcerned about the Iron Wind and unprepared for catastrophe. For the vast majority ignorance is bliss, but the unlucky few don't remain ignorant for long.

DISBELIEF: People ignorant of the Wind often have difficulty believing it even exists. If a Wind is coming, they don't always believe the warnings or take them seriously, thinking the descriptions of

the terrible things approaching must be, more likely, the rantings of a madman or results of some powerful nightmare.

Even those aware of the Winds existence might be dismissive of it, doubting the extent of the terrible tales they've heard. People find it hard to believe that wind could destroy an entire town, dismissing such tales as just scary stories for naughty children.

IRON-TOUCHED: Those ignorant of the Iron Winds are also ignorant of the iron-touched and treat them as particularly badly affected mutants. While aware of prejudice against mutants by Angulan Knights and others, such people are not aware of the additional fear of iron-touched. The iron-touched might find solace and acceptance among such a community for some time (and even teach them about the Iron Wind). However, if discovered by other more knowledgeable visitors, the iron-touched might be driven out and it is possible that the entire community might be

North of Lhauric, the small villages and aldeia dismissed the warnings of Iron Wind brought to them by a travelling Iron Watchmen seeking to establish a new watch. They just couldn't believe the words they were being told and it took the attentions of the torturer-priests of the Challifani to change their minds and, ultimately, save them from a fate far worse than the torture that was wrought upon them.

The growing town of Kibbethi, fearing an Iron Wind, built a high earthen barrier and moat around their town to protect them. An Iron Wind never came, but the barrier served invaluable when they were set upon by the twisted survivors of the next town over, whose afflictions at the hands of the Wind had turned them into a terrible, monstrous army.

punished for harbouring them.

Even with a knowledge of the Wind, some might not be aware of the stigma surround the iron-touched or simply be dismissive of it. Otherwise knowledgeable people can be unaware of the threats lurking in iron-touched flesh, such as Riders and the Ridden, even if they do know of the risks of the Iron Wind itself.

TRAVEL: Travellers unaware of the Iron Wind can cross areas where the Wind has blown and walk straight into danger. Without knowing what it can do, the weird, twisted landscape might pique a travellers curiosity, luring them to their deaths at the hands of some hidden, nightmarish creature spawned by the Wind.

Even those who know of the dangerous things a Wind can leave behind might not take them seriously if they've never experienced it first-hand. In fact, their curiosity to learn more and verify just how true the half-rumours they've heard are might lead to their undoing.

DEFENSES: Defenses against the Iron Wind work well against a number of other threats. Thick walls and deep bunkers can all be useful for other disasters or attacks. Without the additional impetus of the Iron Wind threat, many communities might never invest in building these protections and so their ignorance of the Wind can lead to them falling to an entirely unrelated threat.

On the other hand, investing in such defenses requires a lot of resources and even those with some knowledge of the Wind might think that such large investments are an overreaction. It is difficult to justify stretching their resource even thinner for something they don't believe will ever happen, or even believe exists.

FEAR

Those who know of the Iron Wind, fear it. The tales of destruction or worse, transformation into something terrible and alien by the Iron Wind, are common and most people associate the Wind with the stuff of nightmares.

Because the Iron Wind evokes such a deep, visceral fear from people, naturally they try to dismiss the tales as make believe, clinging onto the illusion of comfort. However, many others react by trying to keep as far away from the Wind as possible and treating anything to do with it as evil and dangerous. Such fear breeds hatred and hatred

breeds oppression. None know of that oppression more than the iron-touched, the sorry people who have already suffered at the hands of the Iron Wind by being changed by its corrupting touch.

When an Iron Wind has blown through a place, often the area is written off as cursed. Many people fear an Iron Wind may return, in addition to fearing the terrible creatures and environmental hazards it leaves behind it. Others turn their fear into anger, refusing to allow their homeland to be stripped from them and fight to rebuild, but even if successful, those that chose to flee will always think of the place as an accursed land and avoid it.

Living in places where Iron Winds are a known risk is not for the faint of heart, but not everyone has a choice. Settlers in lands known for their Iron Winds might forgo basic amenities and common luxuries in order to build defenses and escape routes. More often than not, most people living in Wind-scoured lands are nomadic, able to pick up and leave at a moments notice.

While many people live in fear of the Iron Wind, the risk of strange events and terrible beasts is not a new one to traders and travellers. Most take no extra precautions than they already do, after all a caravan guard won't protect them from an Iron Wind. Some invest in the Iron Watch, using their services as an early warning system of what areas to avoid and what areas might soon need fresh goods for aid and to rebuild. Others rely on hearsay, word of mouth, rumour or numenera to scout ahead of their trade routes.

For those that can not afford to lose anything to the Wind, there are other means of travel that can be expensive or hard to come by. Those of a more opportunistic or exploitative nature take full advantage of other people's fears to line their own pockets, profiting off of their fear by charging them for specialist 'safe' passage via secret routes or numenera.

OPPORTUNITY

For those brave enough, the Iron Wind doesn't just bring terror and destruction, but opportunity. Iron Winds create as well as destroy and for those enterprising enough to claim them, there are a wealth of treasures to be found in the wake of an Iron Wind. This fact is not lost to some and many have joined the informal ranks of people who call themselves Rustchasers, brave (or foolish) people

that track Iron Winds and collect the loot they leave behind.

Iron Winds are also perfect for vultures. Being such forces of terrible destruction, when people flee or are killed by an Iron Wind, whole settlements full of resources can be left behind, ripe for the pickings. Sometimes even a whole town might be left fully intact, either by chance or through trickery: more than once a member of the Iron Watch may have succumbed to greed and teamed up with unscrupulous bandits to send a fake warning, leaving an aldeia evacuated and empty, ready to loot as they please.

Iron Winds can also turn a barren wasteland into a sparkling oasis. The random changes and strange creations of an Iron Wind can be as beneficial as they are destructive. Due to the overwhelming fear and negativity surrounding the Wind, most people don't even realise that some new, undiscovered oasis might be the results of a Wind and therefore spare it the stigma such places touched by the Iron Wind usually have.

For those with the ability to predict the Iron Wind's movements, or at least stay aware of them, Iron Winds can be a valuable military asset. Skirmishes between opposed nations can turn into full-blown wars if one military takes advantage of the chaos created by an Iron Wind to attack before their enemies can rebuild and regroup. Areas changed by the Iron Wind might be chosen as battlegrounds, forcing one side to have to move through dangerous terrain to engage the enemy.

One of the largest opportunities to be had is in research and invention. The powers of the Ninth World would all value the ability to control the Iron Wind, not just for ensuring the safety of their citizens, but also to control them and to destroy their enemies. Whoever unlocks the secrets of the Iron Wind could have untold power and many organisations and governments, in public or in secret, pour funds into Iron Wind research in the hopes they will be the first. As an expert of the numenera or a risk-taker unafraid to get first-hand data about the Winds, there are a lot of shins to be had.

Many people use the fear of the Iron Wind to make their profits. Some charge travellers for the use of airships powered by numenera to sail far above the clouds. While Iron Winds can happen in the sky, they are far less frequent than the already

rare land-bound Winds and the flying crafts can use their extra maneuverability to avoid them. Teleportation using cyphers, artifacts or other forms of numenera can be very popular, but very expensive due to their usefulness and rarity. There are downsides to teleportation though, as for any destination that you can't see, you have no idea if you might be teleporting directly into the heart of an Iron Wind that is raging there. Finally, since the Wind rarely happens underground, subterranean travel is highly prized. There are vast tunnels beneath the earth and numenera capable of burrowing and digging paths. Tunnel networks are well kept secrets because they give traders a distinct advantage, being free from bandits and other hazards on the roads above. However something made those tunnels, and horrors from a forgotten age may be waiting in the dark.

FALLOUT

When Iron Wind destroys people's lives, society must react. People get displaced, refugees need housing, homes need rebuilding. With each Wind the old is blown away, replaced with new opportunities for those hardy enough to grasp them. And grasp them people do, for many organisations in the Ninth World have a deep interest in the Iron Wind, either as a thing to avoid, or as a power to control.

SURVIVORS

Displaced by the destruction of their homes, or transformed by the Iron Wind itself, survivors have more troubles to deal with than just the Wind. A small aldeia of a hundred people or so might be able to survive on basic hunting and simple, small areas of farmland, but when all that is destroyed by Iron Wind, surviving off of the land can be hard. When a Wind blows through, most animals will flee and not return, making hunting difficult. Foraging enough food to feed an entire displaced population every day is nigh impossible.

For small groups, larger cities might be able to bear the load of a few hundred refugees, but in the sparsely populated lands of the Ninth World, there is no guarantee that a displaced settlement would survive long enough to reach one. Neighbouring villages are often only barely self-sufficient and an extra influx of people numbering into the hundreds could easily lead to starvation. When they are

While strange, mysterious and dangerous, Magmid tunnels can make excellent ways to travel beneath the drit in relative safety from the Iron Wind.

Magmid, The Ninth World Bestiary pg. 79

A false alarm in Shallamas once saw a mass panic lead to the destruction of several nearby aldeias. As people fled the city by the hundreds, nearby aldeias were swarmed by refugees looking for safety from a Wind that ultimately never came. Those aldeias were crushed under the burden of simultaneously trying to help and trying to defend themselves and many never recovered. The Iron Watch, despite their protests, were banned from operating within the city after that event for over 50 years before they were allowed back - under the strict proviso that Watchmen were hand-picked by the Provani family themselves.

turned away from other settlements, some survivors turn bandit out of desperation, stealing and even killing to survive. In this way an Iron Wind often continues to cause more destruction, even after it is long gone.

If large cities are evacuated or destroyed by Iron Winds, things become much worse. That many people forced into the wilds cannot sustain themselves and in-fighting, disease, wildlife and weather can kill hundreds if not thousands. Nearby aldeias are almost certainly destroyed, overrun by refugees looking for help, destroying the delicate balance they have with their environment. Even other large cities are at risk, often having to close their gates to the outside world to prevent themselves being overrun. This can result in a sort of siege as the city tries to outlast the survivors outside their walls. Typically, they do, either by their own stockpiles or by killing the refugees that refuse to leave. It is harsh, but it is often the only choice a city has when stuck between trying to help others and trying to protect its own citizens.

For survivors that have been iron-touched, life is often much worse, and much shorter. Most iron-touched are so badly afflicted they die very quickly, finding themselves no longer able to breathe normal air or unable to move unaided. Many of the iron-touched consider this a mercy, for those poor souls will never have to deal with the reactions of 'normal' people and their prejudices, which only add insult to their injuries.

The ordeal of surviving an Iron Wind is excruciatingly painful, and most iron-touched never truly recover from the trauma. Some learn to move past it but never forget the experience. The feel of flesh being spun into living fire or other such unimaginable horrors cannot be easily forgotten. Many iron-touched are consumed by survivors guilt and are traumatised by seeing friends, neighbours and loved ones torn apart, transformed or erased entirely by the Wind. Their trauma can cause them to act erratically or in ways others have a hard time understanding as they try to deal with their issues, and sadly this only further causes people to treat them with suspicion and fear.

Displaced from their homes, they have to survive off the land and often their afflictions make this even more difficult for them. Many settlements are so consumed by fear of the Wind that any sign of it, such as an iron-touched, are seen as bad

omens that must be driven away. The belief that those afflicted by the Iron Wind attract its attention is not uncommon and some settlements will drive the iron-touched away or, more often, kill them on sight. If they are lucky, an iron-touched survivor may find a place ignorant of the Wind and the superstitions that go with it. In those cases, the best they can hope for is to be treated like mutants, and mutants have their own share of prejudices against them, especially from the Angulan Knights. Ultimately, the iron-touched often suffer just as badly at the hands of the rest of society as they did at the hands of the Wind.

Iron-touched can often survive by becoming Rustchasers, even unknowingly. By returning to their homes and scavenging the leavings of the Iron Wind, these survivors can gather up enough useful items to see them through for some time. Many iron-touched develop a 'sense' for Iron Wind and Rustchasers, attracted to the sites of an Iron Wind disaster, often find them and offer them places on their crews due to their unique 'gift'. Life for the iron-touched on a Rustchaser crew can be hard and not many can adapt to a life of constantly chasing after and facing the cause of their trauma. However, iron-touched that stick around Rustchasers soon learn of the rumours of the legendary Rusthaven, a fabled place of safety and acceptance for others like themselves. Those who can't adapt to their new lives often leave to find it elsewhere and are never seen again.

REBUILDING

Rebuilding after an Iron Wind is no small order. For many, a land scarred by the Wind is forever cursed and so rather than rebuilding from ruins, those people have to rebuild from scratch elsewhere, making an already difficult job even harder.

Rebuilding in an area touched by Iron Wind is dangerous as it may have been transformed in any number of ways, from pits of out-of-phase drit and pools of acid to roaming monstrosities conjured from nothing. Those that choose to risk the physical dangers of rebuilding on rust-scorched ground also have to deal with the future issues of trade. Word will spread of the Iron Winds passing and anyone nearby will give the area a wide berth, or possibly return with pitchforks and torches to cleanse the area of its corruption.

For those that accept or ignore all the issues of

rebuilding on the remains of their old settlements, there can be rewards as well as risks. The Iron Wind may have left them with strange new materials that facilitate easy construction or rapidly growing plants they can use as food if they are desperate enough to risk whatever effects such rust-conjured foods might have.

The logistics of rebuilding can be reasonably simple for small settlements; at most a few hundred people might be rebuilding on the ashes of their old homes or starting a new aldeia nearby, but what of large cities?

For very large population centers, many places can be lucky enough that much of the infrastructure survives. Still, a dense, busy city after an Iron Wind can be even more dangerous than the worst afflicted aldeia. With twisting streets and closely packed buildings, the warping powers of the Wind can create a multitude of horrors in close quarters that are hard to flee from and even more difficult to root out.

Maintaining order in a large population is exceedingly difficult in any time of disaster and in the aftermath of an Iron Wind, doubly so. Torn between the necessities of immediate survival and long term rebuilding, many people will loot, steal and even kill to survive. Riots might break out and rebuilding work that does happen risks being undermined by the turmoil.

Because cities have far more political clout, they can demand aid from allies and neighbours or in dire circumstances even dissolve themselves as a city, renouncing their independence and becoming absorbed by their neighbours in exchange for help. Due to their often strategic locations, existing trade partnerships and natural (or stockpiled) resources, cities have more to trade with to secure aid.

SCAVENGERS

Iron Winds passing through an area attract scavengers and looters. People fleeing their homes leave their valuables behind ripe for the picking and the Iron Wind itself may leave untold and never before seen treasures in its wake.

Some scavengers are opportunistic and will enter a village even as they are evacuating, looting homes and businesses for as much as they can carry and gambling they can escape before the Iron Wind hits. The more aggressive ones might even attack an evacuating settlement, using the chaos



and fear to their advantage. In larger cities, looters take to the streets whilst people are hiding in their cellars and bunkers, or break into homes and steal from the occupants whilst nobody is around to stop them. Such vagabonds risk finding themselves without protection during a Wind but the easy pickings are just too tempting an opportunity to pass up.

Rustchasers is a generic term for scavengers that turn up after a Wind has gone past. Typically they are interested only in the wondrous creations of the Iron Wind, scavenging strange new cyphers and artifacts it may have created, but many are not averse to looting abandoned or destroyed homes as well. The term 'Rustchaser' is often used in a derogatory way, but there are a group of people that take the term as a badge of honour and the official name of their culture. These 'true' Rustchasers are nomadic people that follow the Winds, living off its spoils and whatever they salvage, selling anything else for profit.

Rustchasing and scavenging are dangerous activities. Those who are the boldest have first pick of the spoils, but are also the first to suffer if an Iron Wind suddenly reverses course and the first to have to fight whatever monsters it may have created. Competition can be fierce around Iron Winds that have predictable patterns and clashes between bands of scavengers and survivors can result in a fight over resources.

Rustchasers, pg. 25

ORGANISATIONS

*The Vashivok,
pg. 27*

Over the years several organisations have grown to combat, capitalise on or understand the Iron Wind. The Order of Truth reaches everywhere, even into the Beyond where the Iron Winds are more frequent, and their hunger for knowledge about the Iron Wind cannot be sated. As a dangerous phenomenon of great power, the priesthood can only guess at the secrets they might unlock if they can unravel even the smallest thread of knowledge from the Wind.

The Aeon Priests aren't the only ones seeking to learn the Winds secrets, however. The Convergence and The Jagged Dream both seek out the power of the Wind for their own ends. The group that finds a way to control the Iron Wind could scour the surface of the Ninth World clean of their enemies, cause untold destruction and create wonders never before seen by human eyes.

*Ninth World
Organisations,
Numenera
corebook pg. 222*

With all these groups demanding knowledge, it is no surprise that other organisations have grown to supply it. Many people try their luck against the Iron Wind, and those who succeed often band together, creating a support network for each other, a brotherhood and sisterhood of Rustchasers.

*The Iron Watch,
pg. 29*

Those that fail though, or the victims of the Winds that happen to survive, are not so lucky. The Angulan Knights look on the iron-touched much as they do mutants, as aberrations that should be put to the sword, an infection threatening the purity of the human bloodlines that must be cleansed.

The Redfleets have little to fear of Iron Winds, for their occurrence over the vast oceans of the Ninth World are thankfully rare, a gift of protection from the oceans that the numenera-fearing group are most grateful for. However, like Rustchasers, they know of the riches an Iron Wind can bring and the two groups are on friendly terms, often helping each other in Wind-related matters.

The declining Sarracenians treat the Iron Winds

as most others, with fear and respect, but otherwise have little interest in it except for the strange new species of plants it sometimes creates.

The Vashivok are a sub-sect of the Fahat that worships the Iron Wind as the worlds salvation. They believe the Iron Wind will change the world and everything in it, the worthy being spared their lives and granted miraculous gifts to lead them into the true future of mankind.

The Fahat themselves are split about the Iron Wind. Whilst they revere mutation, many of the Fahat despise the Iron Wind and its effects as unholy and unnatural, unlike the blessed gift of mutation and natural evolution. Others embrace the Iron-touched as brothers and sisters, treating their changes and afflictions with the same reverence as the gift of mutation.

Finally there are the Iron Watch. This group formed almost entirely of Iron Wind survivors (though notably no iron-touched) take it upon themselves to man and maintain watchtowers across much of the Steadfast and a short way into the Beyond. They provide a lookout for signs of Iron Wind and early warnings of its approach so others can avoid suffering the same tragedies as they have.

RUSTCHASERS

In only the very loosest sense of the word an organisation, this group is really more of a loose collection of people with a shared creed, similar to honour amongst thieves. Nomadic travellers all united by their common profession, Rustchasers are often scorned by outsiders who see them as nothing but bandits and vagabonds, bands of scavengers that pick at the bones of tragedies for profit.

To Rustchasers, nothing could be further from the truth. They lay claim to a long heritage of Rustchasers, the brave and the bold who risk their lives for profit and glory. They see themselves as pioneering adventurers and daring risk-takers, but also as a single, gigantic family. Rustchasing isn't just a job, it's a way of life, a culture in your blood, deeper than friendship, deeper than even family. The bond of a Rustchaser is absolute, and whenever another Rustchaser is in need, they can always count on each other, even if they've never met.

The reality is somewhere in the middle, a mixture of both, but the culture of Rustchasers is real, guarded and maintained by their semi-official presence known as the Rustchasers Guild. The guild maintains the shared history of the nomadic and dispersed Rustchaser culture and decides on what laws they are to obey and when those laws have been broken.

HISTORY: Rustchasers maintain an oral history of their practices and laws that is passed down from one generation to the next. Partially this is out of tradition, partially out of practicality as passing and carrying books around, or formal education, isn't always possible with the Rustchasers' nomadic culture. Another reason is secrecy. Rustchasers carry with them a certain mystique and romance, they are dashing rogues that take the biggest risks of all, and they don't want to risk losing that image by having their secrets widely known.

Due to the fragmented nature of the Rustchasers, their history is consequently full of contradictions, embellishments, outright lies and huge unaccounted for sections of time. Even so,

their history and tales stretch back hundreds of years, better than many aldeias can manage even with written records.

rites and rituals: Rustchasers are an informal bunch, but that doesn't stop them from having rites and rituals they perform for various reasons, though they don't strictly follow or enforce them. Most Rustchasers use secret signals to indicate they are a fellow Rustchaser and not just some bandit or small time scavenger. These signals take the form of an elaborate secret language of single-hand gestures which they also use for passing warnings, advice and secret messages to each other. If a Rustchaser is fiddling with their hands, chances are they are actually sending a secret message to someone watching, or testing others to see if they recognise it.

No-one is truly a Rustchaser until they've faced the storm and lived to tell the tale. Rustchasers new to the fold are thrown into the deep-end if they want to become recognised members of the Rustchasers Guild and get taught the secret signs. Given the tools they need to survive, they are taken with a crew to an Iron Wind and told to find something of value, constantly dared to get closer and closer to the Wind to test just how much they'll risk. Their first chase is a

test of their mettle and their wit, the rest of their crew also creating obstacles of their own for them to overcome during the chase. If they succeed, they have proven their worth. Those that fail suffer at the mercy of the Wind, but are always welcomed to try again should they survive.

When a Rustchaser dies, they are often given to the Iron Wind, placed in a funeral mound in the path of an oncoming storm. In very rare cases the Wind gives them back, changed, but alive. Most of the time though, they are consumed, or their remains twisted and warped away beyond recognition. A Rustchaser always chases the Wind, they say, and in death they finally catch up with it.

For those Rustchasers that are rendered iron-touched, Rustchasers treat them well if they can still continue rustchasing. If not, they are still considered Rustchasers - once a Rustchaser, always a Rustchaser - and are given whatever



Rustchasers are often known by the rusted gear, the wave and the square. Every rustchaser will tell you a different story, and if you are lucky part of one might be true, but the common theme is one of strength and unity from the gear, wildness and freedom from the wave of the wind and focus and dedication from the square.

Of course, just as many rustchasers will tell you something completely different. Only a rustchaser truly knows what they stand for, if anything.

Rustchaser, pg. 87



supplies they think they need to journey alone in search of the fabled Rusthaven if they choose to seek it. Not everyone believes it exists, thinking of this ritual as a delayed death sentence, but they all respect that a Rustchaser has to chase something, and chasing hope can be a noble end.

LEGENDS AND LORE: Rustchasers aren't terribly superstitious. To survive doing what they do, they have no time for doubts, prayers or imaginary fears so they are a practical and pragmatic folk that only believe in what they can see and touch. However, Rustchasers are also notorious liars and storytellers, spinning wild tales about their adventures and the things they've seen in the Wind.

One of the most widely spread and persistent myths of the Rustchasers is that of the fabled town of Rusthaven. The myth tells of the tenacity of Rustchasers, that a group caught by the Iron Wind survived and refused to be victims, but instead founded a safe place for themselves and others like them to live and thrive. Rumour has it that such bravery and determination in the face of adversity earned them the admiration of the Wind and it protects them and all those that seek out the safety of Rusthaven to this day.

ORGANISATION: As an organisation, the Rustchasers Guild maintains guild houses across the Steadfast and the Beyond where Rustchasers can meet and share tales, and non-Rustchasers can come to be swindled out of their hard earned shins. The guild houses act as hubs to fence salvaged items and sell loot, as well as a central point of contact between the Rustchaser community and 'smoothies' - non-Rustchasers. Most dealings with normal folk are done by intermediaries that live and work in the guild houses, those Rustchasers too old, infirm or retired, who have quit the harsh nomadic life of chasing the Wind.

Above the guild house masters in the informal hierarchy of the Rustchasers sits the council who decide their laws. Rustchasers don't recognise the authority of anyone and the Rustchasers protect each other from external law enforcement if they can, no matter the crime. Crimes against Rustchasers (especially those committed by other Rustchasers) are swiftly met with Rustchaser justice and the council are judge, jury and executioner.

The people who make up the council are whoever turns up to a convocation, plus the elders.

The elders are Rustchasers that have been elected by their peers or others who have bought or earned themselves a seat of power through donations, helping their fellow Rustchasers, or those who have been awarded a place due to their fame and prestige. The elders have veto privileges over the general council, but usually act as tie-breakers or make the decisions themselves if no-one else shows up. It's possible that nobody shows up to a convocation except the people who called for one, which might mean no elders are in attendance at all. In these cases, the disputes are settled amongst those involved themselves, however unfair that can be.

Convocations can be called for at anytime by any Rustchaser, anywhere. The call is passed around and usually a few weeks are given for a council to assemble at the designated meeting point before it is held. Disputes and calls for justice tend to be handled quickly, but the changing of Rustchaser law takes time and if the convocation agrees on a course of action, then that must be approved by the majority of elders, not just those present at the convocation.

THE ANGULAN KNIGHTS

The Angulan Knights' charter calls for it to defend humanity from all that stand in the way of its dominion. One of the biggest threats to humanity is the Iron Wind, for not only is it a force for destruction but one for the more insidious force of corruption.

Like mutants, the iron-touched are an abomination to Angulan Knights. Humanity can not truly rise to greatness if it is being corrupted from within. The iron-touched and mutantkind aren't humans, not any more. Unlike mutants, iron-touched were once pure, but something tainted their humanity, a corruption that can not be allowed to spread, just as the mutant threat must be stamped out. The solution is obvious, the iron-touched must be put to the sword. The Angulan Knights don't like this work, after all the iron-touched are a result of accidents, not a race passing down their corruption from one generation to another. Ultimately they view their work as an act of mercy, saving the Wind's victims from a life of corruption.

Rusthaven, pg. 31

The Angulan Knights, Numenera corebook, pg. 224

Rustchaser Guild Master, level 3, bartering and iron-wind related tasks at level 5.

Rustchaser Elder, level 6, iron-wind related tasks at level 7.

Angulan Knights often team up with or have run-ins against Rustchasers. Some Knights take it upon themselves to follow the Iron Wind to learn more about it so they are ready to both protect others from its creations and to slay those afflicted by its touch. Some Rustchasers are happy to have a proficient warrior tag along whilst others view them as fanatic outsiders that are more a liability than a boon. Angulan Knights and Rustchasers can also clash though, due to the employment of iron-touched in Rustchaser crews.

Angulan Knights already have close ties with the Order of Truth and they work together to understand the Iron Wind. The Knights' goals are to destroy the Wind while the Orders goals aren't so clear. For now though, their goals are aligned and it serves them both to cooperate.

THE VASHIVOK

The Vashivok are widely viewed as crazy by anyone who knows anything about the Iron Wind. An unpopular, but large organisation, several secret churches are dotted around the Steadfast. Their congregation are mostly disenfranchised youths, the disadvantaged, the broken or forgotten - people in need of belonging, of being a part of something larger than themselves, of community. Despite providing something for the outcasts of society to believe in, it is exactly because of those beliefs that the Vashivok are unpopular - they worship the Iron Wind.

The Vashivok originally began as a sub-sect of the Fahat, the worshippers of mutation as a blessing. This sect saw the iron-touched in the same way as mutants and consequently saw the Iron Wind as a powerful force for evolution and change, a storm that would sweep across the Ninth World granting the precious gift of mutation to all of the worthy. The Fahat were divided on this opinion and eventually declared the Vashivok as

heretics, casting them out. However, that only caused them to spread their beliefs beyond the streets of Nieliesh and the Cold Desert, bringing them to be the organisation they are today. Many are warned against them as a dangerous death cult, an opinion that's hard to argue against considering they advocate deliberately heading into Iron Winds.

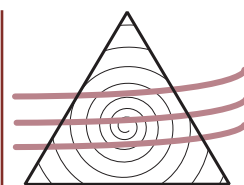
ORGANISATION: As an organisation, the Vashivok have a very flat structure. They view all as equal before the might of the Iron Wind and so have a very limited hierarchy with no official ruling council, pope or other positions of power. Instead, the Vashivok are divided into 3 layers, the Priests at the top, then the Followers, then the Congregation. Priests earn their titles in a few ways, the easiest is by being iron-touched, a blessing that makes them extremely popular and influential in the organisation. The second is to spread the word and collect many followers. When your name is known to other priests as a spreader of the good word, you are ready to don the rust-coloured robes of the Priesthood.

Followers come up from the Congregation and follow a single Priest as his or her disciple. They do this by giving up all their belongings and wealth, donating it all to the church and if they donate enough, are raised to the role of Follower.

Afterwards they don simple peasants clothing stained orange-brown with rust, and follow the Priests' orders and

teachings. They also provide sermons to the Congregation or more often to those outside the church, trying to bring others into the fold.

The entry level into the church is as the Congregation. These people are simply those that identify themselves as Vashivok and attend the sermons of the Priests and Followers. Being parts of the Church officially, these people earn the charity of the Church and its protection.



The symbol of the Vashivok is the spiral in the triangle, blown by the Wind. The triangle represents the solid foundations of their beliefs, which in turn contains the spiral, representing growth and chaos.

However, that chaos is trapped within them, just as the spiral is trapped within the triangle. Only the Wind is free to blow across all, freeing the chaos within and turning the spiral forever.

Vashivok NPCs, pg. 89.



rites & rituals: The Vashivok seek enlightenment and evolution via the Iron Wind and the greatest ritual of all is to find a Wind and enter it. Those that emerge iron-touched are blessed and raised to the priesthood, those that don't are celebrated as the truly blessed, taken by the Wind to paradise. Vashivok believe they must give themselves to the Wind in the same way they entered the world, naked, and strip themselves of their clothes to maximise their exposure to the Wind's warping powers.

The Vashivok are dedicated pacifists. It is one of the most sacred tenets of the Church that nobody, for any reason including self-defense, should raise their hands to another. Only the Iron Wind has the right to give and to take away. This of course can lead to the Vashivok being taken advantage of, but it is something they take in their stride, and transgressions by the Congregation are always forgiven, often overlooked and sometimes even secretly encouraged.

legends & lore: The Vashivok are rife with stories and tales of great, iron-touched heroes and Iron Winds that have transformed lowly aldeia struggling to survive into sparkling city-oases. Verifying any of these stories is virtually impossible and most Vashivok are eager to believe them. A lot of their stories come from Rustchasers, who are known for their lying and storytelling, and the greatest story of all is of a heaven on earth called Rusthaven, a paradise of untold beauty where all iron-touched are provided for by an Iron Wind which creates whatever their hearts desire.

RUSTHAVEN

Rusthaven is a myth to many, a story told to comfort those that suffer a transformation by the Iron Wind. Rustchasers tell tales of it, a legend to be shared over campfires, and the Vashivok believe in it as a heaven on earth, a place the chosen go to live in paradise.

According to the tales, Rusthaven is a mythical place surrounded at all times by an Iron Wind. The Wind there protects its children, keeping them safe from those that would persecute them whilst allowing those pure of heart and intention through. Inside it is reported to be a paradise where the Iron Wind serves the community, making them whatever their hearts desire.

This is, of course, nonsense. The reality of Rusthaven is a far cry from the legends that are told about it, though like all good myths, there is a kernel of truth in them. Rusthaven is a town of exiles and outcasts far in the Beyond and the people there have to work hard to survive and protect themselves. What Rusthaven provides them is freedom from persecution and a safe place to live, a place that provides for them with sources of water, meat and building materials for shelters. It is not remotely a paradise, but it is a home and the people there would die to protect it. While they may not be served by the Wind, it is curious that rust-coloured dust storms are unusually common around Rusthaven and that the Iron Wind never seems to claim an iron-touched or mutant in the area.

organisation: As an organisation, Rusthaven is more like a commune, each contributing what they can, taking only what they need. There are elders that help make tough decisions, but the organisational structure of Rusthaven is egalitarian in nature, though that was not always the case.

The real Rusthaven is a closely guarded secret. Those that leave Rusthaven to gather resources, find other iron-touched or to explore, guard the secret of its location and the truth of its existence closely, so nothing more than rumours are really known about it. Those scouts that leave the safety of the town will kill to protect its secrets from outsiders that can not be trusted. It's sometimes said that the surest way to get assassinated to is to brag about knowing where Rusthaven can be found.

Rustchasers have a strange relationship with Rusthaven. Many know just how fake the stories are, having made half of them up themselves. They originally did so just to provide hope for the iron-touched, but after many years many Rustchasers now half-believe their own tales, the truth being lost amongst the myths. Rustchasers respect and help the iron-touched that claim to be from Rusthaven whenever they can. Many a Rustchaser will soon end up amongst their ranks due to their dangerous work. It only makes sense to protect the only sanctuary they have.



Rusthaven is often marked by the symbol of the dome that is rumoured to surround it, the large, dark crack in its shell both a greeting and a warning.

THE IRON WATCH

Around the Steadfast and stretching into the Beyond are a series of watchtowers manned by an organisation called The Iron Watch. Commonly, these watchtowers are built in areas susceptible to Iron Winds where brave people keep vigil, a group of altruists that dedicate their time to providing early warning systems against Iron Wind.

Made up of almost entirely of Iron Wind survivors (though notably no iron-touched), widows, widowers and family members of those lost to the Wind, these people fund and man tall watchtowers dotted across the Ninth World. They train themselves and each other in recognising the warning signs of an approaching or forming Iron Wind. The Iron Watch have helped save many lives over their years of operation, but are entirely unfunded, relying solely on donations from locals and Rustchasers, who use them to find new Winds to chase.

Since the original Iron Watch was mostly formed from those that have suffered tragedy at the hands of the Iron Wind, they were a small group. In order to grow the organisation they needed to recruit volunteers, so they added more watchtowers by taking over abandoned buildings in an aldeia or city, and training locals in how to keep watch and spot the warning signs. However, as they've expanded, their ranks have been diluted with those less interested in altruism and more interested in shins. Some unscrupulous members of the Iron Watch have faked sightings, accepting a bribe to cause an evacuation so bandits can loot a location indiscriminately. If caught, the Iron Watch deals harshly with the offenders, often with death. They take their duties very seriously and to many, such a betrayal is not only an insult to them and the people they are meant to be protecting, but also to the loved ones they've lost to the Wind.

ORGANISATION: The Iron Watch manage themselves through a series of regional leaders. Individuals towers have a Towermaster in charge of the maintenance of the tower and collection of funds to support it and a Watchmaster in charge of the actual lookouts and training of other Watchers. These report to a regional Ironmaster, some who might be in charge of only a few scattered towers, others perhaps a whole nation, depending on the geography and transport links. The Ironmasters

work to make sure there are enough towers in the network to provide good coverage and work with local governments and organisations for larger sources of funding through taxes and municipal donations. Ironmasters report finally to the Tower, who oversees and coordinates the entire network at the highest level. Towers are elected from amongst the Ironmasters every few years and Ironmasters are elected from amongst the Towermasters the region is responsible for. Watchmasters are elected from the ranks of their Watchers, but they aren't treated as any lower in the hierarchy than the Tower themselves - on a Watchtower, the Watchmaster is king, for they have the biggest responsibility of all. Some Ironmasters are granted their titles by virtue of large donations or the provision of continual funds via taxation and the like. These Ironmasters are never elected to become the Tower, nor can they lose their position, though they may share it with another in the same region.

RITUALS AND DUTIES: The Iron Watch is a no-nonsense organisation that cannot afford the expense of ceremony. However, they do make an effort to reward those that have served in the Iron Watch, thanking them for their service with feasts and the promise that should they or their family ever ask for assistance, it will be granted without question. Family is one of the core values of the Iron Watch and protecting them at any cost is a price many are willing to pay.

When inducted into the Iron Watch, a simple ceremony is held with an iron coin. The Watchmaster pays the new recruit with the iron coin, thanking them for their service. The recruit then pays the Watchmaster back with the coin, thanking them for protecting them and their family, thus completing the circle of the protected becoming the protector.

Duty calls when an Iron Wind approaches and the Iron Watch get to work immediately. To signal a warning, the Watchmen burn special logs from the Ausren Woods which gives the fire a distinct purple hue that is difficult to replicate or be mistaken for anything else. Watchtowers will pass the warning down the line, each one using smoke signals to indicate where the source of the warning is coming from.



The symbol of the Iron Watch shows their gaze from their towers, backed by the purple flame of their Ausren wood. The message is simple: we are watching.

Towermaster, level 4. Level 5 social interactions, level 6 repairs and accounting.

Iron Watchman, level 2. Level 6 perception.

Gathering Ausren wood is dangerous and the logs are used sparingly. Luckily, a single one mixed with normal wood more than does the job, but even so, importing the expensive wood takes up a sizeable portion of the Iron Watch budget.

*Oh wind, cruel wind, will you bring me my love
I still feel their heart in what you leave behind
Oh wind, cruel wind, will you bring me my love
No cypher can replace this true love o' mine*

*I fought off your beast that was made out of teeth
Climbed over your hillock all covered in eyes
I swam through the lake with my poor lover's face
I'll never stop chasin' till the day that I die*

*Oh wind, cruel wind, will you bring me my love
I still feel their heart in what you leave behind
Oh wind, cruel wind, will you bring me my love
No cypher can replace this true love o' mine*

EXCERPT FROM "THE RUSTCHASER'S LOVER",
A RUSTCHASER FOLK SONG



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WELCOME TO RUSTHAVEN



OVERVIEW

Where is Rusthaven? Rusthaven's location isn't specified on purpose, other than that it is somewhere in a dusty, desert region of the Beyond. This might be on the explored maps of the Ninth World, or somewhere yet to be seen. Rusthaven should exist wherever you need it to for your game or perhaps it might even move around, carried place to place by the very Winds that cursed its inhabitants. This is the Ninth World, no answer is implausible.

Only rumoured to exist, finding Rusthaven is difficult, especially by those not touched by the Iron Wind. Those that have been tainted inexplicably feel the call of Rusthaven, a guiding force hinting the way forward in the back of their minds. This guiding force leads out across the rocky, barren expanse of the Beyond. Far from a source of water or food, the Iron-touched are drawn to a place of perpetual sandstorms that look almost like the Iron Wind itself. The sands' natural, rusty hue and the roaming beasts that are warped with strange growths and tumours scare most people away. Those that brave the storms and beasts find they have nothing to fear. Eventually the Iron-touched that push on through come across a town shielded from the elements, and most importantly from the Iron Wind, built inside an ancient dome of transparent synth. Those untouched by the Iron Wind will find the storms and beasts far less hospitable and will be lucky to escape with their lives.

Inside the dome, the storm is filtered from view by the synth dome walls, allowing clear views in all directions, without the storm covering up the sky, the sun shines brightly onto the ramshackle town built within. The entire town's architecture tells of its origins - walls and roofs are scrap scavenged from across the Beyond, packed with dusty red dirt. Leather is curious in its abundance given the lack of animals and many buildings and roofs are constructed from huge bone frames and plates of hardened leather.

Populated by those who have been victims of the Iron Wind, the people of Rusthaven are a strange and varied folk bound together by their shared afflictions. While some succumb to a general malaise at being outcast and exiled, others take pride in their new lives and new home. Like any other town, there are people who are active and engaging and those that stick to themselves. Some residents work market stalls and chat with customers and friends whilst others prefer to live solitary lives, taking jobs that stand them apart from others such as night guards, sewage workers or other unpleasant but necessary tasks. Regardless of a residents' personality, one thing that unites them all is a common curiosity for new arrivals and a will to survive and thrive despite the curses placed upon them by the Wind.

RUSTHAVEN SOCIETY

GOVERNMENT

A town of refugees, outcasts and exiles, Rusthaven is built around a strong feeling of belonging and a shared sense of overcoming adversity. Everyone is expected to pull their weight for the good of all. That is the secret truth of Rusthaven that no-one likes to talk about - the town isn't a haven for all Iron-touched, it's a haven for all Iron-touched that are useful. People who can't pull their own weight within Rusthaven, be it through applying some kind of practical trade or skill, or providing distractions and boosting morale with entertainment and art, find themselves abandoned and forced to fend for themselves outside the safety of the dome walls.

Rusthaven society is a complicated patchwork of different forces, much like the people who live there. For the most part, the town keeps a flat structure, without peasants or aristocracy, treating all as equals as long as they contribute something back to the community. Of course, there are always people who don't want to be responsible for others, or don't want to make hard decisions, and so the people of Rusthaven

have a council of elders. The Small Council, as the group of four are referred to, don't see themselves as rulers, but facilitators. They have their positions of authority granted to them out of respect, mostly, due to the long history they have with Rusthaven, being the residents who have lived there the longest.

However, Rusthaven was not always this way and in the past Rusthaven was ruled very strictly by a man called Ellod Kossay. Ellod Kossay's afflictions from the Iron Wind eventually made him unable to rule, but in his heyday many referred to him under their breaths as The Tyrant, for his harsh and unforgiving rules. He was never a cruel man, though he could be selfish and arrogant at times, but his style of leadership rubbed many people the wrong way. Even though that was a long, long time ago, before most current residents of Rusthaven were even born, Ellod can still be said to have the largest influence on Rusthaven society, even today. Why? Because Ellod Kossay is still alive.

The afflictions Ellod Kossay suffered didn't kill him, but instead cause him to continually grow with barely any need to eat, as long as he had access to water. At the expense of losing his mind, Ellod has maintained his influence over the town by becoming its most valuable resource. His bulk has grown to engulf the entire original settlement of Rusthaven and the central water well, absorbing within him the sole source of water for miles around. The excess water can be extracted by way of growths and pockets of fluid that form in his body, which must be milked or cut open in order to access the liquid within. In the same way that he is the sole source of water for the town, his endless bulk also supplies much of the meat, skin for leatherworking and hair and bone for other crafts. Without him, the town might have water, but they'd have no readily available food in the barren waste and if they didn't constantly cut him back, it might just be possible that his bulk would grow to fill the entire dome.

For the most part though, Ellod stays out of the business of actually running the town. Often he is lost in a dream state, sometimes babbling nonsense in languages no-one has ever heard before as he sleeps. Instead, the day-to-day operation and running of the town falls to Ava the Switch and the rest of the Small Council.

Ava the Switch is two people trapped in the

same life. The elderly woman slides out of phase at random times, sometimes as long as weeks apart, to be replaced by a much younger woman with wild blue hair. Both women claim to be the true Ava, accusing the other being a manifestation of the Iron Winds curse upon them and both take the running of the town very seriously. Blue Ava favours more diplomatic approaches to town disputes and is willing to defer to the wishes of the rest of the Small Council and the will of the people. Grey Ava is far less amenable to negotiation and is of the opinion that people should do as they are told. She is domineering, but kind, and accepts no nonsense from anyone, as any member of the Small Council will attest.

The Small Council are a group of the four mutants and rustwalkers that have lived in Rusthaven the longest, though no-one is old enough to remember a time before Ellod, who as far as anyone can tell has been here forever. Currently, the council is made of Maran Bas, a rustwalker and Chief Tanner; Palavan Ny, son of Grey Ava and the late Prostan Ny; Bastir, a luminous blue mutant with a hard, chitinous shell and Efrixt, a varjellan rustwalker whose entire left side seems to be made of lush plant-growth. Palavan is viewed with some suspicion by the rest of the council for he is one of the rare few second-generation Haveners to be born without any afflictions, for all intents and purposes a normal human being. As such, the others don't trust him to think in the best interests of the other, less fortunate residents, and they mostly tolerate his place on the council out of respect for Ava, despite the obvious nepotism that granted him his position.

SOCIETY

Like many societies, Rusthaven's residents have formed their own cliques and groups. Commonly, these tend to fall in line with their professions, or the regions of the dome they choose to live in. Waterminers, Carvers and Tanners tend to live close to the source of their materials in Bluestock and are often considered a whole separate group from the rest of the residents. While the others respect them, they consider them a strange breed for choosing to live amongst Ellod's rolling folds of flesh and the constant smell of gore. The Farmers that tend the fields and grow the crops have their own language of problems, hardships and expertise

*Ava the Switch,
pg. 41*

*Maran Bas, pg 39
Palavan Ny, pg. 40*

*Bastir and Efrixt,
pg. 40*

Watermining is one of the most respected and valued professions in Rusthaven, not least because the entire town would die out without a steady source of water. Waterminers brave the dangerous labyrinth of Ellod's flesh every day to collect the water the town needs to survive.

that can make others feel alienated. The common labourers, and other skilled workers that make up the bulk of the residents feel like they represent the majority, but equally feel out of place without the same strong sense of purpose and identity the others have. Those that choose to live near the dome's entrance and guard it against potential threats are thought of in contradictory terms. Some praise them as the bravest of Rusthaven, whilst others scorn them as lazy isolationists, using threats that never come true as an excuse not to contribute. No-one really considers themselves one group or the other, and there are no formal splits or divides, but over the years of Rusthaven's existence certain cultural attitudes and stereotypes have developed which an outsider might see more plainly than a native would.

Beyond profession, legacy has a strong significance in Rusthaven. Haveners don't care about your past before you arrived in Rusthaven. As refugees and exiles themselves, they understand the value and honour in putting the past behind you. However, many residents of Rusthaven care deeply about the history of their home and afford a great deal of respect and deference to those that have lived there the longest. People who have lived in Rusthaven most their lives garner a great deal of respect from their peers and the eldest of them sit on the Small Council, or have other positions of authority because people trust them to know how to survive and thrive, and to pass that knowledge on to them.

People born in Rusthaven have a strange time of things. While they often get the respect afforded to those that have lived most of their lives in Rusthaven, they aren't afforded the same authority or deference. Such privileges come with experience, and someone born to Rusthaven has never had to deal with the hardships of the outside world or of being chased from their homes, exiled and abandoned. Rustborn children, those with afflictions inherited from their Iron-touched parents, are looked upon mostly with a sort of wistful envy. These children have the best of both worlds, benefiting from a community that accepts and respects them and never having to experience the prejudices of the world outside.

In rare cases, children are born in Rusthaven to Iron-touched parents that don't inherit or develop any afflictions. Born by all accounts normal, these

children are subject to a lot of mixed feelings. Some resent them for being what they have lost and will never regain, a painful reminder of what it is to be 'normal'. Others are proud, glad to see some beauty amid the sea of ugliness and deformity they have come to accept as their lives. More often than not, peoples attitudes are a complex mix of both.

When outsiders arrive in Rusthaven, those obviously Iron-touched are welcomed like long lost brothers, at least at first. As long as they prove useful to the town in some way, that never changes but those that have nothing to offer soon find they get the cold shoulder and in short order after find the town hostile towards them until they are forced to contribute, leave, or worse. For outsiders that are not Iron-touched, things are not so simple. Many residents of Rusthaven are resentful of the way they were forced from their old lives and lash out at anyone from that old world, whilst others are terrified, afraid that those that hated them so much have come to put an end to them once and for all. However, most residents are all too aware that people shouldn't be judged by their appearance, and so they tolerate, with a lot of suspicion, the presence of outsiders for a time. While not outrightly hostile, the residents of Rusthaven are not particularly friendly either, but if an outsider can earn just one resident's trust, the rest will soon follow. Mutants and automatons that wander into Rusthaven are welcome much like the Iron-touched, though some among the Iron-touched view them as 'pretenders' that haven't experienced 'true suffering' like they have.

EVENTS

Being a tight-knit community that needs to work together to survive, Haveners have a number of seasonal rituals, holidays and events they take part in as a community.

THE FESTIVAL OF SMOKE is a quarterly festival where the town comes together to honour the workers of Bluestock and the hard, bloody work they do. Adorning bright colours and collecting strong incenses, perfumes and fragrant oils, the residents dance through the streets of Bluestock and through the Smokers Row. They burn unique compounds created on the fly to turn Bluestock into a huge cloud of sweet smelling smoke and the excessive amounts of it caught by the dome cause the smells to linger and change in the air for weeks,

Children are a rare sight in Rusthaven. Many residents are unable to have children due to their afflictions and others simply don't want to, viewing it as an unnecessary cruelty to bring a child into such a world, a child that might have to live with a terrible affliction from birth.

providing a welcome change from the smell of meat and blood-smoke that usually emanates from Bluestock.

THE BONE HARVEST is the largest harvest of the year where the town takes to the bone fields and harvests the bony protrusions growing there. All the large, useful bones are collected for industry and the smallest ones for replanting. All the ones in-between are used to make toys, dolls and other simple craft items, or ground down with blood from Bluestock to make a thick red-brown mulch that is distributed to the other farms as fertiliser, or cooked with other ingredients into special, harvest blood-cakes.

MIRROR DAY occurs only once a year. When the sun reaches a certain position in the sky and the conditions are right, the mirrored monoliths all catch the light and reflect it out into the dome in a wash of rainbow light. Feasts, dancing and other entertainments are had and all work stops for the few hours that it lasts.

REMEMBRANCE NIGHT is a sombre festival that, despite the name, is held in the day. At the height of the storm season when the storms around the dome that protects Rusthaven are so thick that they blot out the sun (which is quite a feat due to the strange properties of the dome that allow them to see normally most of the time), the town gathers together to tell stories of the past, the outside world and what their lives were like before they came to Rusthaven.

PLACES OF INTEREST

Rusthaven is an immense dome approximately 2km in diameter. Excavations done at the edges of town show the dome doesn't merely stop at the surface, but continues underground and some people think the dome might actually be a huge sphere. Inside the dome, the land is split out into a number of districts that have formed organically over the years.

BLUESTOCK: The center of Rusthaven, Bluestock takes its name from the towns primary water source and the main source of meat and skins for leather working. The central district is a warren of small, tightly packed buildings but they've long since become inaccessible due to the expanding bulk of Ellod. Nowadays Ellod's flesh

spreads out, filling the alleys and small buildings that surrounded the well, but Maran Bas and Chief Butcher Brolrus Knoa work together with their respective crews to cut back the tide of flesh. With Ellod mostly in a stupor, he barely notices and the crews provide a valuable service and source of meat and skins for leather-working. While newcomers are often horrified by the practice, it has been going on long enough that most residents think nothing of what is effectively cannibalism.

The meat industry in Rusthaven has become central to the operation of the town. The butchering continues non-stop through both the day and night, to prevent Ellods body from enveloping the town. From Ellod comes most of the town's materials for their clothes and buildings, as well as food. Meat is cut, packaged and distributed around town for free, skin is sent to the tanners and bone to the builders who use it to make tools or supports for buildings and furniture.

While Ellod blocks access to the primary source of water, his body draws it up to sustain his growth and deposits pockets of water within his body. The butchers typically tap these pockets for water, as well as extract it from the blood they spill when cutting back Ellod. Ellod himself heals extremely rapidly and even when lucid seems unaware of the harvesting of his flesh, most of the feeling in his body long gone. He isn't merely some placid animal to be milked and butchered though, and he uses his near monopoly on water to secure himself some measure of influence, much of which he earns by deliberately manipulating the passage of water in his body to reward those he sees fit with pure water direct from the well, rather than that extracted from his various lumps and growths.

At the south edge of Bluestock stands one of the largest buildings in Rusthaven. Its northern walls have long since collapsed under the weight of Ellods expanding wall of flesh, but the building is sturdy and is now used as the meeting place for the Small Council. Known simply as the Council House, most Small Council meetings are held there in a large hall on the lower floor. Ellod attends these meetings in an unusual way, his face emerging from the rolls of flesh that spill through the collapsed wall in order to converse, though more often merely to listen silently. Ava the Switch, as the defacto Mayor of Rusthaven has the right to live in the Council House, but she avoids staying there

Maran Bas, pg. 39

Brolus Knoa, pg. 40

Blood-cake, restores 3 points to your pools.

The Monoliths, pg. 37

Eating Ellod's flesh can cause a number of side-effects. The Iron-touched seem unaffected, but other people can find they develop tremors, shivers, headaches and other symptoms from consumption of the meat unless they succeed at a level 3 might defense task.

*Ava the Switch and
Broom, pg. 41*

*For possible
'hauntings' see
Protobeasts, pg. 84*

longer than she has to, preferring to live outside of Bluestock entirely. Apart from the safety issues of living in a house where the lower north wall has collapsed, Ava much like many other Rusthaven residents believes that the Council House is haunted and many a story has been told about strange noises and movements going on at night within the large, old building. For the most part, these can be explained by the twisted faces that sometimes show up in Ellods flesh or the weirder creatures that sometimes bud off from him. Some think it's Ellod himself who is haunted, rather than the Council House.

Due to the rumours of hauntings and the spreading bulk of Ellod, most of Bluestock lays abandoned except by the butchers and tanners, who have claimed most buildings and constructed new ones to house their wares and perform their work. Butchers and tanners are considered a little odd, not just because of the grimness of their profession but also their continued residence in Bluestock despite the hauntings. The butchers and

tanners dismiss any such rumours as foolish scaremongering, though they will be first to admit the smell of the blood-gutters that run from their slaughter-houses can be hard to stomach to those not used to them. The only resident that still lives amongst the butchers and tanners is an aging Nano whose lower body was rebuilt into a cluster of thousands of mobile bristles, earning her the nickname Broom. Broom's expertise has allowed her to perfect a method of extracting clean water from the blood that runs into the blood-gutters. It's a complicated procedure that involves a number of unique pieces of equipment and ingredients, but Broom manages to make do with whatever scraps she can find. She's always keen to inspect whatever cyphers and oddities people can bring to her in the hopes of improving her extraction system.

SMOKERS ROW: In a ring encircling Bluestock runs Smokers Row, a series of smoke houses and huts for curing and smoking meat and skins. They are manned continuously day and night, filling the town with the delicious scent of cooked meats and



serving a dual purpose of drowning out the smell of the blood-gutters. Smokers Row also acts as a dam for keeping Ellod's flesh at bay. As well as the houses and huts, a series of strong stone and metal walls have been erected. While they won't hold back the tide for long, they will at least force Ellod to grow upwards rather than outwards, at least for a short time, if the butchers can not keep up with his growth.

THE VERGES: Past the northern edge of Smokers Row is a large gouge in the earth, lined with smooth stone, glass and metal, like a huge, scabbed over scar in the ground. Known as the Verges by the locals, the strange trench would be an excellent source of useful materials if not for one problem. Anything that spends any time in the trench longer than a few minutes begins getting ill, suffering headaches, nausea and itching, followed by bleeding, vomiting and skin lesions. People that enter can stay sick for days afterwards, so no-one enters the otherwise safe looking Verges without a very good reason. Some people think the Verges will serve well as a barrier for Ellod's bulk and that the northern walls should be taken down to reinforce the others. So far, the Small Council has ruled against it, afraid of what might happen if Ellod's flesh, and thus the water supply, becomes contaminated by whatever force causes such terrible things in the Verges.

On the other side of the Verges is a small ring of buildings kept by Ezkritzki, a relatively normal Varjellan who was fused with the armour he was wearing when the Iron Wind took him, costing him his ability to reforge. Ezkritzki hunts and captures the strange creatures that sometimes bud off of Ellod's body, keeping them in cages and running any number of experiments on them. It is cruel work and mentally exhausting, but being a Varjellan, Ezkritzki isn't really bothered by the things he does in order to learn more about Ellod's condition and the strange creatures that grow from him. After many years of experimentation, Ezkritzki has yet to settle on one single theory but he has several ideas he would like to test out. He would be quite willing to pay people to explore the ruined streets of Bluestock, and even Ellod's flesh itself, to see if they can confirm his theories.

THE MONOLITHS: North of the Verges and dotted around the whole of Rusthaven are clusters of strange monoliths. Always in groups of three

and arranged in a triangle grouping. The monoliths are curved, mirrored slabs of some unknown and extremely hard metal that seem to be entirely unmarked by time. Each monolith's curved surface faces towards the center of Rusthaven, showing a reflection of the town.

Around the monoliths nothing grows and any organic material left nearby begins to break down and spoil rapidly. Living creatures however, do not seem to be affected, but due to the inability to store food nearby, the areas surrounding the monoliths remain uninhabited.

The only exception to the rule is a single, lone monolith standing in the fields to the west of the center of the dome. The lone monolith appears exactly the same as the others, but unlike them it seems to have no ill effect on the crops that grow in the field. There are no signs that there were ever other monoliths accompanying it.

EFRIXT'S BONE FIELDS: To the northwest of the Verges lies Efrixt's Bone Fields. Efrixt, a varjellan afflicted with strange vegetable growths spread across his body, took to planting and cultivating the plants in the rough soil of Rusthaven. After several years, he has a large field of extremely unusual crops. Unlike the plants that grow directly from his body, which are lush and full of greenery, the fields are covered with bony growths, the plants growing into tall, twisted limbs of Varjellan bone. Due to Varjellan's natural reforging ability, the bone-plants seem to have kept this ability in a limited sense and can be bent and shaped, whilst still retaining their strength.

The bones are harvested when they have grown tall enough, or large enough to splinter and snap under their own weight. Once gathered, they are used for numerous things, from building tools, weapons and furnishings, to use as beams and supports for the buildings of Rusthaven.

In the north-most field, the bone-plants grow around a strange artifact. In the middle of the field stands a matte red cuboid, approximately 60ft on each side. More accurately, it doesn't rest on the ground, but remains motionless just an inch above the surface. Each face of the cube has a flat, square hatch with an indentation forming a handle, but no-one has ever been able to open any of them. Nothing seems to harm the cube and the cube looks the same colour red regardless of lighting conditions, even in complete darkness it stands out

*Varjellan, Numenera
corebook, pg. 121*

Ezkritzki, pg 42

Efrixt, pg. 40

Rusthaven's farm land took several decades to become what it is today. Broom was also instrumental in helping to splice and breed hardy plants that could survive the harsh conditions.

One of the core crops that make up Rusthaven's farm land is a vegetable-like fruit called Sampa. The fruit has a thick, rubbery rind that can be used for a number of things like soles for shoes or handles for tools, but it is the sweet, syrupy Sampa juice for which it is most highly prized.

just as red as it does in the high noon sun. More disturbing is that the cube wasn't always there. One day there was a loud clap, like thunder, and ever since the cube has been there, just appeared out of nowhere. Nobody knows whether it will disappear again or if it is there for good, in any event it seems completely benign, so Efixt simply ignores it.

SECOND HOME: Southwest of Bluestock lies the small settlement of Second Home. After it was clear Ellod's growth could not be stopped fast enough, what is now Bluestock was evacuated and all the residents began to rebuild just southwest of the flesh-flooded town. That town came to be known as Second Home, though technically it is actually the third settlement created in Rusthaven, with Bluestock (originally known simply as Well) being the second and Gate (by the Southern entrance to the dome) being the first.

Second Home has two main quarters. The first is a densely packed series of small huts and cottages, near the boundaries of Smokers Row. The first refugees settled here and built quickly, so the Cramped Quarter, as it's commonly known, is defined by its narrow streets and small, randomly orientated buildings. It is also sometimes referred to as the Hotel, as each building is so close to each other it's almost like being in separate rooms of the same building rather than a town.

The second quarter is given over to agriculture and industry. Filled with large buildings for work and farming, the unnamed second quarter serves to support the only working 'conventional' farm in Rusthaven. Whilst the soil in Rusthaven is not very conducive to growing plants or much of anything beyond ugly, stunted scrub, years of hard work importing soils from elsewhere, collecting water, irrigating the area and finding and breeding hardy, yet edible plants has given rise to a sizable farm that can support Rusthaven's needs. No one person lays a claim to the farm, the whole town coming together in joint ownership to both work it and to reap its rewards. In many ways it's one of the town's proudest achievements and Ava in particular looks upon it fondly as a symbol of how through adversity people can come together to help one another.

PALAVAN'S ANIMAL NURSERY: Southeast of Bluestock, far from the town and close to the edge of the dome, Palavan keeps a nursery of animals collected from outside of Rusthaven. He strictly

makes sure they are free of any mutations or corruptions, slaughtering and burning any that show even the faintest sign of being tainted. He does this not out of prejudice, but in order to keep his stock pure and healthy so they can be bred to provide meat for the town as an alternative to eating Ellod. Palavan finds the very idea of eating of Ellod's flesh barbaric and whilst he could forgive the necessity back in the old days, he despairs over those that still choose Ellod's flesh over a nice, healthy aneen steak. As well as breeding animals for meat, Palavan also breeds and trains them for working the fields and carrying heavy loads.

Of course, Palavan's animal breeding does him no favours. Already despised for his 'purity', many residents are of the impression that his purebred animals are just another reminder of what they once had and are a direct insult to their new lives in Rusthaven. Palavan naturally denies any such intent, his parents were mutants and he just wants to make sure that people can eat healthy meat without the risk of contracting anything from a mutated source.

Being situated so far from everyone else, most people tend to think of Palavan as prejudiced and afraid his precious animals will catch some terrible affliction from another resident. In truth, Palavan is a little afraid of that, but he would never admit it, even to himself. His normality is a curse as far as he is concerned, but he is a part of Rusthaven and it's a burden he has to bear to ensure the safety of the town and its supply of livestock.

GATE: At the southmost end of the dome is a large crack through which people can leave and enter. When Rusthaven was first settled, the newcomers made their camp around the crack, calling the small town Gate, as it served as the entrance into Rusthaven at large.

Gate has shrunk over the years. It is an unpopular place to live, due to its distance from the sole water source and its proximity to the entrance and anyone who might come through with ill-intentions. However, a few people make what is little more than a ghost town their home. Those that remember first arriving at Rusthaven recall all too clearly how it felt to arrive in a place filled with welcoming people afflicted just like themselves and so they stay to make sure that no-one ever has to arrive to an empty town. Gate is also home to a basic militia, stationed there to defend Rusthaven.

PEOPLE OF INTEREST

Rusthaven is home to several hundred people, but there are a few characters that stand out amongst the crowd and take a larger role in shaping the destiny of the dome and those within in.

ELLOD KOSSAY

A huge man, or what was once a man, Ellod's body was warped by the Iron Wind into an ever expanding mass of flesh. Once a proud glaive, nowadays his limbs are long gone, lost underneath the huge folds of his body, his face emerging at random from the surface of his skin, like a man underwater gasping for air. However, that is not the most horrific thing about his condition. Sometimes other faces emerge on the surface of Ellod's flesh and try to speak. Worse, tumorous growths bud off from his body and shape themselves into deformed beasts that roam the town and surrounding areas. Those that witness such things do their best to ignore them, part out of fear and part out of respect for their fellow afflicted.

APPEARANCE: Ellod's features are mostly lost within the expansive bulk of his frame and he looks more like a huge mound of flesh than a man. That said, his face does appear every now and again, emerging from the sea of flesh like a whale coming up for air. Stretched out on the surface of his bulk, his face is just about recognisable by those who knew him before the change, but any who did are now likely long dead.

STATS: Level 4, level 0 for all physical actions. Effectively immortal.

MARAN BAS

A rustwalker, a member of the Small Council and the Chief Tanner of Bluestock, Maran Bas is popular and well known. She is first and foremost a hard worker, and she takes her job very seriously. People rely on her and she refuses to let them down under any circumstance. She loves Rusthaven and the sanctuary it has given her; she would do anything to protect it.

APPEARANCE: Maran is a stocky woman in her mid-thirties, with tough, well-defined muscles earned from long days of hard work. Her hair is long and dark and she uses it to cover her face. Peering behind the hair reveals that her eyes are gone, replaced with a cluster of sharp needles - she doesn't seem to have trouble seeing though.

STATS: Level 3, level 4 for physical tasks, level 5 for tanning. Health 20



Efrix arrived in Rusthaven shortly before the fall of Bluestock to Ellod's bulk. Ultimately, it was his bonefarm that enabled the residents to rebuild and expand so rapidly and much of Rusthaven owes its survival to the farm he created. However, his huge contribution to Rusthaven's history often goes unrecognised against the ever-present backdrop of Ellod's expanding bulk.

PALAVAN NY

Palavan Ny is the son of the late Prostan Ny and Grey Ava. Born unmarked by either of his parents' afflictions, Palavan is a perfectly ordinary human being, which in a place like Rusthaven, makes him stand out. A lot of people are jealous of him or judge him harshly because of his purity, and he does himself no favours by running a pure-breed farm, even though he only has the best of intentions.

APPEARANCE: Palavan is a physically unremarkable man with mousey brown hair. He tries to wear a neutral or pleasant expression on his face but you can tell the prejudice he gets for his normality is wearing him down.

STATS: Level 2, level 4 farming. Health 10.

BASTIR

Bastir is one of the few outsiders welcome into Rusthaven that hasn't been iron-touched. A mutant, Bastir is no stranger to persecution himself and found Rusthaven whilst fleeing the Angulan Knights. Bastir has a place on the Small Council as a representative of the people. Whilst Maran, Palavan, Ava and Efrix all have important jobs or positions, Bastir is just like everyone else and provides a common voice from the average Rusthaven resident.

APPEARANCE: Bastir is a tall man with a bad back causing him to walk with a hunch. His mutation manifests as luminous blue skin and a hard, chitinous shell that covers his back. Like his skin, his hair is also a luminous blue and glows faintly in darkness.

STATS: Level 1, level 3 social interactions. Armour 3. Health 5.

EFRIXT

Efrix is a varjellan rustwalker whose entire left side seems to be made of lush plant-growth. His close relationship with plant life has brought him into the role of farmer and his growths served as the initial seeds for what is now a flourishing crop farm. Sadly, in normal soil his plants seem to grow into a substance similar to varjellan bone rather than anything edible, but he has become quite well studied on plantlife and agriculture and tends several other crops brought in from outside Rusthaven. It is a strange change of pace for the varjellan, who used to be a skilled warrior before the Wind took him. Outside of his farm, he spends his time advising on the Small Council.

APPEARANCE: Efrix is short for a varjellan and his strange fish like skin has a reddish colouration to it. His plants grow directly from his skin in patches of vivid greens, reds and oranges, displaying both leafy greenery and brightly coloured fruits.

STATS: Level 4, level 6 agricultural tasks. Armour 1. Health 20.

BROLUS KNOA

When it was clear Ellod's continued growth would not stop, it was Brolus who started the cutting back of his flesh and it was he who then suggested eating it. With a limited food source, it was the most logical, if disturbing, choice. Appointing himself Chief Butcher, Brolus took on the unpleasant task of cutting back and butchering Ellod's flesh and views himself as the only one with the stomach for doing what needs to be done. Though most don't care to admit it, Brolus' push to eat Ellod is what allowed Rusthaven to thrive and grow to the size it has.

Despite what he has done for the town, Brolus is not a popular man; gruff and short-tempered, he is neither patient nor particularly pleasant to work with. As one of the oldest residents of Rusthaven, having arrived shortly after Ellod's occupation of the well, many would expect him to sit on the Small Council. However, despite his long residence, Brolus holds no seat, which he claims is because he is too busy, but in reality is due to his abrasive personality.

APPEARANCE: Brolus is iron-touched and his right forearm is gone, replaced with a sharp black blade. His skin is slightly transparent and insects can be seen crawling through his veins instead of blood. Brolus looks like a proud, aging tree of a man, standing strong and tall, though his beard and hair are a matted, grey

mess as he rarely bothers to take care of his appearance - it never lasts long in his line of work.

STATS: Level 4, level 5 with a blade. Health 30.

AVA THE SWITCH

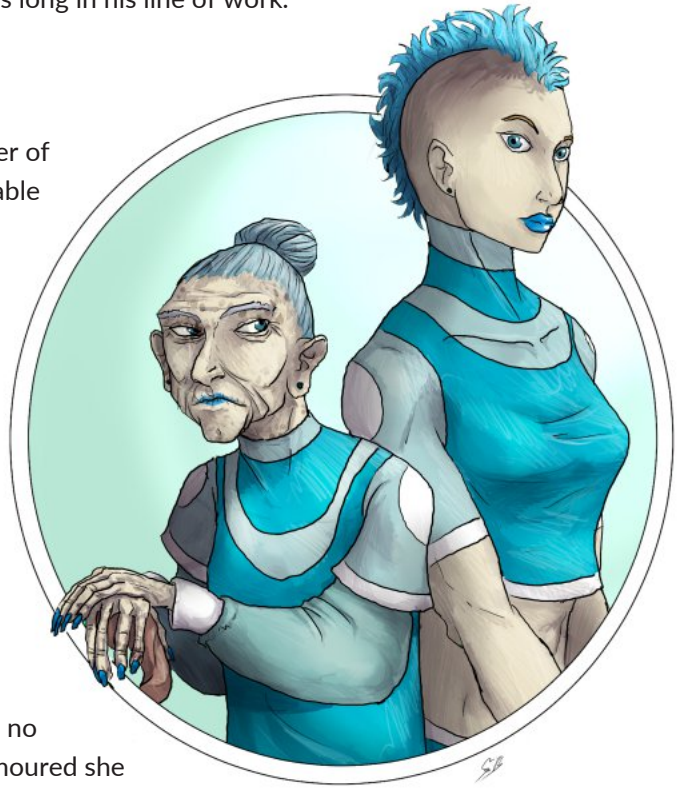
Ava the Switch is the mediator of the Small Council and de-facto leader of Rusthaven. For the most part her iron-touched affliction is not noticeable until she shifts from one form into another. Normally she is an older woman that most refer to as Grey Ava, but she occasionally phases out to be replaced by a much younger woman, one that could easily be mistaken for her daughter or younger self with vibrant blue hair who the others call Blue Ava.

Both women claim to be the 'true' Ava and both retain a seat on the council. They are both forceful women with a drive to achieve success, but while Grey Ava tends to rule by telling others what to do and making the right decisions, Blue Ava takes a more diplomatic approach to reach a group consensus. Grey Ava's relationship with the late Proston Ny put a lot of strain on her relationship with her Blue counterpart and is no small part of the reason they hate each other. Grey Ava blames Blue Ava for his death, the stress of her appearances driving him to an early grave. Blue Ava of course claimed no interest in Proston or any responsibility for his death, but it's been rumoured she finds Grey Ava's son, Palavan, quite attractive and she always speaks up against the prejudice he suffers.

APPEARANCE: Grey Ava is an older woman in her mid-fifties, but looks much older. Her face is lined with deep wrinkles and she keeps her hair secured in a taciturn, grey bun. She walks with a cane due to her aching bones but she clearly has some life in her, giving people who mess with her a vicious thwack with her stick far stronger than her frail appearance would suggest.

Blue Ava is in her mid-twenties and has a shock of electric blue hair in a short mohawk. She is fit and agile but prefers a more peaceful, sedentary existence working on the organisation of the town and the politics of running it.

STATS: Level 4. Grey Ava level 6 intimidation, level 2 might tasks, level 5 attacks with cane; Blue Ava level 6 diplomacy, level 5 speed tasks, level 2 attacks.



BROOM

Kaida Suum, or Broom as she is more commonly known, was an Aeon Priest before the Wind touched her. She is a skilled Nano, though her advanced years have left her brain a bit addled, and she's been a fixture of Bluestock for as long as anyone cares to remember. In fact, some people think she may even have known Ellod before he over-grew the centre of town, though Broom herself doesn't recall. Broom spends most of her time researching ways to cure Ellod and, in the meantime, extract water from him, since he blocks and controls the town's primary water source. She has a number of complex devices and machines she has cobbled together over the years which provide a lot of the town's water, but it is never quite good enough, so she is always searching for new components to upgrade it with.

APPEARANCE: Broom gets her name from her affliction. When the Iron Wind warped her flesh, it replaced her lower half with a series of mechanical bristles that she can manipulate to move around. Apart from her affliction, she looks like a kindly, old woman with dark brown skin and a face worn from too much laughter. She wears thick goggles to help her see.

STATS: Level 5, level 6 numenera tasks, long movement. Health 20.

Most people leave Ezkritzki to his own devices, partially out of fear and partially out of respect. His melancholy and unstable moods make him dangerous, and they'd rather he take out his cruelties on the strange creatures that emerge from Ellod than one of the residents.

EZKRITZKI

Ezkritzki is a battle-hardened old soldier and it shows. He takes great pride as a varjellan, so his affliction has broken his spirit. Having lost his ability to reforge due to his armour becoming fused to his body by the Iron Wind, Ezkritzki is a depressed loner who stays away from everyone. Living on the clearing just North of the Verges, he researches the strange creatures that occasionally emerge from Ellod's flesh. He runs various tests and experiments on them, ones that any normal person would find cruel and inhumane, in order to learn more about Ellod's condition and the creatures themselves.

APPEARANCE: Permanently wearing a suit of armour that blends into his flesh, with a distant stare and a scowl on his face, Ezkritzki is quite unusual compared to most varjellan. He is quick to anger and prone to bouts of melancholy—unusually emotional compared to others of his race; a fact, which when pointed out, only makes him more angry and bitter. He is covered with scars from old battles and his frills are tattered and torn.

STATS: Level 4, level 5 biology. Health 20. Armour 3.

STEINER-FROS

Steiner-Fros is a lattimor that has taken on the role as Sheriff of Gate. Unelected, but welcome to it, Steiner-Fros makes sure that the community comes together to pull guard duty and maintenance work. Quite popular with the people he looks after, his mood swings and personality changes are overlooked or accepted, but others in the main town find him unstable and a little threatening.

APPEARANCE: Steiner-Fros looks like a typical lattimor, but where his neem patch would be is instead a large, crinkled hump, much like the surface of a brain. In fact, all evidence of the neem fungus seems to be absent, even though his neem state still exists.

STATS: Level 5, level 6 attacks in bursk, level 6 diplomacy in neem. Health 25.

WEIRD OF RUSTHAVEN

CHILDREN OF THE WIND: Outside of Rusthaven, a miniature Iron Wind, or Iron dust-devil, sometimes sweeps through the area by the entrance to Gate, leaving a trail of warped material in its wake. Every 4 years on the same day, one of the things formed by its passing is a living baby, often with some kind of mutation or corrosion.

THE RED CUBE: While no-one has ever managed to open the hatches on the strange red cube in the Bone Fields, on occasion, one of the Rusthaven residents who tries remembers succeeding. They remember only fragments; the sensation of falling for hours, followed by days of being lost in darkness, even though they have never been missing and no such time can be accounted for.

THE LONELY MIRROR: The lone monolith reflects its surroundings just like the others, but it only ever reflects one person at a time, and some people never at all. All those that appear reflected appear slightly different - sadder, bitter, angrier, and never seem to have any items or clothing with them that were given to them by loved ones or friends.

ON THE VERGE OF CREATION: Sometimes the strange creatures that bud off from Ellod's flesh steal small items, especially oddities and other numenera, and take them into the Verges. The creatures work furiously, attempting to build something with the stash they've collected, but never survive long enough to make much progress. No-one knows what they are building, or why, and no-one can reach it to get a closer look.

IMPOSTERS: On particularly bad nights, when Ellod's bulk is quivering and shifting, strange creaks and echoes bounce through the streets of Bluestock. During those times, perfect duplicates of residents can be found, dead or dying. The copies are incredibly lifelike, but they lack orifices - their nostrils and mouths are sealed - and their clothes seems to grow directly from their bodies and have the texture of rough skin.

HEARSAY OF RUSTHAVEN

Many strange things have happened in and around Rusthaven over the years. The history of the small town goes back as far as 230 years, though there are few records before the establishment of the Small Council. Most of the past exists only as oral history passed down from person-to-person, so a lot is inaccurate, missing or completely fictional. The Small Council and the town historian have tried to recreate records from the various tales that cover past events, but naturally they are not very reliable.

The origins of Rusthaven are murky at best and little is known about the early days, but stories tell of how a small group of Rustchasers that were caught in a Wind found the dome and decided to turn the fable of Rusthaven into a reality. In the early days, the dome was dangerous and inhabited by vicious beasts, so the settlement grew around the entrance to the dome rather than explore further inwards. Soon, as they grew, the dome was explored further and the well at the center was discovered. Eventually, more and more exiles, rejects and survivors of the Iron Wind arrived. Settlers built the town into the beginnings of what it is today and then Ellod Kossay arrived.

According to some, Ellod Kossay used his mastery of combat to threaten and control, setting himself up as leader through might alone. However, under his direction, the dome was cleared of beasts and his hard rule brought structure to the rabble. As the group of refugees were just beginning to become a proper community, his affliction from the Iron Wind began to make itself known with a vengeance. He began to get increasingly hungry and thirsty until he was almost constantly eating and drinking.

One day, his thirst drove him to throw himself into the well that had been discovered in the center of the dome. Many thought he was dead and when no water could be drawn from the well, they soon discovered what had happened. He hadn't died, but had grown, filling up the well as he absorbed the water. As his growth continued, his bulk emerged out of the well upto the surface, and he used his position to his advantage. He could manipulate the flow of water up to the surface through channels within his mutated and swollen body, thus providing a water source to the town - if they met his demands. As time went on, and his body spread further and further, his mind slipped deeper and deeper into a fugue until eventually the Small Council took over.

THE LOST LIBRARY: Rumour has it a library is lost inside the inner town beneath the bulk of Ellod Kossay's flesh. A few even believe that it might contain Ellod's personal journals or history books about the town's past, but no-one has been able to reach it or even confirm it exists.

MURDER IN THE VERGES: One of the town's residents was found dead just within the edge of the Verges. The terrible effects of the verges rendered them all but unrecognisable, but it is certainly no accident - the body's hands and feet were bound. Someone in town is a murderer.

A STORM IS COMING: A new arrival to Rusthaven has been predicting the coming of an Iron Wind, one that the dome of Rusthaven will not be able to stand against. When questioned about how they know such things, the newcomer merely says "they" whisper it to them, and that this "they" have never been wrong before.

SAVAGE ROCKS: Some of the rocks outside Rusthaven were animated by an Iron Wind and now prowl the wastes. They are slow, but dangerous, and those that live in Gate would like to see them eliminated in case they attack new arrivals.

MISSING MEAT: A large cache of cured meat has gone missing, more than anyone could easily carry or eat, even with help. The storehouse has no signs of being broken into, but it does look like something clawed its way out from the inside. The Small Council is offering a reward to anyone that can find the cause and stop it from happening again.

This is one version of Rusthaven's history, the one most popularly believed, but others exist. No-one truly knows exactly what happened all those years ago and neither Ellod nor those like Broom, who are thought to have lived in those times, are talking.

*There's a voice in the Wind and it's crying
And a face on the rocks with tears in its eyes
This Iron-touched 'chaser, this scoundrel, this waster
In the Rust, his lover, he never did find*

*Defeated and broken, now Rusthaven bound
Defeated and broken, now Rusthaven bound
This Iron-touched 'chaser, this scoundrel, this waster
In the Rust, his lover, he never did find*

EXCERPT FROM "THE RUSTCHASER'S LOVER",
A RUSTCHASER FOLK SONG



PART 3: CREATURES & CHARACTERS

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DESCRIPTORS

OVERVIEW

Those who are touched by the Wind and survive are often left with a legacy of terrible afflictions. In rare cases, however, the Wind grants blessings as well as curses that can also be passed down to future generations. In any event, survivors wander the world forever marked by the Wind, for better or worse, some more so than others.

Unlike the descriptors in the corebook, in this chapter many of the descriptors have negative effects as well as positive ones - surviving the Iron Wind is rarely a pleasant experience. The important thing to remember is that descriptors aren't just a collection of positive and negative attributes, but they define your outlook on the world and how the world looks upon you.

As part of the descriptors comes a brand new set of mutation-like abilities and afflictions called Corrosions. Corrosions are changes caused by the Iron Wind and the some of the descriptors, much like the Mutant descriptor from the corebook, can be created with a particular load out of abilities and afflictions, or be generated randomly. Where mutations and corrosions differ is that all corrosions are always distinctive in addition to being powerful, beneficial or harmful. While some mutants might be able to hide their mutations, a corrosion is always obvious.

NIHILISTIC

Nothing matters, there is no meaning, no rhyme nor reason to anything in this pointless existence. You are empty inside, but that doesn't matter because everyone else is too. There is nothing to hope for and nothing to fear - just acceptance of the yawning void of meaningless that waits to consume us all.

This doesn't mean you are apathetic, but you know that ultimately anything you do is futile. Your will is the only thing that is real, and even that is an illusion.

You gain the following benefits:

NOTHING MATTERS: You are trained in intellect defense and resisting persuasion. You don't care about anything.

DESTRUCTION IS TRUTH: You are trained in any action taken in aid of utterly destroying something. Everything is temporary.

DEAD INSIDE: People flap their fleshy tongues and pour out fetid garbage from their minds. They disgust you with their ignorance. Pleasant social interactions are two steps more difficult for you.

INITIAL LINK TO THE STARTING ADVENTURE:

From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

- You seek out destruction and these people are going to lead you straight to it.
- Sheer chance brings you here. To believe in purpose or fate is foolish.
- The group saved you from death, now you will save them by guiding them to it.
- You willed it so, for your own desire is all that is real in this world.

RUSTBORN

Iron-touched rarely end up having children due to inability or the difficulty of finding a partner. If they do it is often with another afflicted, the two coming together in part due to their shared circumstances. Much like how mutants are often the descendants of other mutants, Rustborn are the children of Iron Wind survivors. Consequently, Rustborn often inherit strange combinations of attributes from both parents or even develop entirely new ones. Luckily the worst and most obvious afflictions are rarely inherited, so often a Rustborn can pass for a mutant and if exceptionally lucky, even an ordinary human.

What makes the Rustborn stand out isn't what is on the outside, but on the inside. Through some quirk of nature or the workings of the Wind itself, Rustborn are born with an inherent ability to sense oncoming winds and resist its warping effects. Rustborn, though reviled by some due to their iron-touched heritage, are often prized members of Rustchaser troupes due to their abilities to track the Wind. Some Rustchasers even consider them a good luck charm for their resistant abilities.

You gain the following benefits:

BORN DIFFERENT: Your strange heritage is plain to see - roll for two cosmetic mutations.

STORMSENSE: When you focus, you can sense the direction of the nearest Iron Wind storm long before it is detectable by normal means. Once per session, you can ask the GM about the Iron Wind and be told the direction of the nearest one within 10 miles.

RESILIENT: Your heritage has made you hardy against disruption. You are trained in might defense.

CHANGED: You were born with one beneficial and one harmful mutation. For each one, roll 1d100, for results below 51, refer to the mutations tables in the core rulebook, for 51+, select a corrosion from the beneficial corruptions table on page 51 or the harmful corruptions table on page 53 respectively.

INITIAL LINK TO THE STARTING ADVENTURE:

From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

- You offered to help guide the other PCs past

an Iron Wind.

- One of the other PCs wanted a good luck charm for their next endeavour and you fit the bill.
- One of the PCs saved you from a group of thugs prejudice against Rustborn or mutants and you are repaying a debt.
- You want to define yourself by more than your heritage and so you took the first opportunity for adventure.

RECKLESS

You give no thought to danger or the safety of yourself or others. Through fate, chance or just blind luck somehow your attitude hasn't gotten you killed. In fact, your willingness to fly in the face of danger has earned you no small measure of respect and put more than a few shins in your pocket, though not without some scars to show for it.

You are attracted to dangerous work, putting your life on the line makes you feel alive. Likely you wear flamboyant, light clothing and eschew armour, preferring to move quickly and deftly. You're smart enough not to get yourself killed, but not an academic by any means. What you lack in raw intellect or cunning, you make up for in bravado and agility, reacting quickly to danger rather than avoiding it in the first place. More often than not, reckless individuals such as yourself find themselves on the frontier, combing the wake of an Iron Wind as a Rustchaser or delving into a monsters lair for their next big score.

You gain the following benefits:

QUICK REFLEXES: +2 to your Speed Pool.

FEARLESS: Nothing scares you. You are trained in resisting fear and intimidation.

SKILL: You are trained in speed defense actions.

INABILITY: You find judging potential danger dull and pointless. All tasks relating to identifying danger are one step more difficult.

INABILITY: Due to your reckless nature, people find it difficult trusting you not to put them in harms way. Attempts to gain the trust of others are one step more difficult.

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT: Through reckless acts, you've earned some favours here and there, managing to collect an additional 10 shins.

*Mutants, Numenera
corebook, pg. 123*

GM Intrusion:
While you can take the time and effort to cover up your mark, it has a way of revealing itself at the worst possible moments. The more effort you've put into hiding your mark, the worse people will react when your secret reveals itself. Make up fades or is wiped off, masks are damaged or fall, hair or hoods are blown aside. Sooner or later, your luck will fail.

INITIAL LINK TO THE STARTING ADVENTURE:

From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

- It sounded dangerous and danger is all the invitation you need.
- Your reckless actions caused harm to one of the PCs or their loved ones and you are repaying a debt.
- You angered the wrong people with your reckless attitude and this is just the excuse to get out of town.
- You blew all of your money on a million-to-one game of chance. You could do with some extra shins.

SHUNNED

You're different, and people fear and despise that difference. Something you did in your past, perhaps through no fault of your own, has left you marked as someone to be avoided and shunned. You might have been touched by the Iron Wind and been lucky enough to get off with only a mild cosmetic alteration or perhaps you are an ex-convict, branded with a mark identifying you and your crime to others.

No matter what happened, you try to put your past behind you but it isn't easy. Often you are targeted for blackmail, for jobs people don't want or just as a victim to be beaten upon as punishment for offending others prejudices. Such a life has made you hard and cunning, teaching you the skills to hide your mark and the strength to stand up against a hostile world.

You gain the following benefits:

TOUGH: You can take a beating. +4 to your Might Pool

SKILL: You are trained in disguise tasks related to your mark.

SKILL: You are trained in remaining unnoticed and out-of-sight.

INABILITY: If discovered, all social interaction tasks are two steps more difficult for you and anyone known to associate with you.

INABILITY: Your mark is very obvious and by default a difficulty 0 task to notice without any disguise or other means of obscuring it.

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT: Simple disguise kit for covering your mark.

INITIAL LINK TO THE STARTING ADVENTURE:

From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

- You were fleeing persecution and the other PCs took you in.
- You are seeking redemption for your sins and offered your services to the group by way of penance.
- You took the blame for something another player did, and everyone was more than willing to believe someone like you was responsible. The PC invited you to join them as thanks.
- Living on the edge of society, shunned and alone makes getting shins hard. You could do with some money.

FRIGHTENING

You have a terrifying presence. Something about the way you carry yourself, perhaps augmented by a scar or deformity, makes others afraid of you and what you might do. You've learned to use this presence of yours to control others, using your aura of fear to bend people to your will.

You gain the following benefits:

VERY STRONG: +4 to your Might Pool.

SCARRED: You have a scar or deformity that acts as an asset for intimidating others.

SKILL: You are trained in intimidation.

INITIAL LINK TO STARTING ADVENTURE: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

- You told the others to let you into the group... or else.
- Another player treated you like a normal person instead of something to be feared, so you joined them to feel normal again.
- The players resolved a dispute you were having before things got ugly, and you joined them as thanks.
- You have your own goals and the PCs can help you achieve them, whether they want to or not.

PURE

You are the perfect embodiment of pure, untainted humanity. In fact, you are a little too perfect, your features are perfectly symmetrical, you have no blemishes or scars. Your voice and appearance are pleasantly neutral and androgenous.

You gain the following benefits:

PERFECT: You have +1 to each of your Pools.

ANDROGENY: You can pass as either male or female with no difficulty.

VAIN: You take your pure state very seriously and try to avoid blemishes. Tasks that risk ruining your appearance are one step more difficult.

SKILL: You are trained at pleasant social interactions with untainted humans.

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT: You have a hand mirror and set of cosmetic paints and dyes.

INITIAL LINK TO STARTING ADVENTURE: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

- You charmed your way into the group.
- You were invited after demonstrating your superiority.
- You were set upon by non-humans and another PC rescued you, so you joined them to repay the debt.
- Your life has been a little too easy and too perfect. This could be just the adventure you need.

RIDDEN

Your body is a factory for producing terrible creatures. Something inside grows, riding within you, trying to manipulate you to its own ends. You hear its terrible thoughts like whispers in your ear but worse, you feel it moving, growing, directing your body to grow more of its kind. You know you can not win this battle, so rather than die by their hand, you serve them.

Once, when you awoke during the night, you saw some horrible growth detach from your body, unfold legs and wings and escape into the wide unknown. You rarely slept again after that.

You gain the following benefits:

SERVANT: As long as you serve and obey, the Riders grant you +4 to your Might Pool.

FACTORY: Your body grows terrible growths which occasionally bud off into level 2 creatures. These creatures are not hostile to you and are not under your control, but may be convinced to assist you on a single task.

ADVICE: The creatures within advise you on courses of action or provide knowledge you otherwise couldn't easily obtain. Once a session you can ask a question about your current situation and get an answer.

INABILITY: Your body is covered with horrible growths, making pleasant social interactions one step more difficult.

INABILITY: You have given yourself to the Riders and must obey their commands (which often come in the form of GM intrusions). Disobedience makes any task two steps more difficult and causes your maximum Might Pool to reduce by 4 points until you atone.

INITIAL LINK TO STARTING ADVENTURE: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

- The Riders told you what to do and you obeyed.
- You secretly hoped the group might find a way to free you from the Riders, so you tagged along.
- One of the Riders that budded from your body stole an item from another player and flew off. You joined them as penance.
- You needed money to enact the plans of the Riders.

BITTER

You are consumed by a grudge or a bad memory of the past. You dwell on things, letting the past consume you rather than building a new future for yourself. Bitterness is all you know and it taints everything you do and feel.

You will never get over it, the bitterness is the only thing that keeps you going now. Hate, spite, anger and a need for justice; those are what motivate you now.

You gain the following benefits:

When the Riders make their demands known, they could be anything. Their motives are unfathomable and it is as likely they might ask for you to steal a friend's oddity and place it under a tree as it is to demand you murder a child in the street. What you do know though, is that they have a plan or goal you cannot see or understand, one that affects all Riders and their Ridden across the Ninth World.

FIXATED: +2 to Intellect pool.

DWELLING ON THE PAST: You spend a lot of time thinking about the source of your bitterness and are trained in any knowledge tasks related to it.

INABILITY: Pleasant social interactions are one step more difficult.

INABILITY: The GM gets free intrusions when invoking the source of your bitterness.

INITIAL LINK TO STARTING ADVENTURE: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

- The group dragged you along despite your wishes.
- These idiots don't know what they are doing. You might as well show them.
- This seemed like a way to find closure, or to help yourself get over your bitterness.
- You tried to confront your bitterness, but it went badly wrong. The group saved you and you feel indebted to them... and bitter they didn't leave you to your fate.

GRUMPY

You've had a harsh life, you've seen how things go wrong, how everyone else is incompetent, selfish or just plain stupid. You'd try to make things better but why bother? Some things are just a lost cause and you need to look out for yourself, no-one else is going to.

Maybe something bad happened to you or maybe you don't like people getting too close, but whatever the reason, you wear the persona of a grumpy, cantankerous person, keeping people at arm's length and fending off affection with ascerbic wit and insults. Despite this, some people find your behaviour endearing, a dubious honour you begrudgingly accept.

You gain the following benefits:

CANTANKEROUS: All pleasant social interaction tasks are one step more difficult.

MINOR EFFECTS: As a minor effect on pleasant social tasks, you gain an asset as the target finds your grumpiness endearing.

PESSIMIST: Years of expecting the worst has hardened your mind. You are trained in intellect defense.

INITIAL LINK TO STARTING ADVENTURE: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

- If something is going to be done right, you'll have to do it yourself.
- Another PC said you were secretly a big, cuddly softy. You'll show them.
- You were fed up with your life and figured this, if not better, was at least a nice change.
- Going with these clowns was the only way to get them off your damn lawn.

REBORN

You remember dying, the bite of a blade, the slash of a claw, the illness sucking the life out of you. Afterwards there was blackness, nothingness, too long or too short to remember. And then suddenly light, pain and rust.

When you awoke, you were no longer dead. You found yourself naked and alone amidst twisted shapes in a nightmarish landscape - the aftermath of an Iron Wind. You don't know why it brought you back, or how, but you have a second chance now. You have been reborn.

You gain the following benefits:

HOPE: You have a second chance at life. You are trained in resisting fear and doubt.

TEMPORARY REPRIEVE: You feel a yearning to return to the Iron Wind, a calling deep in your bones. When confronted with the Iron Wind the GM can use intrusions on you for free.

INITIAL LINK TO STARTING ADVENTURE: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

- You are trying to learn about the world you left behind when you died, adventuring is a quick way to see and learn.
- You were looking for family, friends or some remnant of your previous life.
- You were reborn with nothing, not even clothes on your back. You need to build a new life.
- You want to get as far away from the Wind as possible before it calls you back to your death.

IRON-TOUCHED /RUSTWALKER

You are forever marked as a victim of the Iron Wind. Unlike the Rustborn who have the benefit of being one-step removed from the Iron Winds effects, you know its horrors firsthand, up close and personal. You may have been a Rustchaser caught in a storm or just an unfortunate traveller, but whatever your past, it was erased when the Iron Wind changed you. Most people from before wouldn't recognise you, or if they did, would deny it. You are shunned, sometimes even by mutants who at least have the refuge of claiming their differences as 'natural'.

In the Ninth World, Iron-touched, or Rustwalkers as they are often called, are frequently reviled as cursed beings and shunned for fear they may attract an Iron Wind. In many cases, those not murdered for the sin of being different take their own lives, but some treat the Wind's curse as a challenge or a gift, their survival of the storm a sign they have to go on. In those cases, they try to make a life for themselves and find acceptance amongst mutants and understanding communities or strike out on a pilgrimage to the rumoured Rusthaven.

As an Iron-touched, you have special abilities but at terrible costs. In lieu of a normal descriptor, or rather by taking Iron-touched as your descriptor, you gain two beneficial 'corrosions'. Corrosions are like mutations, but all of them make a significant change to how your character is perceived, be that by appearance, smell or other means; in essence, all corrosions are like 'distinctive' mutations in addition to their normal effects and you are always recognised for what you are. If you opt to take a harmful corrosion as well, you can increase the number of beneficial corrosions to three or have one beneficial and one powerful corrosion.

Like mutations, abilities gained via corrosions that affect the difficulty of tasks count as assets, not skills. This means that any step changes from a corrosion are in addition to any step changes you might have from a skill.

BENEFICIAL CORROSIONS

The following corrosions grant beneficial effects that are 'always-on' and never cost pool points or require activation.

01-05 ROCK ARMOUR: The wind has fused chunks of rock and stone to your body, granting you +1 armour.

06-10 VERDANT PATCHES: Parts of your body are no longer flesh and are instead lush plant-growth. The various plants may be poisonous or edible and a fruit can be extracted once per day. Extracted fruits spoil after 1 day. Roll 1d100 to determine the effect of consuming the fruit for that day:

01-20 Restore 4 pool points

21-40 Deal 4 points of damage

41-60 Grants an asset to might defense for 2 rounds

61-80 Stuns for 1 round

81-00 Ability to see in the dark for 10 minutes

11-15 MENTAL VOICE: Whenever you speak, your voice is heard telepathically by everyone in immediate range, regardless of how loudly you speak or any environmental factors (such as vacuum or loud noises).

16-20 BUBBLE SKIN: Your body is studded with hard, synth spheres that roll in their sockets, allowing you to slide and move along the ground as long as it is a hard, smooth surface. Escaping grapples is one step easier.

21-25 GEL MUSCLES: Your muscles have been rebuilt using some unknown material that makes you look smooth and lacking in definition, your limbs almost uniform cylinders. You gain +5 to your Might pool and find squeezing through tight spots one step easier.

26-30 BIOLUMINESCENCE: Your flesh has an unnatural glow that provides a constant low-light in the dark, reducing difficulties of perception tasks in the dark by one step, but increasing the difficulty of stealth tasks by one step.

31-33 CHEST CAVITY: Where your chest and lungs would normally be is now a large, smooth alcove lined in transparent synth. You can store a

Corrosions are similar to mutations, but are also highly visible and plain to see. An Iron-touched person is always marked as Iron-touched. No mutation could have such random, deformed results. If a corrosion doesn't explicitly describe a specific deformity accompanying it, you or the GM should design one to go along with it.

GM Intrusion
Feed the hand that bites you: Your jaw-hand develops a hunger all of its own and tries to eat you unless you feed it.

GM Intrusion: *You pluck out some eye-needles, but accidentally loosen the entire cluster, making them all fall out. You're blind!*

single cypher in this cavity which does not count against your cypher limit, or look through it to inspect the state of your internal organs. Somehow, you still breathe and you still need air to survive.

34-36 FREE-JOINTED: All of your joints are freely rotating ball-and-socket joints, allowing you to bend in any directions or rotate your head 360 degrees. You walk with an unnatural gait and find any task involving escaping bonds or squeezing through tight spaces one step easier.

37-39 GRASPING SKIN: You have too much skin and it hangs off you, baggy and loose. However you can control it, using it to wrap and grip things or hold and carry small, light objects. Climbing and other gripping-related tasks are one step easier.

40-42 NEEDLE EYES: Your eyes are clusters of sharp needles through which you can see much like an insects compound eyes. Individual needles can be plucked out and used as single-use light weapons or lockpicks. They grow back in 28 hours, so you never run out but if they are all removed at once, you are blinded.

43-44 PHASELESS: Your head is out of phase, making you appear headless, though items held in your own hands can interact with your head as normal (so you can still feed yourself). As a result, you can not be decapitated and you can see other phase-shifted objects that would otherwise be invisible.

45-49 LEECH: Your jaw is missing and the lower half of your face is a large hollow trunk, lined inside with barbed teeth. The trunk can perform attacks against foes within immediate range dealing 2 damage. You can speak normally via your strange tongue-mouth.

50-51 SHINSKIN: Your body reacts to severe pain and shock by generating and shedding random shins as ablative armour. For every 5 points of damage taken, you generate 1 shin which provides +1 armour against the next attack, after which it falls off.

52-55 SPHEROID: Your lower half has been replaced with a large, bony sphere that rotates in a large socket. You can move at double your normal speed, but stairs and steep slopes can pose significant problems for you, making any actions taken on them two steps more difficult.

56-60 HIVE: You have a hump riddled with holes in which strange insects make their homes.

The insects aren't harmful and produce a delicious, healing honey - enough per day to grant one free recovery roll when eaten.

61-64 BLADED HEELS: You have large, vicious hooks that emerge from the back of your heels. They count as medium melee weapons when used with a well aimed kick, but make wearing footwear or long trousers difficult.

65-70 JAW-HAND: One of your hands is a large, animalistic jaw, like that of an reptile, which can be used as a medium weapon. You can also eat through this hand, though speaking intelligibly through it is extremely difficult due to its non-human form. Tasks requiring fine manual dexterity are two steps more difficult when using this hand.

71-73 FAUCET: Your body spouts a short, metal appendage with a twistable handle. When twisted, scalding hot, clean drinking water pours out of the appendage. 1 litre of water is generated per round until closed. Without taking a few minutes to carefully position yourself, it is a level 4 Speed task to release the water without scalding yourself. Where the water comes from, you do not know, but there seems to be no limit to it.

74-78 BRAIN HUMP: You have a large hump of cerebral matter on your back, wrinkled and moist like the surface of a brain, that grants you +5 to your Intellect pool. Damage inflicted on the hump is always Intellect damage.

79-84 GLITCHED: You look strange, like you were sliced into cubes, each stained a different colour, then put back together, but imperfectly. You can now abruptly move in extremely short, rapid movements, granting +5 to your Speed pool.

85-90 TOUCH-SIGHT: Your eyes are gone, the top of your head and face above the nose just a perfectly smooth dome. However, the entire surface of your skin is like one large eye, allowing you to see in every direction simultaneously from every part of your body.

91-93 BLOWHOLES: Your body is covered with muscular holes that can expel air extremely quickly. This allows you to maneuver in water or zero-gravity extremely well, granting an asset to such tasks. By covering the holes, you can make sounds like a musical instrument.

94-98 SCREENGRAFT: A large patch of your body has been replaced with a black cuboid fused perfectly with the flesh around it. By concentrating, you can display any visual memory on its surface.

99-00 SYMBOLSPEAK: When you speak, the words you say are also printed out in Truth (or whatever language you are speaking) on a white tape that spools from your chin. If you eat anything with printed words on, you can recall the words as if you had read them recently.

HARMFUL CORROSIONS

These corrosions are all harmful effects, terrible afflictions caused by the Wind that do nothing but hinder.

01-10 FLESHMELT: You look like you have melted, like a synth figure left in a fire. Your face droops down your head, spilling onto your neck and your limbs are warped and misshapen. All social interactions are two steps harder due to your sickening and terrifying visage.

11-14 GIBBERING

PASSENGER: The Wind placed an insane passenger in your flesh, some remnant of an animal or person since gone mad. Somewhere on your body is an inhuman face, constantly gibbering and babbling nonsensical noises, crying out when you are hurt. Attempts to be silent are two steps more difficult.

15-19 SHATTERED: Your skin is coated in thousands of jagged blades of broken glass. Whenever you touch anything soft, you cause 1 point of damage to it. Wearing normal clothing or armour will require them to be replaced or repaired after repeated use due to constant cuts and tears.

20-22 WRITHING TENDRILS:

Your body has a number of writhing, coiling tendrils that snake and twist around, grabbing and breaking nearby items or lashing out at others within immediate range.

23-27 PULSE: You are riddled with pulsing blue veins of energy. When enraged or damaged in melee combat, there is a 1 in 1d20 chance you immediately take 5 damage as the energy flares up. When the energy flares, make an immediate roll on the cypher danger table for every character in immediate range.

28-32 FUSED BURDEN: Part of your body is fused to an unwieldy, useless object like part of a broken cart, a large rock or a piece of twisted metal or synth. Dragging it around is cumbersome and trying to cut it off causes you immense pain as if it is part of your nervous system. Speed defense is one step more difficult.

33-38 SELF-BLIND: You can't see yourself. To you, your own body is invisible, even in reflective surfaces. The difficulty of all tasks requiring accurate or delicate movement are increased by one step.

39-44 LIGHTNING ROD: Your body has various metallic rods jutting out from it. They cause no discomfort, but nearby electricity is drawn to you, making you vulnerable to electrocution. Defense against electrical attacks and effects are one step more difficult and nearby electrical effects and esoterics have a 50% chance of targeting you if you are within immediate range of the source.

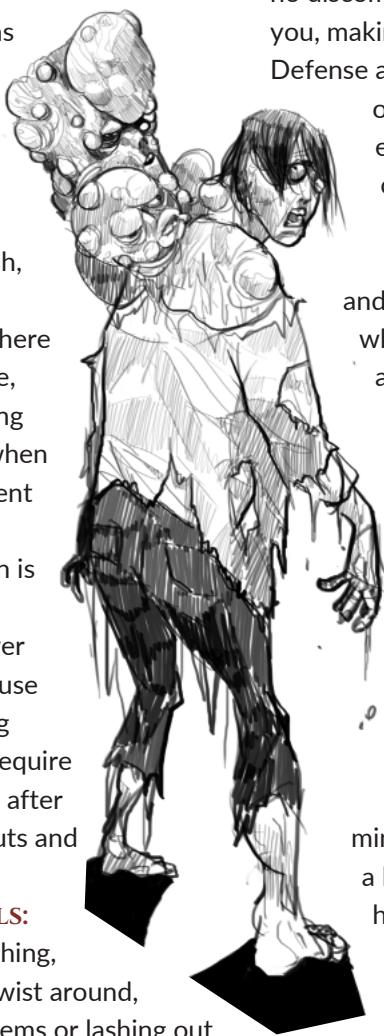
45-50 BRITTLE: Your flesh is rough and brittle, like coral or coarse glass, and when you take physical damage you suffer an additional point of Might damage as cracks and splinters occur. A single blow causing more than 6 damage (after armour reductions) shatters you badly and knocks you immediately one step down the damage track.

51-53 SWARM

RECONSTRUCTION: You no longer have a body, you no longer are a 'me', but rather a 'we'. The Wind has reconstructed you into a swarm of large insects that act as a single hive-mind - your mind - and build themselves into a human-shaped mass. You can not be healed effectively by normal means, regaining only half as much health from recovery rolls. Birds and other insectivores find you a very tempting target.

54-57 PARTIAL GIGANTISM: One of your limbs has been rebuilt by the Wind almost double in size and mass, making all speed defense tasks one step more difficult.

58-60 ABOUT-FACE: Your face is no longer on the front of your head, requiring you to either walk at an angle, strain your head around or not look



where you are going. All tasks requiring focusing on what you are doing in front of you are one step more difficult.

61-63 MURDENS BURDEN: Like Murdens, you create an aura of mental static around you, giving those around you headaches and disrupting telepathic communication. Murdens up to long-range are attracted to your broadcasts, but are furious to learn they originate with a non-Murden.

64-68 SMOTHERSKIN: Your skin grows to seal your body completely, sealing every orifice and covering your eyes. Every day you must cut yourself out to be able to see, eat, hear, breathe, etc, causing you 3 damage that bypasses armour. Not doing this causes you to slowly suffocate or suffer similar ill effects.

69-72 INVERTEBRATE: You no longer have a normal spine and now move like a large, muscular tube, similar to a snake. You are not strong enough to crush anything by coiling around it, but you can move unimpaired along the ground or in water. Running tasks are two steps more difficult.

73-74 SHEDDER: You shed your skin constantly, leaving behind crunchy, hard fragments that make you easy to track. When your face sheds, it leaves behind a perfect mask recognisable as you.

75-77 FOUR-LEGGED: Your legs and hips have been rebuilt so they bend like that of a four-legged animal, making it extremely difficult not to walk on all fours. All movement tasks performed upright are two steps more difficult.

78-80 MIRRORMASK: Your face shifts to mirror the face of whoever you are talking to, making all interactions one step more difficult as people are disturbed by your unwilling theft of their faces.

81-83 EMETIC BATS: Every 7 hours you find yourself vomiting uncontrollably as a small animal crawls up out of your throat and launches itself into the air, flapping leathery wings and flying off. The animals are level 2 creatures that attack everything in sight viciously if captured or if they emerge in an enclosed space. Whilst vomiting, you can not take any actions and defense tasks are two steps more difficult.

84-86 BISECTED: You are missing half of your body and are a single arm on half a torso, on a single leg. Your exposed half is covered in rough metal, synth and flesh. Despite this, you walk and act as if your other half was only invisible rather than gone, but any tasks requiring both hands are

one step more difficult.

87-89 NEON: Your flesh emits a constant, bright neon light, partially blinding you. Sight related tasks are one step more difficult due to the glare and spotting you at a distance or in the dark is an automatic success. All close range social tasks are one step more difficult due to your glare.

90-92 AEROGENIC: You constantly produce a combustible gas from ugly vents on your body and if you are not in a well ventilated area, eventually you or others may suffocate. Large concentrations of gas (such as a room full), when exposed to naked flames or electrical arcs, explode dealing 5 damage to everyone in short range.

93-94 BROADCAST: You have a number of antenna that constantly broadcast data that make machines that receive it hostile towards you. All interactions with complex machines (automata, computers, etc) are one step harder and machines always target you first in combat.

95-97 CONSTANT TEETH GROWTH: Your teeth are large, tusk-like and keep growing, so much so that they will start filling your mouth and breaking your jaw unless you chew on rough objects like stones constantly to wear them down. Every day you go without actively grinding your teeth for a minimum of 1 hour, you take 1 point of Might damage. After 5 days your teeth must be smashed or cut out so you can use your jaw. Every day after this that you go untreated causes 10 points of Might damage.

98-99 SOLUBLE: If you are exposed to liquids externally, your flesh reacts violently, dissolving and bubbling away in frothy foam, causing 3 points of damage that ignore armour. You can still drink water normally, however.

00 RIDDEN: Take on the attributes of the Ridden descriptor (page 49) and roll for a distinctive mutation from the corebook or a beneficial corrosion.

Emetic bats, if captured, can be tamed. However, the bats rarely live longer than 28 hours. Those that do eat voraciously and require feeding fresh meat every few hours or else starve to death.

POWERFUL CORROSIONS

The following corrosions grant powerful abilities, some of which may be actions or cost stat pool points.

01-05 ROTORS: You have a large propellor that branches from your spine, made of bones and synth. At will, you can rotate it, spinning it fast enough to fly at half speed for up to 10 minutes at a cost of 2 Might. The blades are large and unwieldy, making movement through tight spaces 1 step more difficult. Action to initiate.

06-10 DETACHABLE: Your neck and limbs have glowing metal bands or growths where they join with your torso. At will, you can disconnect your head or limbs from your torso and control them independently for up to 10 minutes. After 10 minutes, you lose control of everything but your head until you are reconnected again.

11-15 ARTIFACT FUSION: You and an artifact are fused at a molecular level. Roll for a random artifact on the artifacts table (Numenera corebook, pg. 301). That artifact is integrated into your body in an obvious though not necessarily optimal way, but you can activate it mentally as it is part of your nervous system. Artifact depletion applies as normal, but after 1 week without use, the artifact recharges.

16-20 HIGH-FREQUENCY BLADES: Your elbows or knees stick out, elongating into long blades that hum slightly. The blades vibrate at hyper-sonic frequencies, allowing them to cut through armour and even solid objects like stone or metal with ease. They can not be deactivated, so you constantly hum and risk cutting things as you move about. They count as medium weapons which ignore 1 point of armour.

21-24 VOIDSIGHT: Your face is an asymmetric cluster of metallic eyes and lenses. At a cost of 1 Intellect, you can open all these eyes for ten minutes and view the world very differently. The world appears in an inky black and white and you can see vast distances, easily over 100 miles. Living things show up in colour against the inky voidscape and you can see transdimensional, out-of-phase or invisible objects and creatures plainly.

25-26 HUNCHMEN: You have a large, fleshy hump on your back with two brilliantly blue, human eyes. By spending 2 Intellect points, you can detach the hump. For 28 hours, the hump is a

malleable level 2 creature with 5 health that responds to your will. It takes the form of a 1 metre (3 feet) tall, blue-eyed, featureless humanoid, that can carry objects or wield light weapons. After 28 hours is up, it crumbles to dust and a new hump grows on your back immediately.

27-30 SOILMAN: Your body is fused with rock, earth and soil. You can grow plants in and on your body. If buried, you can survive without air or sustenance and can sense motion in or on the ground up to long range.

31-35 CONDENSED: You have been shrunk to half your size, but your mass stays the same, increasing your density. Swimming is two steps more difficult, but you gain +1 armour and hit unarmed as a medium weapon.

36-40 ENGINE: Your torso is some kind of mechanism that pumps and churns with power. You no longer get tired or require sleep as long as you have a steady supply of food, making all endurance tasks two steps easier. With the correct cables, you can also power inactive numenera as long as you have additional food to eat as fuel.

41-44 SPRINGS: Your limbs are tightly coiled metal springs which you can release and coil up at will. Coiling up takes 1 round and when releasing a limb, it acts as a heavy weapon on impact. Jumping tasks are two steps easier. Fully extended, you can reach up to short range, or leap short range in a single jump.

45-47 AQUARIUM: A large part of your body has been rendered transparent and hollow, now filled with water and a number of fish equal to your intellect pool. Your hands are able to pass through the transparent surface, allowing you to remove as many fish as you like at a cost of one intellect point per fish. Anyone (including you) eating one of your fish gains training in a skill you know, for 1 hour. You grow new fish when you recover intellect points.

48-50 HYPERTHERMOPHILE: You can survive in blistering heat, intense pressure and noxious chemicals rendering you immune to damage from those effects. Your skin is a dense crust of hard, multicoloured material.

51-53 MOLE: Instead of hands you have large, heavy claws. You can not easily hold items, making using hand-held objects one step more difficult, your claws are heavy weapons and can be used to burrow through the earth at half speed.

Hitting things with your rotors at full speed can do some serious damage, but also hurts you from the sudden change in speed. Impacts cause 4 damage to both you and the target.

When detached, your head and limbs float above the ground, held in the air by the glowing bands. They can move a short distance every round but cannot fly vertically.

GM Intrusion: You can communicate with machines, but they too can communicate with you. Something large and ancient has woken up and has decided to turn its terrible eye upon you.

54-59 CHIMERA: Your body is blended with that of several creatures, warping you such that random fragments of limbs, partial faces, patches of fur and scales cover your body. Your affliction grants you the uncanny ability to interact and befriend other creatures, making all friendly interactions with non-sentient creatures two steps easier and enabling basic communication with non-sentient creatures of level 3 or lower.

60-62 ANTENNA: You bristle with long, metal spines in various shapes and configurations that allow you to hear and broadcast a variety of transmissions. These transmissions grant you the ability to communicate mentally with machines and people over a short range distance. However, you have no way of transmitting to or from specific individuals, nor any way of identifying who you are communicating with beyond asking them. If you already have telepathy or machine-speaking abilities, the distance increases to long range.

63-67 KALEIDOSCOPE: Your skin is a flickering pattern of flashing lights and shifting colours, making you hard to look at on occasion. As an Intellect attack costing 1 Intellect point, you can focus your shifting lights into specific patterns causing all onlookers in short range to enter a trance-like state for one round.

68-70 TEMPORAL-KINETIC

SHUNT: Your whole body has a nimbus of ethereal blue energy. When you take physical damage to your Might pool (such as an attack or impact, but not poison or starvation), instead of taking damage you may convert the kinetic energy into temporal displacement, teleporting yourself into the future by 1 round per point of damage, leaving you dazed on arrival and making all tasks one step more difficult for the same number of rounds you have travelled. You can not absorb damage this way whilst dazed.

GM Intrusion: You fall from the mountain, but the impact with the ground is converted into temporal energy, hurling you into the future. You're safe, but you've lost a few hours and feel sick and dizzy for the rest of the day.



71-73 MOLLUSC: Your flesh is moist and secretes a sticky fluid that allows you to stick to and slide across any surface. You slowly dissolve and absorb plant matter you move over, digesting enough that a day's travel through forest or grassland is enough to feed you for 28 hours.

74-78 STARFISH: Your head and limbs are all tentacles. While you lack the ability to see, your tentacles are highly sensitive allowing you navigate by vibrations and sound alone in a manner similar to echo-location. Each tentacle is strong and prehensile, allowing normal bipedal movement and counts as a medium weapon. Climbing tasks are two steps easier.

79-80 ROOTED: Your skin has a tough, bark-like texture granting you +1

Armour. Additionally your feet, when directly on soil, begin to take root like a tree. When fully rooted (a process that takes 4 rounds), you may make a recovery roll every round, however you can not move and unrooting yourself requires digging yourself out - a difficulty 4 Speed task that takes 4 rounds to complete.

81-85 SPORES: Your body is covered with pulsating pustules. When you concentrate and spend 2 Might points you can cause them to burst, spewing spores into the air.

Anyone within short distance who inhales these spores (roll versus their Might defense) finds themselves sneezing and coughing violently, making all attacks against them one step easier for 1 round.

86-90 SHARP-TOOTHED ARM: One of your arms stops at the elbow, instead turning into a large, metal paddle lined with sharp teeth. At will, you can cause the teeth to rotate around the edge of the paddle extremely quickly, allowing you to cut and tear at anything in your way, causing 6 damage to anything you hit. You can also use the arm to cut through soft materials like wood, as well as flesh.

91-92 ANTI-GRAVITY GROWTH: Your back and left side is fused with a glowing material that produces an anti-gravity field. Whilst not easily usable as a means of floating (a level 5 Speed task to balance on the awkwardly positioned growth) you can maneuver yourself to force others to be repelled away from you, making you immune to melee attacks from behind or your left-hand side. You can not lay down on your back.

93-97 CHASM: A large black crack runs down your body from your head to your toes. It seems to have no ill-effects on you, however to others it appears larger than your body could physically accommodate, yet at the same time fits within your frame. With a tight squeeze (a 1 round, difficulty 3 Speed task), a normal human-sized person can squeeze through this void into an extra-dimensional space that seems to go on forever. Weirdly, you can fold yourself into the chasm,

entering the space yourself. Whilst you are in it, you appear normal and a large crack hangs in the emptiness, showing wherever you were last on the other side. When you do fold in on yourself, you disappear and any witnesses must succeed at a difficulty 2 Might task or feel nauseated for 10 minutes.

98-00 EXPLOSIVE DIGITS: Your fingers and toes periodically die and fall-off. Losing too many makes tasks involving balance or manual dexterity one step harder (two steps if all digits are missing). However, each fallen digit becomes highly reactive and explodes when thrown or damaged, causing 3 points of Might damage to everything within immediate range. Digits grow back after they have exploded and wither off your hands and feet at a rate of one every 7 hours. If not used, your fingers and toes never grow back.

When more than one person has the Chasm corrosion, sometimes they share an extra dimensional space, allowing them to effectively teleport 'through' each other, as long as they can find each other in the vast, empty expanse of that strange place within.

COSMETIC CORROSIONS

Most of those who have been touched by the Wind aren't so lucky as to get abilities (or are lucky enough to avoid its curses). Rarely does a person escape its grasp unscathed. These corruptions offer no harm or benefit beyond their striking appearance.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 01 Chunks of metal sticking out of body | 26 Twitching insect legs grow out of your face |
| 02 Chunks of wood sticking out of body | 27 A second, melted face lines your lower jaw |
| 03 Chunks of bone sticking out of body | 28 1in (2.5cm) cubes of weird metal embedded in skin |
| 04 Chunks of glass/crystal sticking out of body | 29 Nose inverted, an alcove in your face |
| 05 Lumps of flesh growing from body | 30 Wiry, bloated patterns in skin from internal hair |
| 06 Melted facial features | 31 Ears constantly ooze a waxy substance |
| 07 Limb made of glass | 32 At night, eyes turn invisible, showing empty pits |
| 08 Useless, alien eyes dotted over body | 33 Open sores across body that leak a silver paste |
| 09 Skin grows patches of blunt teeth | 34 A second row of teeth protrude from lower jaw |
| 10 Skin grows patches of animal claws | 35 One foot is a cloven hoof |
| 11 Skin grows patches of coarse, wiry fur | 36 A stalk with a faint glowing light on your head |
| 12 Skin made up of interlocking tiles/plates | 37 Skin is transparent, showing muscles beneath |
| 13 Eye-sockets are mouths with eyes inside | 38 Ears have spider legs, ear holes have mandibles |
| 14 Hair is iridescent crystal filaments | 39 Skin is covered in clusters of small holes |
| 15 Mouth is a cluster of slurping tubes | 40 Cheeks lined with non-functional, goat-like eyes |
| 16 Useless plant growth over body | 41 Nails seep a grey pus from the cuticles |
| 17 Useless machinery embedded in body | 42 Skin has a crumbly, sandy texture to it |
| 18 Single, useless leathery wing | 43 A ghostly machine hand overlays your left hand |
| 19 Useless, drooping tentacles | 44 Your hair moves and crawls of its own accord |
| 20 Widened, horizontally stretched eyes | 45 Skin is covered with shifting, fresh scars |
| 21 Skin grows patches of shiny, coloured feathers | 46 Small, baby-sized hand grows from cheek |
| 22 Eyes are pulsating bulges of glowing skin | 47 Eyes enlarged, wide and birdlike, on side of head |
| 23 Fingernails grow like scales down one limb | 48 Strange, quivering, wrinkled flaps of flesh on throat |
| 24 A patch of dark, semi-transparent glass on face | 49 Small, wooden tool embedded into shoulder |
| 25 All veins are fully visible on the skin in lurid red | 50 Metallic flowers sprout from scalp instead of hair |

Vashivok, pg. 27
Iron Watch, pg. 29

IRON-WILLED

You've seen the light, and the light is rust-coloured. The Iron Wind isn't your enemy, but your salvation, a force for change and growth and evolution, not death and despair. You walk the world preaching the truth of your vision, helping others where you can and inspiring others to help themselves and their fellow man.

Many Iron-Willed hear the call of the Vashivok and join their ranks but equally, many feel the calling of the Wind and their affinity for its chaotic nature disturbing. These people feel like the Wind changed them in some way, that their minds are not entirely their own and it frightens them. Nonetheless, they find they have a new found skill to inspire and comfort those in need, an empathy they never had before.

You gain the following benefits:

STRONG MIND: You gain +2 to your Intellect Pool for your altered mind.

INSPIRING: When helping others, you grant two assets instead of one.

IRON-WILLED: Your faith can not be shaken, you are trained in resisting temptation and coercion.

CALLED BY THE WIND: You have an inability at dealing with anything related to avoiding or defending against the Iron Wind.

IRON BLESSING: The Wind left its mark upon you. Take a cosmetic corrosion.

INITIAL LINK TO STARTING ADVENTURE: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

- Your faith guided you along this path.
- You wanted to spread your message to others.
- You wanted to find a way to undo what the Wind has done to you.
- Sometimes people find your heightened empathy threatening. This was a good opportunity to move on.

VIGILANT

You are the watcher on the wall, the guard against the darkness. You never rest easy, always ready to spring into action or raise the alarm at a moment's notice. It is hard, always being alert and ready, never relaxing or letting your guard down, but this is a tough world with tougher consequences for failure.

Many vigilant people find themselves welcome into the arms of the Iron Watch, where their natural skills and inclinations can be best made use of. However vigilants are often guards, lookouts, spies or thieves. Anything that requires attention to detail and unwavering focus suits them well.

You gain the following benefits:

FIRST RESPONDER: +2 to your Speed Pool

OBSERVER: Perception tasks are one step easier.

REACTIVE: You are trained in initiative.

INABILITY: You can be rude or terse in social situations due to your constant focus and watchfulness. Polite social interactions are one step more difficult.

INITIAL LINK TO STARTING ADVENTURE: From the following list of options, choose how you became involved in the first adventure.

- This is an adventure requiring close attention to detail and careful planning.
- Something is coming, just over the horizon, and you intend to be there to meet it.
- These people aren't careful or observant, they need a guide and guardian like you.
- Someone always has to take watch, getting paid for it never hurts.

FOCI

EMBRACES CHAOS

Most people fear the Iron Wind. Then again, most people are sane. You are not held back by such limitations upon reality and see the world for what it truly is, a chaotic, swirling mass of change, constantly evolving. To you, the Iron Wind is just a manifestation of nature, of evolution, and you embrace it - tapping into the very forces that drive the Wind in its constant hunger for change and chaos. If you perform esoterics (or similar abilities), they are wildly chaotic, never taking exactly the same appearance or effect, every use tainted with chaotic energy.

You probably wear wildly mismatching accoutrements, clashing colours and complex, mind-bending patterns on your clothing and skin, perhaps even going so far as to never wear the same thing twice or to change your hair and makeup every day to further embrace the tenets of constant change.

Although many who embrace chaos are jacks, who have a natural predilection to constant change, glaives and even nanos sometimes see past the stagnation of order to embrace the powerful forces of evolution in chaos.

CONNECTION: Pick one other PC. When you were both caught in an Iron Wind, they fled and abandoned you to save themselves. Perhaps you resent them for this curse you carry, or revere them for revealing to you the power of chaos.

MINOR EFFECT SUGGESTIONS: The warping nature of your ability causes the nanites that permeate the world to generate a random oddity either near you or on the target.

MAJOR EFFECT SUGGESTIONS: The nanites that permeate everything swarm suddenly, creating a brand new random cypher, instantly, from the materials at hand.

TIER 1: Warp (1 Intellect point). Using your wild connection to the nanites that permeate everything in the Ninth World, you launch a blast of energy to temporarily disrupt them, causing them to randomly deform and warp all matter of a single target within short range. Deals 3 damage that bypasses armour. *Action.*

TIER 2: Iron Touch (3 Might points): Your body is infused with chaos and with a touch, you can transfer a portion of that chaotic influence into another, inflicting a random beneficial, or harmful, corrosion on the target which lasts for 1 hour. *Action.*

TIER 3: Constant Flux: Your body is a silent storm of chaotic activity, constantly shifting and reforming beneath your skin. As a result, you gain +1 Armour against Might, Speed and Intellect damage as your body shifts and adapts randomly. *Enabler.*

Aura of Chaos (4 Intellect points): You can now use warp as a burst attack that originates with you, damaging everyone and everything within short-distance as you emit a swarming aura of nanites like a miniature Iron Wind. *Action.*

TIER 4: Transmutation (4 Might points): You can consume an unused cypher, destroying it and reforming it into a new, random configuration. Roll for a new random cypher. The process takes at least 1 minute. *Enabler.*

TIER 5: Changesense: You can sense the presence of shifting matter and chaotic energies. All tasks relating to sensing Iron Wind, harmful energies or matter-rearranging effects are two steps easier. *Enabler.*

Changecraft (5 Might points): You have the ability to warp and reshape matter by using your wild nanites. You can create simple items from any material to which you have access, including the flesh of other people. Items are rarely well made, but are serviceable as simple weapons, oddities or

***GM Intrusion:** You momentarily lose control of your warping powers and something terrible happens. You fuse a lock, break a cypher, hurt an ally or cause some other kind of disruption.*

tools which have a depletion of 1 in 1d6, on which they fall apart or crumble to dust. When transmuting flesh, you deal 6 damage. Crafting a usable object takes 1 minute. *Action.*

TIER 6: Heart of the Storm (6+ Intellect points):

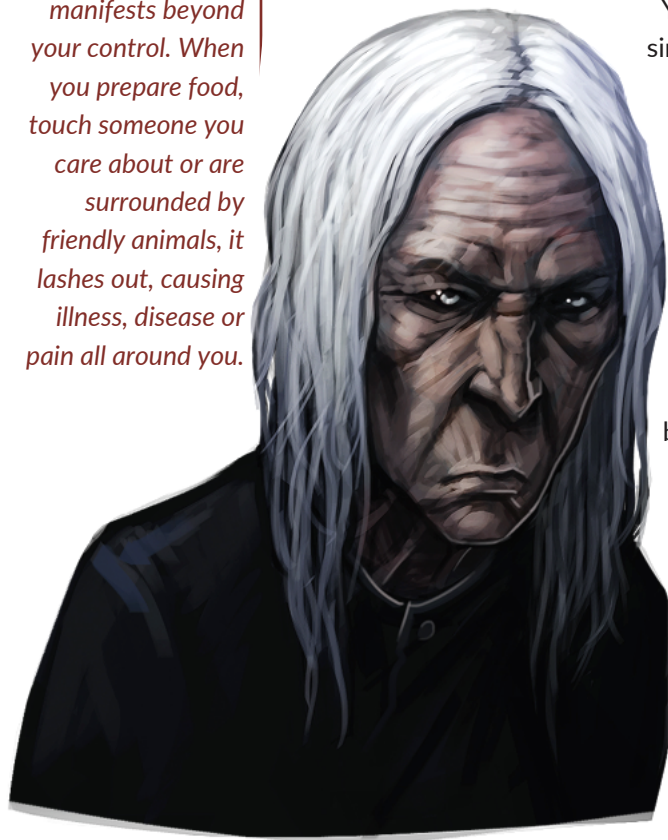
You burst into an Iron Wind cloud that changes the landscape and creatures within your reach. Your Might Pool drops to 0 as you lose a corporeal form, but you become immune to physical damage.

Whilst in Iron Wind form, every creature within long range at level 3 or below is destroyed by your warping effects and all other creatures and objects take 6 points of might damage. New obstacles, entirely new creatures or other random effects may take place at the GMs discretion. The effect lasts for 1 round, plus an additional round per 2 extra Intellect points spent, after which you revert to your previous form, regaining your previous Might pool value. *Action.*

TAINTS

You've always carried a darkness inside you, a corrupting influence that eats away at everything you touch. You drain the very life force of others with your grasp, leaving corruption in your wake. While many think of you as a terrible monster, you have found a way to use your abilities, or your curse, for good as well as evil.

GM Intrusion: *Your tainted touch manifests beyond your control. When you prepare food, touch someone you care about or are surrounded by friendly animals, it lashes out, causing illness, disease or pain all around you.*



You probably wear simple, dark clothes, revealing as little bare skin as possible to avoid accidentally touching someone and exposing what you are.

Anyone could be a taint of flesh, but those that revel most in their abilities are glaives that focus on unarmed combat.

CONNECTION: Pick one other PC. You saved this character, but in doing so, you had to touch them for a prolonged period, perhaps pulling them from a cliff edge or holding a wound closed. They are now forever marked as a victim of your kind by their pallid appearance, aged beyond their years.

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT: A pair of black, synth gloves

MINOR EFFECT SUGGESTIONS: You fully absorb the health you drain, restoring your own pools by the amount of damage dealt.

MAJOR EFFECT SUGGESTIONS: The target becomes physically weakened and all Might tasks taken against them (including normal attacks) become one step easier until the end of their next turn.

TIER 1: Withering Touch. With a touch, you drain the life essence of a living, organic being. For each round you are in contact, you reduce the targets Health by 2 points and make all Might tasks against them easier by one step (up to a maximum of two steps). *Action.*

TIER 2: Poisonous Touch. When you make physical skin-to-skin contact with an organic being, you must roll a Might attack. If you beat their level, you poison them, causing 2 points of damage (bypassing armour) each round until they beat a difficulty 2 Might defense roll. *Enabler.*

Corrupting Touch (2 Might points). You can inflict a random cosmetic mutation on any organic creature for 28 hours. The effect takes place rapidly, manifesting within minutes. *Action.*

TIER 3: Leeches Mark (3 Might points). You open your palm into a leech-like mouth to bite an organic target, doing no damage, but injecting a small, black leech that burrows under the skin. The target takes 2 points of Might damage per round for 3 rounds. After 3 rounds, the leech exits the targets body and immediately flees by burrowing into the earth, but can be eaten to regain 1 point of Might if captured. *Action.*

TIER 4: Souldrain (4 Intellect points). You can touch someone, draining them of any will or hope and converting it into healing energy for yourself. All social interaction tasks against them become two steps easier and you restore 2 points to your Might Pool. The difficulty reduction remains in effect only as long as you retain physical skin-to-skin contact. *Action.*

TIER 5: Decay (5+ Intellect points). You rapidly increase entropy in whatever you touch, causing a non-living organic object of your size or smaller to crumble to dust, or non-organics to become weakened, granting an asset on actions to break it. Living targets age rapidly by one year causing disorientation (granting an asset for all tasks against them) and a 1 point reduction in health, plus one extra year and damage for every additional point of intellect spent. *Action.*

Scorched Earth: When you make a recovery roll, you can elect to damage all organic life within a short range to gain an additional 4 health points back, leaving the earth around you blackened and barren, unable to support life and leaving all other organics within range feeling sickened. *Enabler.*

TIER 6: Tainted Powers. Your corrupting influence has seeped so deeply into your being that it now manifests through your other powers and abilities. Any ranged esoterics or abilities can now also be used to inflict Withering Touch, Poisonous Touch or Corrupting Touch. *Enabler.*

FOREVER CHANGES

Most people who encounter the wind and live consider themselves lucky and never want to see the horrors of it again. You, however, do not have that luxury. When the Wind touched you, it didn't just change you, it became a part of you and now wherever you go you carry part of that swirling chaos inside of you, twisting and warping your frame at a whim. The changes inside you are not without their benefits though and with your constantly changing form you are hard to recognise. With a little effort and a little luck, you can control your changes in a limited fashion to lend yourself temporary benefits.

You probably wear loose-fitting, gender-neutral clothing because you never know who you are going to be. You care little for your appearance, after all, this face may only be temporary.

Anyone might forever change, but Jacks in particular can benefit from their unique skill set and abilities.

CONNECTION: Pick one other PC. No matter what you look like, they always know who you are and recognise you instantly.

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT: A small hand-mirror so you can see what you look like.

MINOR EFFECT SUGGESTIONS: A change happens at just the right time or in a perfect way to compliment the action you are performing, granting you an asset for the action.

MAJOR EFFECT SUGGESTIONS: Instead of a beneficial corrosion, you develop a powerful one instead.

TIER 1: Forever Changing. At the start of each day, roll on the beneficial corruptions table. You gain that corrosion temporarily until the next day. *Enabler.*

Toolkit (2 Might points). With some concentration, you can shape your fingers, toes or other appendages into simple tools with no moving parts such as lockpicks, hooks or knives. These simple implements can be used to deal 2 damage or grant you an asset on a relevant task for 10 minutes whereafter your appendages revert to normal. *Action.*

TIER 2: Oddly Familiar (3 Might points). At will, you can trigger a change in your physiology, changing your gender and appearance to match someone you have touched in the last 28 hours. *Enabler.*

TIER 3: Change Control (4 Intellect points). At the start of each day when you roll for a corrosion, you can instead spend four Intellect points to choose a beneficial corrosion. You cannot choose the same corrosion twice in a row. *Enabler.*

Reactive Adaption (3 Speed points). Your changes start forming reactively to your situation and for 3 Speed points, you react to an attack by your body spontaneously doing one of the following:

Roll 1d20:

1-5 Attacked body part develops a bony coating, granting +3 Armour against the current attack and the next one.

6-10 Attacked body part phases out of existence.

11-15 Attacked body part warps to grab the attacking weapon or projectile, disarming melee weapons whilst still taking damage or negating damage from projectiles.

16-20 A bony spur juts out, inflicting 2 damage on the attacker by flinging the weapon or projectile back at them.

You can use this ability after any defense roll you make, regardless of success. *Enabler.*

Those who forever change are often recruited as spies and agents by the Jagged Dream. Their unique skills make them excellent infiltrators and assassins, perfect for disrupting governments and bringing the world closer to the edge of war.

GM Intrusion: *That face you're currently wearing? It is someone's long lost loved one, hated enemy or recently deceased relative and now they've seen you.*

There are rumours of people who live forever, walking the paths of the world since before even the Ninth World. One of them may be your friend, your lover or someone you pass in a market square. Often, these people out of time won't even know themselves, their memories of previous worlds long forgotten in the aeons of time.

TIER 4: Human Weapon (4 Might points). You can change your body into a deadly weapon, growing spikes, blades, armour or claws. Whilst transformed, you gain +3 Armour and deal unarmed damage as if using medium weapons until the start of your next turn. However, you look terrifying in this form and all pleasant social tasks are two steps more difficult. *Action.*

Master of Faces. When using your Oddly Familiar ability, you can now choose to adopt any appearance of your choice instead of those only recently touched. *Enabler.*

TIER 5: Powerful Changes. As Forever Changing, but you can now opt to take a random Powerful corrosion instead of choosing a Beneficial one. *Enabler.*

TIER 6: Powerful Control (6 Intellect points). You can now choose any Powerful or Beneficial corrosion once a day instead of rolling randomly. *Enabler.*

Perfect Adaption. Your forever changing body reacts and adapts to whatever circumstances attempt to disrupt it. When underwater you grow gills, when under high gravity your bones and muscles adapt to negate the negative effects. You are immune to most environmental hazards (except vacuum or extreme heat or cold) and disrupting effects that cause mutations or corrosions. *Enabler.*

WAKES FROM DEATH

You don't know how long you have been walking this earth and you've forgotten more than most people learn in a lifetime. By some quirk of fate or the workings of the ancients themselves, you cannot die, blessed and cursed to live forever. You don't age normally, but you heal and suffer just like ordinary people, so your body is a mass of scar tissue, a living testament to the hardships a body endures when made to keep going for centuries beyond its normal expiration date. You look younger than you truly are, but your eyes hold within them a soul far older, your face etched in the shape of someone who has seen too much, for too long.

You probably wear whatever you feel like wearing, likely clothes in styles long outdated or forgotten. You're too old to care about keeping up with the latest trends. You often carry books and

tomes with you to record the knowledge you would have otherwise forgotten through time.

Anyone might wake from death, though many are nanos and jacks, no doubt due to their predilection for fooling with powers beyond their understanding.

CONNECTION: Pick one other PC. You have a strong suspicion they may be one of your descendants from a child of yours centuries back.

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT: An indestructible oddity that had a major role in you discovering your immortality. It never seems to be far from your grasp, even when you awake from total destruction.

MINOR EFFECT SUGGESTIONS: You are suddenly possessed of an insight from a similar experience in your past, granting you an asset for the action.

MAJOR EFFECT SUGGESTIONS: Your vast storehouses of knowledge allow you to know a secret or specialist piece of knowledge that is perfect for the situation, giving you a two-step asset or allowing you to declare a fact about the scene not already defined by the GM such as "I explored here centuries ago, there is a secret entrance over there." or "Hello Gravax, you remember me, I'm your great-grandfather."

TIER 1: Undying. When you die, instead of losing your character you instead add one point to a new Immortality Pool and enter a coma for 28 hours. If your body is completely destroyed, it reforms again in the nearest safe place. Your equipment is vulnerable to destruction as usual, and you always reform with nothing (except your oddity) when completely destroyed.

When you awake, you regain 20 points + the value of your Immortality pool to distribute to your stat pools. *Enabler.*

Living Relic. You are a walking, talking relic of the past and are trained in all tasks related to historical knowledge. *Enabler.*

TIER 2: Deathless Confidence. Because you know you cannot die, you have developed strange techniques for dealing with foes. When attacking or defending in melee, you can elect to take damage by hurling yourself on your opponents weapon. When doing this, you leave the opponent shocked by your seemingly crazy actions, stunning them for 1 round. If you succeed on a Might defense roll

GM Intrusion: An elderly stranger in the street recognises you and screams in terror! "It's him! The Butcher of Milave!" You don't remember that part of your past, but this man does, and soon others begin to recognise you as this terrible historical figure.

versus the opponents level, you disarm them by lodging the weapon inside your own body. *Enabler.*

TIER 3: Eternal Reserves. Channelling your immortality, you can use points from your Immortality Pool in place of points from any other pool, fuelling your powers with your regenerative energies. *Enabler.*

Instant Resurrection (5 Immortality points): When you die you can choose to spend 5 Immortality points to instantly regenerate instead of waiting 28 hours. *Enabler.*

TIER 4: Enduring. Your experience, memories and ability to survive have granted you many skills. Your Intellect Pool is increased by 5 points and you've built up so much scar tissue over the centuries, it now grants you basic +1 Armour. *Enabler.*

TIER 5: Past Life (6 Intellect points). Peering into your past, you can pull forth the memory of an ability from a previous life, feeling the memories flowing back into your mind. By spending 6 Intellect, plus its usual cost, you can make a single use of any character type ability of your tier or lower. *Action*

TIER 6: Release of Death. You have mastered the forces that grant you eternal life and have found a way to release the energy directly. At death, you can elect to release the forces that rebuild you as a burst of energy that converts your entire Immortality Pool into triple the amount as damage against all targets you designate within long range. You continue to regenerate as normal. *Action.*

True Death. When using Release of Death, you can opt to release yourself from the endless cycle of rebirth. All damage dealt is doubled, but you lose your immortality to be reborn as a new Tier 1 character with a different focus, retaining your memories and the Living Relic feature. *Enabler.*

CHASES THE WIND

Most people flee the Iron Wind, and rightly so, but those brave or foolish enough try and chase after it to loot the gifts it leaves in its wake. Rustchasers, they are commonly called, are considered strange by most, suicidal by many and heroes by few. They venture into the places even the bravest fear to tread in search of that elusive score, using a combination of guile, instinct, numenera and dumb luck to come out on top.

You typically wear rugged adventuring gear with quick release straps so you can drop everything and run if you have to. Dust clings to you from hard days out hunting the Wind, and harder days avoiding it, and you value function over form, sticking to clothing that provides many pockets and places to attach items to keep them within easy reach.

Anyone can chase the Wind, but those most drawn to the calling are Jacks.

CONNECTION: Pick one other PC. You've supplied them with particularly unique, strange cyphers reclaimed from the leavings of the Iron Wind before and they've either been stung by, or greatly benefited from their use.

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT: You have an oddity, a unique object that reacts in some way when placed near a cypher, artifact or oddity.

MINOR EFFECT SUGGESTIONS: Your latent sense for cyphers makes you use the cypher expertly, making it count one level higher than normal.

MAJOR EFFECT SUGGESTIONS: A Rustchaser knows how to move like the wind. You take 3 points less damage and get an asset on retaliating.

TIER 1: Rustchaser. Great risks mean great rewards. You can chose to roll twice and pick the best result, but if you fail, the GM gets a free intrusion against you. You also have a knack for knowing when a Wind is getting close, about to form or about to dissipate, granting you training in all tasks related to Iron Wind lore and tracking. *Enabler.*

Cyphersense (2 Intellect points): You know how to find cyphers better than anyone and by feeling out for that all familiar buzz in the back of your mind, you can detect cyphers in the area and where they are within short range. *Action.*

TIER 2: Quick Reactions (2 Speed points). You need to be ready for anything when you're chasing down the Wind, so you've honed your reactions to a razor-sharp edge. By spending 2 points from your Speed Pool, you can react to events almost before they happen, granting you an asset in Speed defence for 1 round. *Action.*

TIER 3: Camaderie. All Rustchasers are brothers and sisters, some more so than others. Your adventures chasing the Wind have earned you a contact. You can call upon them for information

GM Intrusion:
You've got that familiar itch on the back of your neck... An Iron Wind! It's almost on top of you!

about new hauls, deals, Iron Winds or for a favour, though they'll expect you to pay them back in kind. You and the GM should work out the details of your Rustchasing comrade. *Enabler.*

Cypher Tolerance: You deal in the trade of numenera, the scavenging of cyphers and artifacts from the wreckage of an Iron Wind. As such, you've gotten used to handling more cyphers than the average person. Your cypher limit is increased by 2. *Enabler.*

TIER 4: Quick-use Cypher (4 Speed points). As a Rustchaser, you always have a cypher close to hand ready to use. By spending 4 Speed points, you can use a cypher and also take an action this turn. *Enabler.*

TIER 5: Improvisation (5 Intellect points). You've developed a knack for thinking on your feet and experimenting on the fly with cyphers. You've learned how to, with some effort, combine two cyphers together to form a new composite cypher that just might be a bit more helpful. You destroy two cyphers and choose a new one that would be useful in your current situation. *Action.*

Survivor: Sometimes chasing the Wind gets ugly and you need to lay low and shelter from the storm, or sometimes get as far away as possible from some dangerous horror a Wind has whipped up. You are trained at all tasks involving finding shelter, hiding, survival and running. *Enabler.*

TIER 6: Iron in the Blood. You've had so many close calls with the Wind and handled so many cyphers, you've actually learned how to tap into the latent instability. For every new cypher you hold beyond your limit, you gain +2 to a Cypher Pool which can be used instead of or in addition to any other pool when you are required to spend points. However, you must roll on the cypher danger table whenever spending from this pool. *Enabler.*

COMMANDS FLESH

You used to have nightmares that your flesh was not your own, that it was a factory for creating terrible monsters. Afraid of what might be unleashed, you made your flesh a prison. Now though, you think you can understand the creatures lurking within and maybe even control them.

Perhaps you obey the voices within you and they grant you great powers or maybe your will is stronger than theirs and you control them for your own ends. Whatever the reason, your body is a

factory and with it you can create whatever you need.

Anyone might command flesh, though Glaives in particular find the benefits most useful.

CONNECTION: Pick a PC. Your fleshy passengers hate them for some reason and whenever you sleep your body spawns a small, level 1 creature that attacks them.

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT: 2 weeks of rations. Generating all this additional biomass is hungry work.

MINOR EFFECT SUGGESTIONS: Your spawn is particularly vicious and manages a second attack.

MAJOR EFFECT SUGGESTIONS: You spawn two creatures instead of one.

TIER 1: Spawn (2+ Might points). Your flesh bunches up and buds off a small, level 1 creature that can survive independently for 10 minutes before it shrivels and dies. The creature obeys basic commands such as "get that key", but it is not intelligent enough to perform complex tasks like "pick this lock". The creature is strong enough to pick up small items, but not enough to wield weapons. For each additional Might point spent, you can extend the life of the creature by 10 minutes. Creatures not actively following a command follow their own motives, whatever those may be. You must always spend at least 1 Might point from your pool when spawning, even after discounting Might Edge. *Action.*

TIER 2: Reabsorption. You can reabsorb your creatures, regaining 2 Might points for each one reintegrated into your flesh. *Enabler.*

Willful Mutation (4+ Might points). Choose a beneficial mutation from the core rulebook. From now on, by spending 4 Might points, you can force your body to develop that mutation temporarily for 10 minutes. For every additional point spent, the mutation lasts 10 more minutes. The choice of mutation can be changed each tier. *Action.*

TIER 3: Improved Spawn. You can now spawn level 2 creatures. Optionally, you can elect to leave them as level 1 creatures, but they can now fly with stubby, malformed wings. *Enabler.*

TIER 4: Forceful Absorption (4+ Intellect points). With some effort, you can try to forcibly absorb a level 3 or lower creature of your size or smaller, as long as it is organic and terrestrial, by beating the creature's level with an Intellect roll. Absorbing a

Cypher Danger Table, Numenera corebook, pg. 279

Those that are both Ridden and Command Flesh are fighting a continual war within their body, two wills fighting for dominance. Many go mad, others reach an accord, an uneasy alliance forged in blood and bone.

Ridden, pg. 49



creature causes you to regain 2 Might points. For each additional Intellect point spent, you can increase the maximum level of the creature you can attempt to absorb.

Attempting to absorb ultra-terrestrials results in harmful and/or unpredictable effects ranging from spontaneous harmful mutations, shifting out-of-phase or immediately moving down the damage track. GMs are encouraged to take advantage of this for intrusions. *Action.*

Whispers Within (4 Intellect points). The things within your flesh listen and learn and plot. Sometimes you overhear them and sometimes you can interrogate them. Things you may have forgotten or missed, things you couldn't see behind you, secret, silent thoughts you aren't sensitive enough to receive - the things inside you hear and see all. Spending Intellect allows your mind to slip inside yourself and ask a question of the riders within, which they must answer to the best of their abilities, though whether they tell you the whole truth or not is another matter. *Action.*

TIER 5: Improved Spawn. You can now spawn level 3 creatures. Optionally, you can elect to leave them as level 2 creatures, but they can now fly with stubby, malformed wings. *Enabler.*

TIER 6: Master of Flesh. Your increasing ability to control the creatures you set free from your body

now extends their lives. Through force of will, you can reshape your own form, budding off a portion of your flesh and permanently reducing your Might Pool by one point to make a new, permanent spawn. When the spawn dies, you regain the lost point. *Enabler.*

Factory. Your body has become a perfect factory for generating creatures and you permanently gain +4 Might points. *Enabler.*

SPAWN

Your spawn are ugly, malformed shapes of flesh. They are weak, but versatile.

LEVEL 1: Can move a short range and deal 1 point of damage when attacking. They have 5 health.

LEVEL 2: Can move a short range and deal 2 points of damage when attacking. They have 10 health.

LEVEL 3: Can move a short range and deal 3 points of damage when attacking. They have 15 health.

FLYING: Flying spawn can move up to a long range.

GM Intrusion: You may be the master of your flesh, but it is still factory for creating terrible monsters. You are suddenly wracked with pain as a terrible creature grows from your body and attacks!

Protobeast, pg. 84

CREATURES

There are many creatures and beings that roam the Ninth World and they are already strange and wonderful before the Iron Wind changes them. When an Iron Wind blows through, warped creatures are not the only thing you have to worry about. New creatures never before seen might be conjured out of nothing and rocks and plants may be animated into twisted, malformed monsters.

The Iron Wind leaves its mark upon everything it touches; its power and rage is boundless. The dead may be brought back to life, life itself may be created as well as destroyed. Only one thing can be relied on from the Iron Wind and that thing is Chaos. The creatures recorded here are just a small subset of the terrible and beautiful forms you may see in a Wind's wake, so provided are some helpful rules for creating your own as well.

BUILD YOUR OWN BEAST

Building your own beast from the Iron Wind is easy. The Iron Wind often twists things that exists or conjures monstrosities up from nowhere that have never been seen in the Ninth World before. To embrace that randomness and chaos, use it to generate a creature of your own.

First, start by picking the level of creature you want to generate. Next, simply pick several creatures of that level (or near it) and randomly combine their abilities. Take the armour of one, the modifications of another, the health of a third. Mix and match their combat and interaction descriptions and imagine how these beasts could have been blended together to create something capable of those feats.

Additionally, creatures created by the Wind may even be part cypher or artifact, granting them dangerous one-use or even reusable abilities. How might these devices look as part of a creature?

Of course, you can come up with your own abilities too, the Iron Wind is nothing if not creative - it needs no justification for why or how.

For good examples of how these blended beasts might look, refer to the [Twisted Predator](#) and [Conjoined Monstrosity](#).

The Ninth World Bestiary and the Technology Compendium: Sir Arthur's Guide to the Numenera are excellent sources of cyphers and creatures to blend into a terrifying monster smoothie.

CREATURES BY LEVEL

1 Dirus	pg. 85	4 Razorgel	pg. 69
2 Fogsnake	pg. 75	4 Shoulder-devil	pg. 86
2 Fragment Implanters	pg. 83	4 Swollen Guster	pg. 77
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TWISTED PREDATOR

3 (9)

Twisted Predators are animals warped into new and terrifying forms by the Iron Wind. While warped both mentally and physically, these creatures still retain some of their predatory instincts. Twisted Predators come in all sorts of forms and are often completely unrecognisable compared to the creatures they were before.

An amalgamation of limbs, claws and teeth, these creatures are often terrifying to behold but are also things to be pitied. Their suffering and pain is obvious to even the coldest heart. Twisted Predators hunt down anything they can use as food which, due to their condition, could be anything from flesh to cypher energies.

LEVEL: 3 (9)

MOTIVE: To feed

ENVIRONMENT: Aftermath of Iron Winds, anywhere

HEALTH: 15

DAMAGE INFLECTED: 4

ARMOUR: 2

MOVEMENT: Short

MODIFICATIONS: Speed defense as level 2. Initiates pins and grapples at level 4. Roll for a random level 3 cypher, the Twisted Predator has the same abilities.

COMBAT: Twisted Predators stalk their prey, aiming for quick kills by pouncing upon a pinned target and landing a killing blow. Once they have pinned a target down, the beasts tear into them, using their teeth claws and other appendages all at once in a mad fury. When pinned by the beast, all Speed defence rolls are two steps more difficult.

Twisted Predators often will have fragments of numenera fused into them, and may exhibit the abilities of a cypher when attacking or defending themselves. They don't have the tactical thought or reasoning abilities to use their cypher powers effectively, however, so they may trigger randomly or not at all during a battle.

INTERACTION: Twisted Predators are driven by instinct and pain. They can not be reasoned with or appeased.

Use: Twisted Predators make excellent examples of the horrors left behind the Wind. Dangerous, but damaged, they embody both the benefits and disabilities an Iron Wind can afflict upon its victims.

LOOT: 1 cypher (the one rolled for in Modifications), 1d6 oddities, 1d6 shins.

GM Intrusion: You hit the beast, rupturing a pocket of dangerous chemicals inside it that spray out, causing choking coughs. The chemicals deal 3 Might damage and make all tasks one step more difficult for 3 rounds.



CONJOINED MONSTROSITY

VARIES

Conjoined Monstrosities are not just one creature, but several, fused together into something greater than the sum of its parts. A monstrosity may be made of equal parts animal, machine or plant but all of it is hunger, pain, and madness.

Terrifying to behold, their twisted forms evoke a primal fear in even the bravest soul. They appear in any number of shapes and sizes, some smaller than a metre, whilst others might be a fusion of many different creatures and people into something much larger. The only constant is a universal thirst for violence, the only way these insane creatures can find a quick end to their torment.

LEVEL: Any (roll d10)

MOTIVE: Suicide through violence

ENVIRONMENT: Aftermath of Iron Winds, anywhere

HEALTH: Level x 3

DAMAGE INFLECTED: Variable

ARMOUR: Variable

MOVEMENT: Short

MODIFICATIONS: Conjoined Monstrosities can never be surprised: they often, quite literally, have eyes in the backs of their heads. Defends as 2 levels lower.

COMBAT: Conjoined Monstrosities lash out with reckless abandon with all the weapons and tools at their disposal. Driven by madness and a lust for death, they hurl themselves at their targets. Due to their warped natures, depending on their positioning a person might find themselves fighting off claws one round and slapping tentacles the next. Every attack changes between light, medium and heavy damage at random and every time a Conjoined Monstrosity is hit, it may or may not have up to 3 Armour.

INTERACTION: Conjoined Monstrosities only seek a quick death. They can not be reasoned with, whatever minds they had are gone, though one that is part human might call out for mercy and beg for death.

USE: Conjoined Monstrosities make excellent examples of the weird, twisted monsters left behind the Wind.

They are simultaneously pitiful and dangerous, a demonstration of the callous chaos of the Iron Wind.

LOOT: 1 cypher, 1d6 oddities, 1d6 shins.

GM Intrusion: The beast turns around, a patch of thick armour absorbing the force of your blow and lashes out with a patch of savagely sharp, insectile arms.



RAZORGEL

4 (12)

Razorgels are strange, coloured blobs of a gel-like substances that adhere to any surface. They are surrounded by a tough, non-permeable membrane which protects them from harm, but it also prevents their inner gel bodies from being able to access and digest food.

Razorgels can eat anything and rapidly dissolve and digest metal and stone when their gel makes contact with it. In order to feed, razorgels seek out sharp objects to cut themselves on, compressing and expanding rapidly in order to fling themselves against a target with enough force to rupture themselves on its sharp points.

LEVEL: 4 (12)

MOTIVE: To rupture themselves on sharp objects; to feed

ENVIRONMENT: Aftermath of Iron Winds, anywhere sharp objects are in abundance

HEALTH: 20

DAMAGE INFLICTED: 4

ARMOUR: 2

MOVEMENT: Immediate normally. Long when leaping or flinging themselves.

MODIFICATIONS: Speed defense as level 0. When ruptured, contact with the razorgel causes 10 points of might damage that ignores armour. Ruptured razorgels regain 3 health back from material they dissolve and reseal at the start of the next round.

COMBAT: Razorgels initiate combat by flinging themselves at weapons or sharp clothing from a distance. When flinging themselves, the force of the impact deals damage as a medium weapon. If the razorgels can not find something sharp to rupture themselves on, they latch onto an enemy in the hopes that the target will try and cut them off, rupturing them in the process. Whilst attached and intact, they cause no damage and can actually act as armour against blunt forces.

INTERACTION: Razorgels are not intelligent, but can be distracted or appeased by sharp objects.

USE: Razorgels make excellent weird enemies. They don't care about harming the players, only wanting to use them as tools to help them eat. Because of their toughness, they can also act as a strange, and dangerous, symbiotic armour.

LOOT: Nothing (they'd digest anything that could be held 'inside' them).

***GM Intrusions:** The razorgel leaps onto your face, adhering over your mouth and nose, suffocating you and causing you to drop one step down the damage track.*



SLAGOMORPH

3 (9)

The famous Rustchaser Lucello Vas, often tells a tall tale of how he once came across a completely intact bridge in the Beyond, in the middle of nowhere. When he went to investigate it, the entire thing was made up of thousands of slagomorphs with no original bridge to be seen at all.

Slagomorphs are lumps of bubbling flesh, amorphous metals and liquid stone, all blending together like a foul material soup. Their patches of different substances can morph into shapes, flesh patches becoming hands, claws, faces; metal becoming blades, keys and clamps; stone becoming solid walls, heavy bricks or stoneware utensils.

Slagomorphs don't seem aware of the utility of the shapes their substance forms into and a slagomorph is as likely to attempt walking using a series of bricks and metal forks as it is to use a human leg. They are attracted to things with missing pieces, where they try to use themselves as a replacement, perhaps longing to be part of something whole again. Inevitably though, they fail. Flesh doesn't belong in a broken wall and a missing leg can not be replaced by a stone jug. Sometimes their idea of what constitutes 'broken' makes no sense, and they will try and fix that hole full of small bones a person would normally call their mouth by becoming a hooved leg or a metal bar to fill it.

LEVEL: 3 (9)

MOTIVE: To use their own bodies to replace missing parts of things

ENVIRONMENT: Aftermath of Iron Winds, ruins, hospitals, broken equipment

HEALTH: 15

DAMAGE INFLECTED: 1

ARMOUR: 1

MOVEMENT: Short

MODIFICATIONS: All actions against a slagomorph are one step more difficult if you are injured or damaged in some way, except attracting one, which is two steps easier.

COMBAT: Slagomorphs don't really seem aware of hostile actions and don't actively attack. However, their attempts to repair things using their own bodies can sometimes cause more harm than good. Slagomorphs will clumsily try to climb on things using random 'limbs' which may comprise of sharp hooks that cause 1 point of damage, or they may try to enter a wound or orifice, potentially causing internal injuries or suffocation.

INTERACTION: Slagomorphs are semi-intelligent but can only hear/speak/see if they happen to have the required organs formed on their flesh surfaces. They want to be part of a whole, and don't understand any concepts that don't immediately and obviously lead to that conclusion.

USE: These creatures are pitiful and incompetent and demonstrate the tragic side of weirdness that can be created by the Iron Wind. Slagomorphs can be very useful as novel ways to bypass obstacles and enterprising PCs may be able to convince several slagomorphs to become the necessary repairs to make a bridge safe enough to cross, at least for a short while.

LOOT: Slagomorphs may contain a single cypher, 1d6 oddities or 1d6 shins.



GM Intrusion: A slagomorph tries to become the repairs to a small tear in your boot, but ends up encasing your foot in a fragment of stone table, making you unable to move and act at the same time for 1d6 rounds.

GALLING

6 (18)

Gallings are large fleshy tubes that crawl, climb and walk on a series of thousands of tiny insectile legs. To look at, they resemble very large, greenish sleeping bags with legs, but in reality they are far more dangerous.

Gallings can live for a long time without food, waiting in a sort of stasis for years before their next meal comes along.

LEVEL: 6 (18)

MOTIVE: To consume fat

ENVIRONMENT: Aftermath of Iron Winds, caves, overhangs

HEALTH: 30

DAMAGE INFLECTED: 4

MOVEMENT: Short

MODIFICATIONS: Avoiding a hidden Gallings attack is two steps more difficult.

COMBAT: Preferring to climb into secluded spots above where creatures travel, Gallings hang in wait until a creature passes below them. The Galling then falls over them, enveloping them in their tube like bodies and covers them with a bitter, digestive enzyme. The enzyme doesn't kill their victims however, but breaks down the fat, causing it to 'bleed' from the skin in gross, yellow rivers which the Galling absorbs for food. When finished, the Galling retracts back up to its hiding place above, waiting for the next unlucky traveller. If the victim survives the shock of all their fatty deposits being liquified and drained (an unlikely scenario), the Galling has no further interest in them.

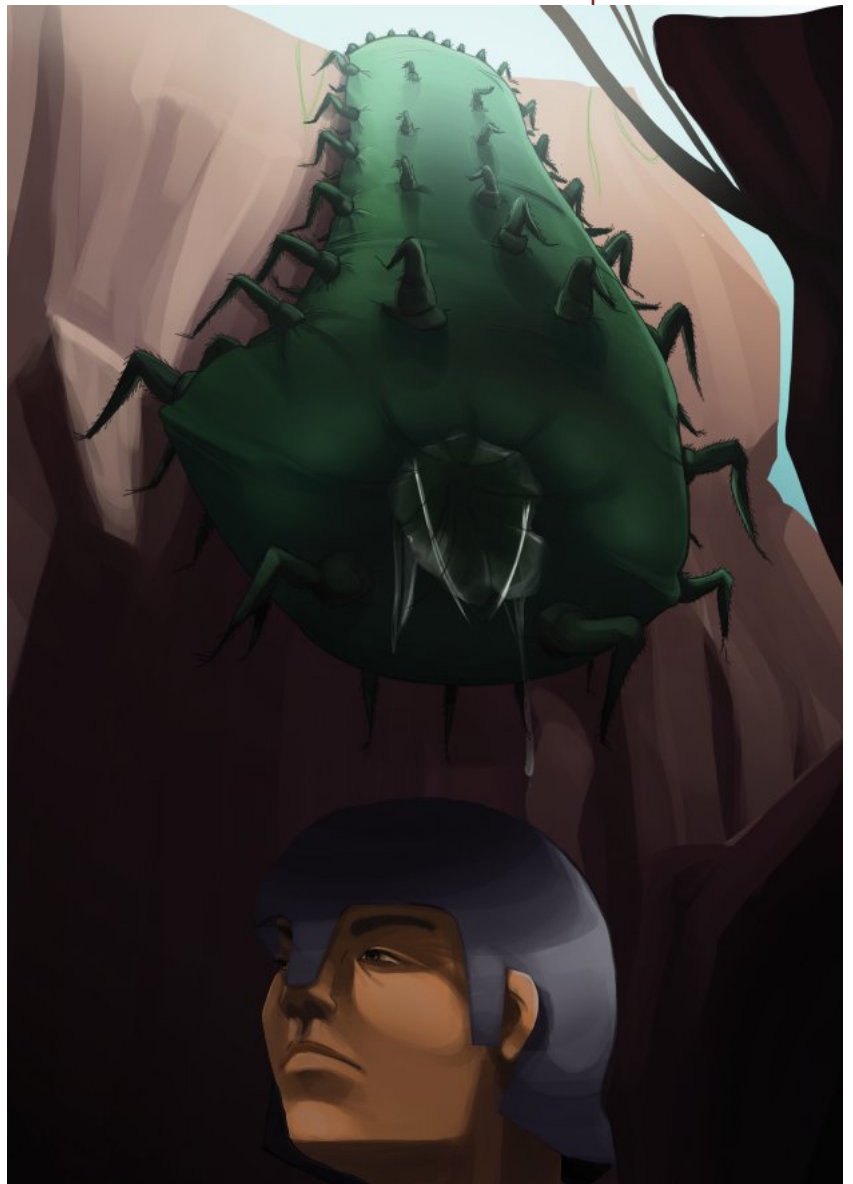
When detached from the ceiling, a Galling scuttles unnervingly quickly on its hundreds of legs, trying to leap up and onto attackers in order to swallow them whole. If it can't swallow a target, it will slam them with its soft body until its victim is unconscious and then slowly processes them through its tube-body by scooping them up off the ground.

INTERACTION: Gallings are not intelligent and have a preference for human fat over other sources. They are only interested in eating though, so can be distracted by high-fat foods.

USE: Gallings make excellent obstacles or as strange sideshows. A captive Galling might be used as a strange, and dangerous, weight-loss device by an unscrupulous trader.

LOOT: Gallings may contain 2 or 3 cyphers, an oddity or a handful of shins, all covered in filmy, greasy fat.

GM Intrusion:
Suddenly everything goes dark and you feel your body surrounded and gripped tight as a Galling drops from the ceiling and envelops you.



MURKSTONE CRAWLER

4 (12)

Squat and moist, these dumpy creatures look like vaguely animal shaped rock outcroppings, drenched in a thick mucus. They crawl along slowly, coating their surroundings with slime to prepare it for their parent, a Murkstone Builder.

Despite crawling slowly, Murkstone Crawlers can move quite quickly at a risk of drying out, after which they crumble and fall apart. They are extremely aggressive towards anything that approaches their mucus, but otherwise care little for intruders or threats, instead interested only in spreading a thin layer of mucus over everything.

LEVEL: 4 (12)

MOTIVE: To spread and protect mucus

ENVIRONMENT: Aftermath of Iron Winds, large, flat areas

HEALTH: 15

DAMAGE INFLECTED: 2

MOVEMENT: Short

MODIFICATIONS: Defend as level 5.

COMBAT: Murkstone Crawlers prefer to stab enemies with their rocky protrusions and drown prone targets in sticky mucus. If provided with a prone enemy, a Murkstone Crawler will sit on top of one and continually spill mucus over them until the enemy stops moving. Because they are stone, they are quite heavy; being sat on makes using Might or Speed edge impossible and lifting off a Murkstone Crawler is a difficulty 6 Might task.

INTERACTION: Murkstone Crawlers prefer flat ground to spread their mucus over and whilst they are not intelligent, they can be herded by providing a flat area for them to move towards.

USE: Murkstone Crawlers can be used to provide interesting (and gross) obstacles to bypass but more importantly can forewarn against the presence of the far more dangerous Murkstone Builder that will follow.

LOOT: None.

GM Intrusion: The Murkstone Crawlers roaming past shoot a particularly large jet of mucus, accidentally coating the players and thus making them targets if they move - and candidates for etching if they don't!

MURKSTONE BUILDER

9 (27)

Hovering about 20 meters above the ground, these huge, ridged slabs of rock are about 300 meters long by almost 100 meters wide and float across mucus covered landscapes, a series of powerful rays of energy shooting down from a tangle of glowing tentacles that hang below them. The Murkstone Builder uses its rays to burn designs into the mucus, the intense heat creating solid structures as the mucus is transformed into hard metal lines and complex, finely etched slabs of synthetic material.

As they travel, they constantly etch these circuitry designs across the landscape for a purpose that only later becomes clear. Far behind them, a storm follows, lightning arcing into the metal design. The builder constantly runs a pair of thick

metal tentacles from its bulk along the circuit paths it has laid out, collecting the energy.

As a Murkstone Builder travels and collects energy, it grows, ablating shards of rock that fall in curiously animal-like shapes onto the patterns below. Those rocks soon begin to glisten as they start to produce mucus and move of their own accord. A new Murkstone Crawler is born.

LEVEL: 9 (27)

MOTIVE: Unknown; to etch metal patterns

ENVIRONMENT: Aftermath of Iron Winds, large, flat areas

HEALTH: 90

ARMOUR: 5

DAMAGE INFLECTED: 6

MOVEMENT: Short

MODIFICATIONS: Defend as level 6 due to size. Healed by electrical damage.

COMBAT: Murkstone Builders are vast, heavy, flying rocks with access to powerful energy beams. However they are slow and can only levitate over the patterns they etch or the mucus laid by their crawlers. When in combat, they make use of their energy beam tentacles to try and burn any attackers, but will not pursue them. Out of combat, Murkstone Builders are indifferent to other creatures unless they touch the etchings or the mucus, at which point they attack. While most tentacles are busy etching, a builder can free up to 4 to attack with per round. Typically these fire energy beams up to long range, but if within short range will coil around a target and attempt to fling them up to a long range away, causing 6 points of ambient falling damage that ignores armour.

If forced off of the etchings of mucus, a Murkstone Builder falls to the ground as only several tons of rock can. It ablates new crawlers every round to get itself new mucus, but it also tries to crawl, albeit very slowly, on its tentacles. When moving this way, it can only attack once a round using its energy beams. If kept from hovering for more than 10 rounds, it dies, becoming inert rock.

INTERACTION: Murkstone Builders are not initially intelligent, but the larger an etched area they are in contact with, the more intelligent they become. With several square miles of etchings, a Murkstone Builder becomes fully sentient and can be conversed with by anyone with the ability to talk to machines. Intelligent Murkstone Builders are very rare, and they are often obsessed with destroying any others of their kind. They can not see or hear directly, but they know all that their crawlers experience and can share that knowledge if given a reason to do so.

USE: Murkstone Builders are a whole campaign in themselves. Large, powerful and enigmatic, these strange creatures are dangerous and can cause untold destruction due to the electrical storms they create and the massive scale of the terraforming they perform upon the land.

LOOT: 2 artifacts, 2d6 cyphers, 1d6 oddities and 500 shins.

GM Intrusion: While the PCs are nearby a Murkstone Builder, it sheds a few Murkstone Crawlers that they have to dodge to avoid being crushed.



The Iron Wind leaves behind more than monsters of flesh and blood. One of these non-corporeal creatures are Phashrieks, ghostly apparitions that let out terrible sounds. Formed of living ultra-dimensional energies, Phashrieks have no bodies at all and can only be observed by their effects on the world. They manifest as clusters of violent vibrations that cause terrible shrieking sounds to emit from out of nowhere.

Phashrieks sometimes contain echoes of animals and people claimed by the Iron Wind, their shrieks sometimes turning to calls for help, animalistic grunts or whispered names in the dark. However, Phashrieks don't care about communicating; they only care about murder.

LEVEL: 5 (15)

MOTIVE: To kill physical creatures

ENVIRONMENT: Aftermath of Iron Winds, sources of ultra-dimensional energies

HEALTH: 25

DAMAGE INFLECTED: 4

MOVEMENT: Long

MODIFICATIONS: Hides from normal sight as level 10. Weak against intellect, out-of-phase and ultra-dimensional attacks, making such attacks two steps easier. Immune to physical attacks.

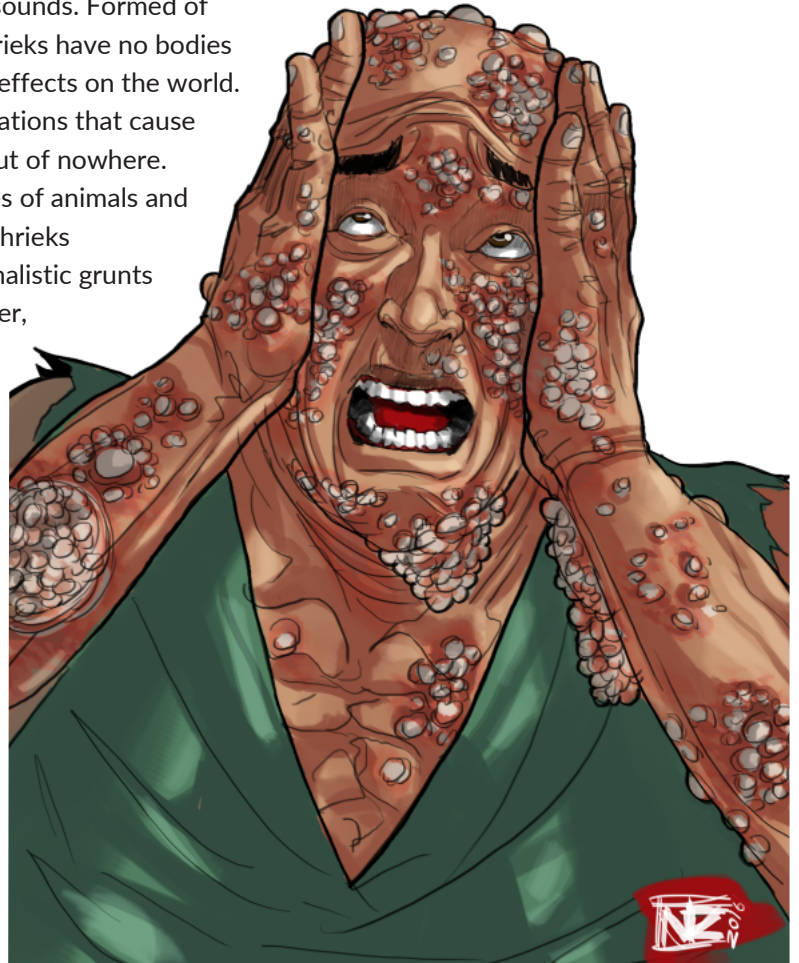
COMBAT: Since they lack a physical form, Phashrieks attack in one of two ways. The first is to use their terrible shrieks and other sounds to manipulate and trick others into fatal accidents. They particularly relish these kinds of deaths because no-one knows they were even involved.

The other is to phase through another creature, vibrating its molecules to cause their terrible sounds in such a way that it physically damages their victim, heating them up from the inside and causing their flesh to bubble and pop, dealing 4 Might damage.

INTERACTION: Phashrieks are intelligent and cunning. They hate all corporeal creatures and delight in causing them harm. Bargaining with one is all but impossible, but the promise of more victims for them to murder might persuade one to show mercy... for a while.

USE: Phashrieks are very difficult creatures to fight, being invisible and immune to physical attacks. They make excellent villains for ghost tales and hauntings.

LOOT: None if killed by normal means, however death caused by ultra-dimensional or phasing weaponry might reward players with a cypher.



GM Intrusion: As you sneak past the bandit camp, your throat feels like fire as it emits a terrible, inhuman shriek. You take 4 points of damage and the bandits spin around towards the sound, spotting you instantly.

FOGNAKE

2 (6)

Contrary to its name, the Fogsnake is not a snake made of fog. Rather, it is a fog made of snakes. A Fogsnake is a ball of writhing, floating, ethereal snakes that travels through the air. While each snake seems like an individual creature, unique in size, shape and colouration, they are all part of the same creature even if not physically connected.

Fogsnares assimilate other snake-like creatures and appendages into their bodies. Another snake might be sucked up, slowly fading to semi-translucency as it joins the collective. More horribly, a Fogsnake may take a liking to an arm or a leg and try to draw it from its host body, turning it into a snake-like creature as it joins the collective lifeform.

While floating and ethereal in appearance, Fogsnares are actually as solid as any other matter and can be harmed normally.

LEVEL: 2 (6)

MOTIVE: To collect snakes or snake-like organics

ENVIRONMENT: Aftermath of Iron Winds, sources of ultra-dimensional energies

HEALTH: 10

DAMAGE INFLECTED: 2

MOVEMENT: Short

MODIFICATIONS: Might defense as level 4. Hides as level 5.

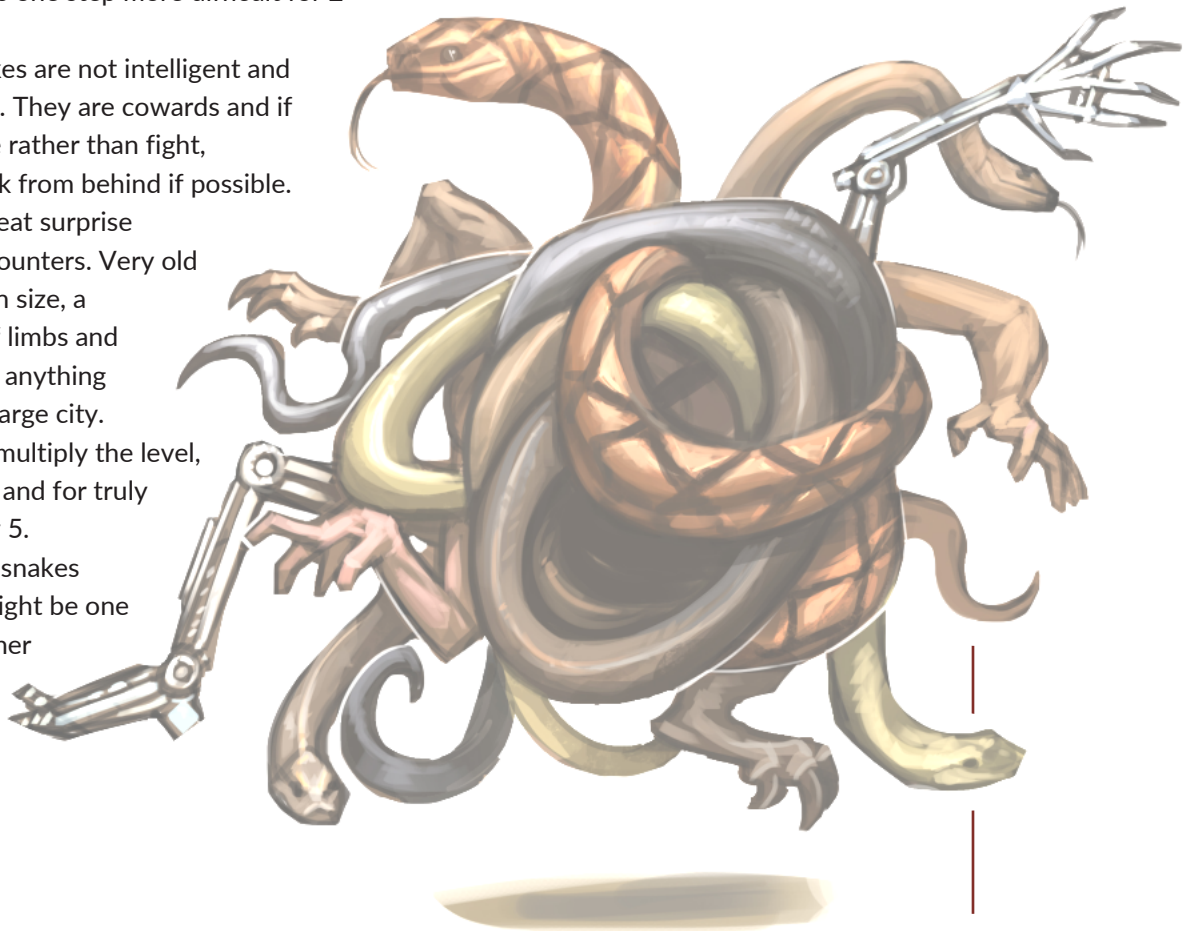
COMBAT: Fogsnares drift through the air, colliding with their targets from behind and writhing over them, biting and trying to pull off any limbs they might be interested in adding to the collective. To aid their attacks, a Fogsnake may use poison. Resisting the poison is a level 4 might task and if failed, causes the target to find all tasks one step more difficult for 2 rounds.

INTERACTION: Fogsnares are not intelligent and cannot be reasoned with. They are cowards and if attacked face on will flee rather than fight, preferring to sneak attack from behind if possible.

USE: Fogsnares make great surprise attacks or just weird encounters. Very old Fogsnares can be huge in size, a collective of hundreds of limbs and snakes that can terrorize anything from a small village to a large city. For very old Fogsnares, multiply the level, damage and health by 3 and for truly ancient ones, multiply by 5.

LOOT: Often one of the snakes making up a Fogsnake might be one or more arms with a cypher implant, yielding 1d6 cyphers.

GM Intrusion: You suddenly feel a slithering presence and a bite on the back of the neck, feeling weak. As you collapse, you see a ball of snakes descending down on your arm menacingly.



Kryptiles and Shanus (Ninth World Bestiary, pg. 113) instinctively hate each other and use all the tools at their disposal to attack each other. Typically, their hosts will find themselves in a battle of luck versus accidents as the two creatures work their magic on probability to try and harm and avoid each other. Often, the two creatures will end up abandoned by their hosts due to the chaos they cause, and resort to teeth or claws until only one survives.

GM Intrusion: The nano goes to use their Numenera book as an asset, but finds the exact page they needed has been ruined, smeared with some foul-smelling substance.

Kryptiles are tiny, cute reptiles that lack eyes and mouths. They don't seem to need sight, nor do they need to eat, and can be found living near sources of information, such as libraries, people or ancient machines that access the datasphere.

Kryptiles don't need a mouth because they don't eat food - they absorb mental energy in the form of confusion and frustration in order to sustain themselves. A kryptile will alter books by smudging words or removing and reordering pages. It will move signs and directions and use simple illusions to secretly make life more complicated and needlessly difficult for those around it so it can feed on their frustration. In many way, Kryptiles are considered the opposite of the Shanu.

LEVEL: 2 (6)

MOTIVE: To cause confusion and frustration

ENVIRONMENT: Aftermath of Iron Winds, sources of information

HEALTH: 8

DAMAGE INFLECTED: 1

MOVEMENT: Short

MODIFICATIONS: Climb and stealth as level 5; perception as level 4; Speed defense as level 4 due to size and speed.

COMBAT: Kryptiles flee rather than fight. They can scratch with their claws but otherwise have very few offensive capabilities. Their real talent is in making tasks more difficult. A Kryptile will find a suitable ally it thinks is capable of defending it and providing it with sustenance and will use its illusions to make attacks against its ally one step more difficult (effectively providing an asset on defense tasks to the ally).

INTERACTION: Kryptiles are clever little beasts, but mischievous. They can not speak but they can recognise words both spoken and written down (quite how they see text without eyes is unclear). They are always looking for new sources of frustration, but prefer timid or gentle people that are more likely to seethe with frustration quietly than lash out in anger.

USE: Kryptiles make great surprise attacks, annoying pets or just weird encounters. Perhaps someone the PCs encounter is having a rash of bad luck and wants the PCs to investigate the source of a possible curse.



SWOLLEN GUSTER

4 (12)

One of the stranger creatures to be created by the wind are these rotund, six-legged beasts. Swollen Gusters are simple, docile creatures about half as tall as a man, complete with a wide mouth full of large, flat teeth suitable for grinding and crushing the plants they feed on. They constantly look ready to burst, as if too big for their own skin.

When threatened, a Swollen Guster inhales deeply, inflating itself to almost 3 times its normal size. When inflated this way, its stretched out skin becomes hard, acting as a thick armour coating protecting it from damage. If attacks persist, it rapidly exhales, blasting air out of its mouth with extreme force.

LEVEL: 4 (12)

MOTIVE: To graze on plant life

ENVIRONMENT: Aftermath of Iron Winds, plants

HEALTH: 20

DAMAGE INFLECTED: 4

MOVEMENT: Short

MODIFICATIONS: When swollen, has 6 Armour.

COMBAT: Swollen Gusters try to avoid combat, and fight defensively if forced to. They bite with their large teeth, causing 4 points of damage if needed, but prefer to inflate in the hopes an attacker will give up and leave.

When inflated, a Swollen Guster has two options. It can grip the ground with its six powerful claws then rapidly exhale, creating a blast of air similar to the Push esotery that is powerful enough to knock several people off their feet and push them back a long distance. Alternatively, the creature can elect to not hold onto the ground and can try to escape by launching itself away like a deflating balloon. In rare cases, a Swollen Guster may use this offensively to launch itself at an attacker, hoping to knock it down so it can then escape.

INTERACTION: Swollen Gusters generally avoid other creatures unless threatened. They often herd together, travelling in groups of 6 to 10.

USE: A farmer's crops were assaulted by a herd of Swollen Gusters and he needs someone to drive them away.

LOOT: A Swollen Guster may have sucked up a cypher, oddity or some shins when inflating itself.



Push esotery, Numenera corebook, pg. 36

GM Intrusion: *The Swollen Guster inhales sharply, pulling the weapons out of your hands as it inflates to thrice its size.*

Some Rustchasers have tried to train Swollen Gusters as mounts. Such training is difficult and the Swollen Gusters are completely unbalanced by their riders, making such attempts incredibly dangerous. Consequently, catching and riding a Swollen Guster has become a sort of right-of-passage for the more eager risk-takers among them.

—CANNEN QUINNEY, THE RUSTCHASER COMMENTARIES

GM Intrusion:

While fighting the front half of a Fenester, a terrified man falls out of the back of it, helpless.

The Fenester is distracted and furious - do you take advantage of the distraction and flee, or try to save the man?

Fenesters look like large, crystalline-glass dogs, cut in half through the body so that their hind- and fore-legged halves are separate from each other. This doesn't seem to affect them negatively at all and each half is able to move independently over any distance.

If you were to look at the sheared half of the creature, you would see a rippling, distorted view of the world as seen from the other half, and a simple level 2 intellect task can reveal that it is in fact a portal from one half of the creature to the other. The halves seem to move and stand as if they were attached, so they often look impossibly balanced.

LEVEL: 4 (12)

MOTIVE: To consume flesh

ENVIRONMENT: Aftermath of Iron Winds, mountains, sources of fresh meat

HEALTH: 20

DAMAGE INFLECTED: 5

MOVEMENT: Both halves can move a short distance independently.

ARMOUR: 2

MODIFICATIONS: When both halves are in the same area (both halves within short range of each other), acts as a level 5 creature.

COMBAT: A Fenester will stalk lone prey and pounce, using its powerful jaws or claws to tear apart an opponent. Its other half may show up depending on where it is at the time and flank the engaged opponent, attacking from behind.

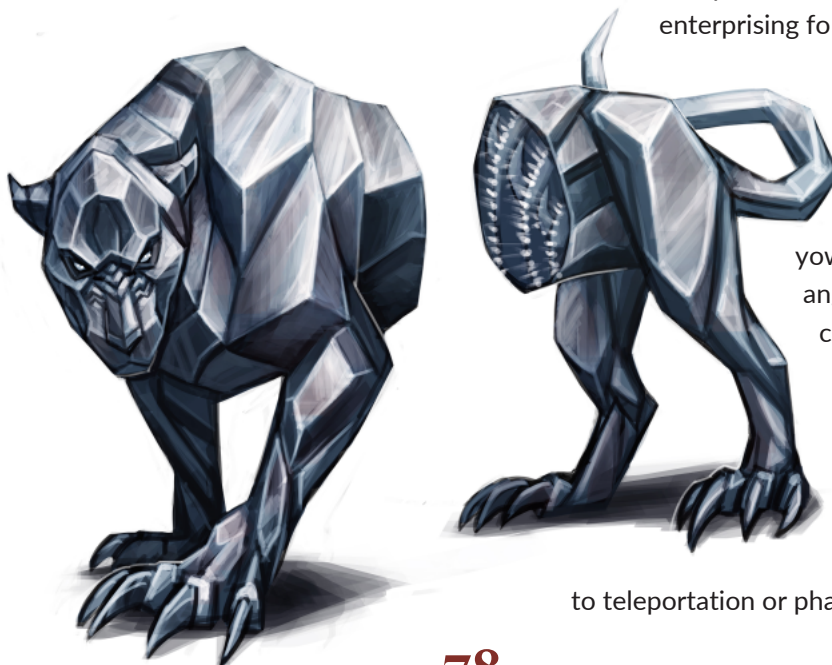
INTERACTION: Fenesters are not overly aggressive, but do not like to be approached and see any organic being as a potential food source. They are not intelligent and cannot be reasoned with, but they can be distracted from attacking by offerings of fresh meat.

Fenesters can be used as teleportation devices if one is brave or foolish enough to try. By jumping through the smooth, rippling half of a Fenester, you appear instantly out of the other half of the creature, though doing so leaves you at the mercy of a very angry beast. Fenesters hate any creature that uses them for travel and will attack them relentlessly until either the creature or the Fenester dead.

USE: Fenesters make great weird creatures to happen across. They can be an obstacle to be avoided or an enemy to face. One of the best uses for a Fenester is as a window to another place or even a potential

transportation system. Some braver, more enterprising folk attempt to capture Fenesters in special harnesses to use them permanently as transportation conduits. Fenesters hate being captured as much as being travelled through and yowl constantly in pain, hatred and anger. Freeing a captured Fenester could earn the PCs some measure of loyalty from one, with it guiding them to some hidden discovery or even allowing a transportation through it in exceptional circumstances.

LOOT: A single cypher related to teleportation or phasing



Dritgeists are the remnants of people fused with or melted into the ground by the Iron Wind. Tormented, they move through the ground as living drit, forming shapes in the dust, seeking an end to themselves, some kind of respite from their loneliness and boredom or just lashing out in anger, spite or madness.

Dritgeists barely remember who they were and some might have been more than one person. Many are insane, driven mad by the Wind itself or the ordeal of living on as animated drit.

LEVEL: 9 (27)

MOTIVE: Suicide, adventure, boredom, spite

ENVIRONMENT: Aftermath of Iron Winds, large plains of drit, mudpools

HEALTH: 45

DAMAGE INFLICTED: 6

MOVEMENT: Long, can move anywhere there is a continuous seam of drit to do so.

MODIFICATIONS: Dritgeists are impervious to physical damage because they don't have bodies. However, disintegrating a large section of the drit they are composed of can kill them outright.

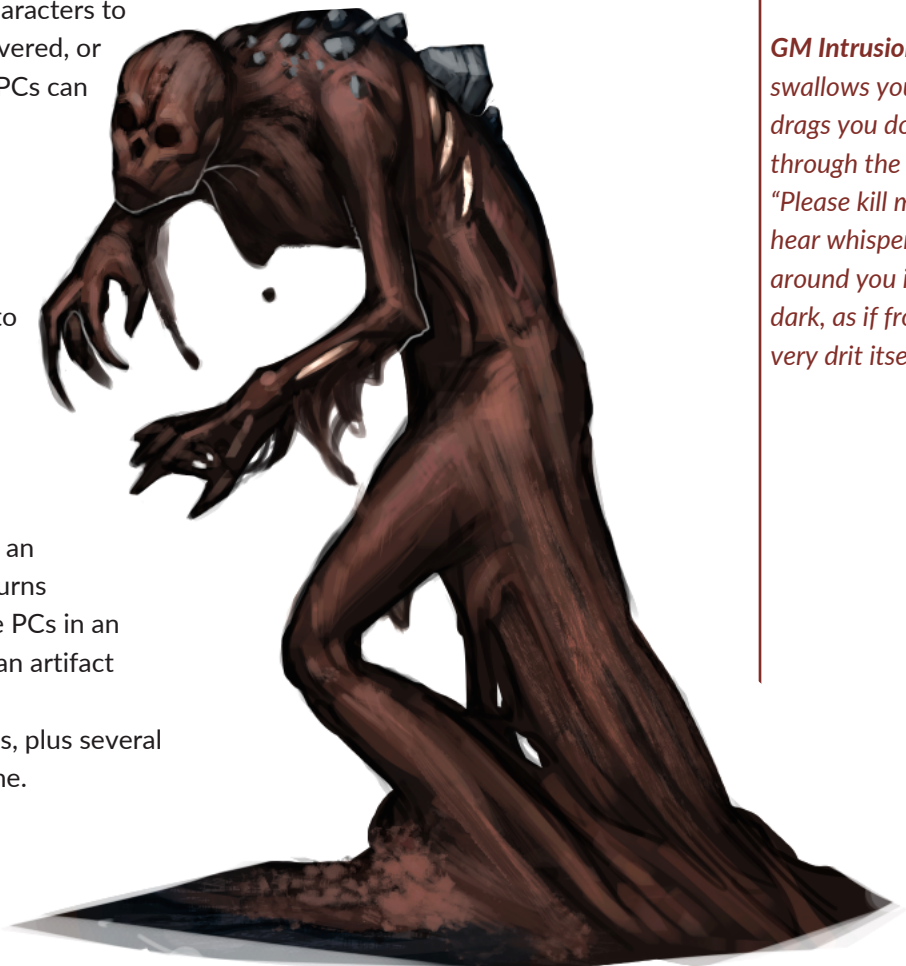
COMBAT: Dritgeists attack mostly by hurling boulders or smothering people with drit by causing the earth to rise up and swallow their targets. Dritgeists can attack any number of people within a short range radius, but every person it attacks simultaneously find defense tasks one step easier per person.

INTERACTION: Dritgeists are not always aggressive and are mostly lonely. They might trap people in order to have company, or to force them to try and kill it so it does not have to suffer anymore. Some more lucid Dritgeists might offer to take characters to secret places underground they have discovered, or share information they have learned if the PCs can alleviate its boredom and melancholy.

When Dritgeists speak, it is in a gender-neutral, gravelly tone that echoes from the ground itself. During conversation, the Dritgeist may form chairs to seat players, restraints to hold them or shape the drit into statues to demonstrate things it is talking about.

USE: Dritgeists can make interesting campaign hooks. They may know many things or even be the remnants of a loved one thought lost to the Iron Wind. Perhaps an aldeia worships a mystical talking hill that turns out to be a Dritgeist, or a dritgeist traps the PCs in an underground facility, sending them to find an artifact that can finally end its life.

LOOT: 1d6 cyphers, 1d6 oddities, 1d6 shins, plus several more if players decide to try 'excavating' one.



GM Intrusion: A hole swallows you up and drags you down through the earth. "Please kill me." you hear whispered around you in the dark, as if from the very drit itself.

Veselvarks are small, deformed rodents covered in thousands of fibre optic quills that emit multi-coloured lights. Their quills are very sharp and Veselvarks use them to scare off or attack predators.

Veselvarks also have another purpose for their quills. By pushing against machines, the quills can seek out and connect with parts of the machine, controlling it. Veselvarks use their machine interfacing abilities to use cyphers, open doors or to feed off machine energy. They typically use their abilities to open large machines in which they make their nests.

Some Veselvarks have connected to the datasphere through machines they have used and consequently have learned skills and accessed knowledge that allows them to do a number of things not usually expected of a small rodent. They move quite slowly and some Veselvarks permanently graft machines to themselves to aid them, such as anti-grav plates or mechanical legs.

LEVEL: 6 (18)

MOTIVE: To interact with and feed on machines

ENVIRONMENT: Aftermath of Iron Winds, ancient numenera ruins, machinery or vehicles.

HEALTH: 30

DAMAGE INFLECTED: 4

MOVEMENT: Short

MODIFICATIONS: Veselvarks may be trained in Speed defense or other skills from a datasphere download or cypher.

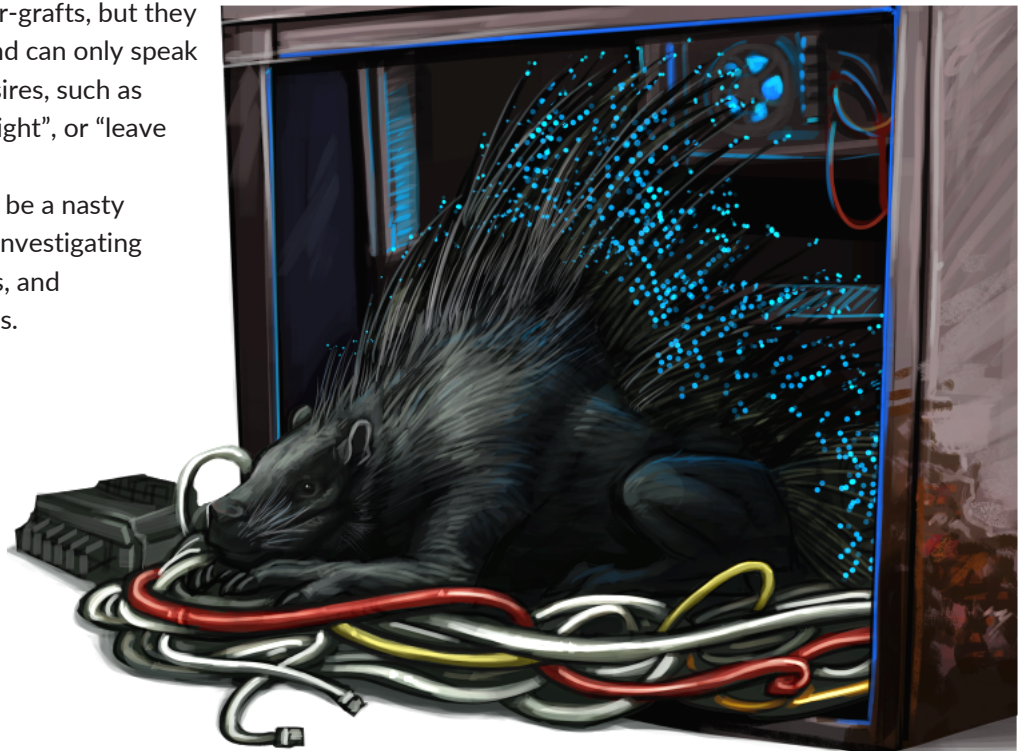
COMBAT: Veselvarks puff themselves up, rattle their quills and flash multi-coloured lights to scare off threats. If that doesn't work, Veselvarks will try and use a cypher or artifact they carry nestled in their quills to attack or escape. Failing that, Veselvarks try to rush backwards at a threat, impaling it with sharp quills that cause 4 points of damage and an additional 6 points of damage when pulled out without specialist tools.

INTERACTION: Veselvarks seek out machinery and while they do not want to attack others unnecessarily, they will if it means they can access a new machine. Some Veselvarks can talk due to datasphere downloads or cypher-grafts, but they are not intelligent and can only speak in terms of basic desires, such as "want cypher", "no fight", or "leave now".

USE: Veselvarks can be a nasty surprise for players investigating numenera or curious, and dangerous, nuisances.

LOOT: 1d6 cyphers

GM Intrusion: You smash the machine and reach in to retrieve the cyphers, but your hand is suddenly in immense pain as you whip it back, now pin-cushioned in glassy quills. Looks like you disturbed a veselvark nest, roll for initiative!



Thin, agile creatures, Wants look like a greenish-black tar wrapped around a bipedal, lop-eared skeleton. What a Want desires most of all are things that other people have. It doesn't care about the items themselves, just that they belong to something else.

The reason a Want desires others belongings is because of its keen empathic abilities, which are always on. Wants always feel the desires of others and, unable to distinguish them from their own, they crave whatever others have. Once they have something, they soon discard it if it is not immediately useful to them.

Because of their mental abilities, Wants are quite unstable and very dangerous. They can anticipate moves and actions of others with ease, and the desire to defeat a Want only drives it to desire to defeat those attacking it even more.

LEVEL: 5 (15)

MOTIVE: To take others belongings.

ENVIRONMENT: Aftermath of Iron Winds

HEALTH: 25

DAMAGE INFLECTED: 4

MOVEMENT: Short

MODIFICATIONS: The longer a combat lasts, the greener a Want gets as it absorbs more and more desires from its targets. Every 4 rounds, it raises in difficulty against those specific targets by one level unless they all unanimously choose to retreat. Intellect defense as level 3.

COMBAT: Wants attack with bony claws, or any weapons or cyphers they are carrying. In early rounds of combat, a Want merely wants to take an item from the target, such as their weapon or a treasured oddity. As a fight draws on, a Want starts desiring the death of its enemies and even appeasing it with items will not turn it away.

INTERACTION: Wants are intelligent, but so consumed by envy that they can barely do anything else but steal and kill to get what they need. Wants can be helpful though, to a group of altruists looking to help others, but it is rare that people remain entirely pure of thought all the time and even the smallest desire can set off a downward spiral of envy toward violence.

USE: Wants make for mischievous and surprisingly dangerous encounters. A village might find itself terrorised by a Want that is trying to scare the residents away from the village it now desires, or kidnap the loved one of another.

LOOT: 1 medium weapon, 2 cyphers

***GM Intrusion:** As you lunge at the Want, it dodges, grabs your weapon and runs away with its new prize.*



THE RIDDEN

*See also the Ridden
descriptor on pg. 49
and the Ridden
NPC on pg. 91*

In the quiet mutterings of mad men, a rumour was started. It spoke of an intelligence that invades the mind and influences those it touches in horrible ways. Some call them Riders, because they seem to have no corporal body, but instead ride inside other creatures, whispering into their minds. While this rumour has existed for many years, scholars of the Steadfast are starting to expect there is more to it than simple hearsay. In search for the truth, Aeon Priests have begun to speculate that The Ridden is a real phenomenon, and are trying to figure out what it is exactly that rides within their victims.

The following creatures are all related to the phenomenon of the Ridden. They are all agents or vectors for infection, or are the results of the infection itself - foul spawn created by the changes wrought within the flesh of others. All the Ridden are connected somehow, the Riders in the flesh all part of some great plan. Something is behind them, directing them, giving them purpose, orchestrating things from behind the scenes. What that thing is, nobody knows, but those that dig deep find that the secret is buried deep within the heart of the fabled town of Rusthaven, out there somewhere in the Beyond.

PAVLO HOUNDS

2 (6)

*Broken Hounds,
Numenera
corebook, pg. 232.*

Broken Hounds are already known across the Ninth World as wild unpredictable dangers to the unwary traveler. Recently, a new strain of Broken Hounds have been observed, which are similar in appearance, but not in behavior.

Unlike their savage cousins, Pavlo hounds seem conditioned to live in controlled packs. Instead of their typical feral wildness, a pack of Pavlo Hounds will march in single file. A most curious sight to those who see them, and while their movement seems to be directed by some force, the purpose is unknown

*GM Intrusion: 1d6
Fragment
Implanters
suddenly shoot out
of the Pavlo
Hounds body. The
Hound is killed, but
the Implanters join
the attack on the
PCs.*

LEVEL: 2 (6)

MOTIVE: Travel to an unknown destination; Defense

ENVIRONMENT: The Beyond

HEALTH: 6

DAMAGE INFLECTED: 4

MOVEMENT: Short

MODIFICATIONS: Perception at level 5 due to scent

COMBAT: The Hounds are similar to Broken Hounds when they attack, relying on pack tactics to overwhelm superior foes. They are far better organized though, and only two of them are required to make a level 4 attack which does 6 points of damage.

INTERACTION: Most packs of Pavlo Hounds march towards some unknown destination, ignoring what is near them for the most part. Sometimes they may react with sudden violence towards those that come too near.

USE: Large packs of Pavlo Hounds roam around the area near Rusthaven, making travel there even more dangerous.

FRAGMENT IMPLANTERS

2 (6)

These enigmatic machines have been seen with an increasing frequency in the Beyond the last couple of years. About a foot long, and with the thickness of a mans thumb, they are propelled through the air by some unknown propulsion. Their function is unknown, but they are able to attack by hurling themselves at a target and boring into their flesh. Such attacks seems to be the reason for their existence, since they attack any living being on sight.

Some suspect that they may be related to the phenomenon known as the Ridden, since attacks from these sinister machines have caused the victims to fall under the influence of the Riders.

LEVEL: 2 (6)

MOTIVE: Implantation into living hosts

ENVIRONMENT: Close to Rusthaven

HEALTH: 2

DAMAGE INFLECTED: 3

ARMOUR: 4

MOVEMENT: Short

MODIFICATIONS: Speed defence 3 due to speed and size.

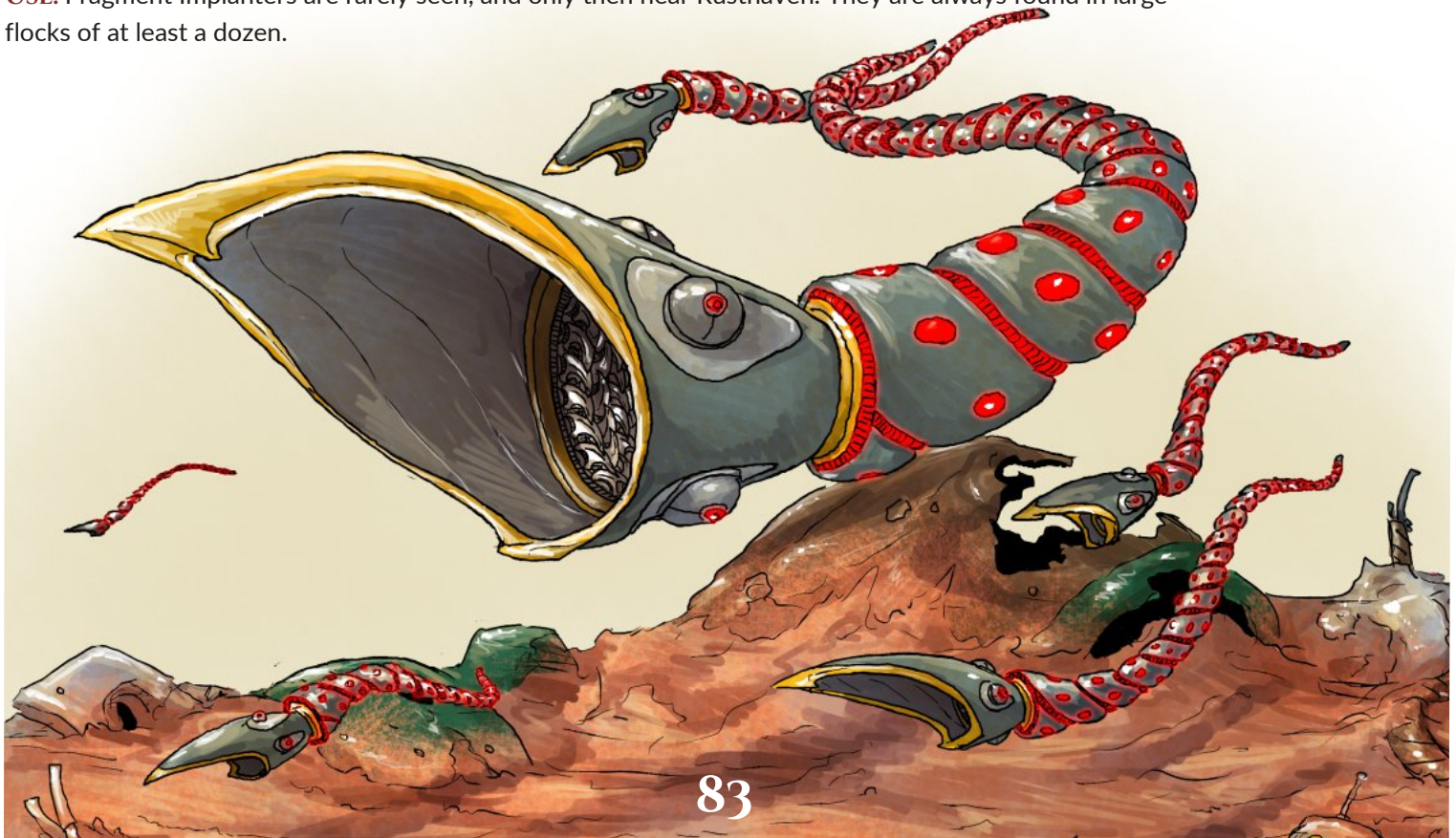
COMBAT: The Fragment Implanter flies through the air, like a crossbow bolt, trying to impale its victim with brute strength. Any target hit can immediately make a level 6 Might defense roll to prevent the Implanter from exiting their body. This causes 2 more points of unavoidable damage, but also allows the target to break the Implanter by snapping it in two.

After an encounter with Fragment Implanters, all targets hit by them must make a Might roll with a difficulty equal to the number of times they were hit. Should the roll fail, the victim develops the harmful corrosion: Ridden, within the next 1d6 days.

INTERACTION: The Fragment Implanters have only one wish, to impale the enemy, and make them Ridden.

USE: Fragment Implanters are rarely seen, and only then near Rusthaven. They are always found in large flocks of at least a dozen.

***GM Intrusion:** An Implanter embeds itself in a soft part of the characters body. It is immediately destroyed, but counts as two hits for the purpose of the Might test at the end of the encounter.*



Little is known about what creates the Ridden, but it is generally believed to be related to the strange purple growths and tumors found in creatures that were believed to be Riders. There are also stories, thought to be from Ridden themselves, that the things growing inside of them aren't just a motionless presence, but sometimes can develop the ability for self-locomotion. A few self-proclaimed Ridden tell stories of things growing inside them that eventually are able to extract themselves and go out into the world alone.

GM Intrusion: A protobeast leaps onto a player and grabs a cypher, then uses it to escape.

These may be the so-called Protobeasts that recently have been discovered in the Beyond: purple-pink masses of homogenous flesh that imitate mammalian life, and often look quite natural until one gets close.

Scholars believe that the same purple masses may eventually grow into replications of human forms. Such a being would be similar to a Protobeast, being made entirely of the same purple-pink substance. How well it would be able to imitate human life, is anyone's guess.

LEVEL: 3 (9)

MOTIVE: Unknown

ENVIRONMENT: Close to Rusthaven

HEALTH: 6

DAMAGE INFLECTED: 2

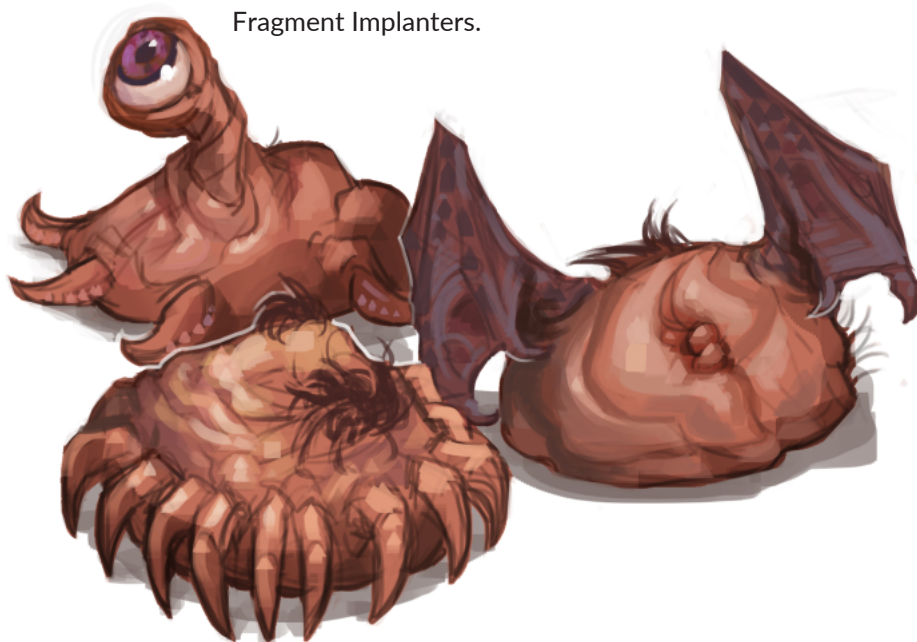
MOVEMENT: Long

MODIFICATIONS: Speed defence 4 due to speed and size.

COMBAT: Protobeasts come in a variety of forms all made of a singular mass of purple-pink flesh. Some can fly with leathery wings, whilst others scuttle on multiple legs. They are small and prefer to avoid combat unless cornered. If forced, they scratch and bite viciously until there is a safe opportunity to flee.

INTERACTION: Protobeasts can understand human speech and some of them can speak in simple, hoarse whispers. Protobeasts aren't interested in following orders and have their own agenda, however they may perform simple tasks in exchange for things they want. These might be small items, cyphers or they might ask for a task from the players, such as taking it to a certain location.

USE: Protobeasts are useful as distractions, strange guides or betrayers. A protobeast might make a deal with the players, only to lure them to a location riddled with Fragment Implanters.



PROTOMEN

4 (12)

Protomen are Protobeasts, but in the form of a human being. Their features are hazy and undefined, like a sculpture made of soft clay. They act like Protobeasts, but are more complex and able to use weapons, cyphers and armour.

LEVEL: 4 (12)

MOTIVE: Unknown

ENVIRONMENT: Close to Rusthaven

HEALTH: 12

DAMAGE INFLICTED: 2 (unarmed)

MOVEMENT: Short

COMBAT: Protomen fight like human beings, using fists, feet and even biting if able. They often try to grab their opponent's weapons to use for themselves, and if a player fails to beat a level 5 Might task, the protoman succeeds at stealing their weapon, and uses it for damage from then on.

INTERACTION: Protomen can understand human speech and can speak in simple, hoarse whispers. Protomen are invariably soldiers, ready to fight and can't be reasoned with.

USE: When Protobeasts aren't enough, or you want to add something eerily close to human as the next progression of your Protobeast assault, Protomen make the perfect enemy.

GM Intrusion: A Protoman grabs your weapon, pulling you forward and head-butting you as it wrenches it from your grasp, dealing 4 might damage.

DIRUS

1 (3)

Dirus are foot long flying insects with a vicious, needle-like stinger. As they fly, they let off a keening, whining sound with their rapidly beating wings. They seek out living things to stab with their needles, injecting them with a sickly purple fluid that begins to replicate rapidly through the body. If left untreated, eventually the entirety of the target's body is turned into purple flesh which falls apart into a collection of more Dirus, Shoulder-devils and Proto-beasts.

LEVEL: 1 (3)

MOTIVE: Transforming living hosts

ENVIRONMENT: Close to Rusthaven

HEALTH: 1

DAMAGE INFLICTED: 3

MOVEMENT: Long

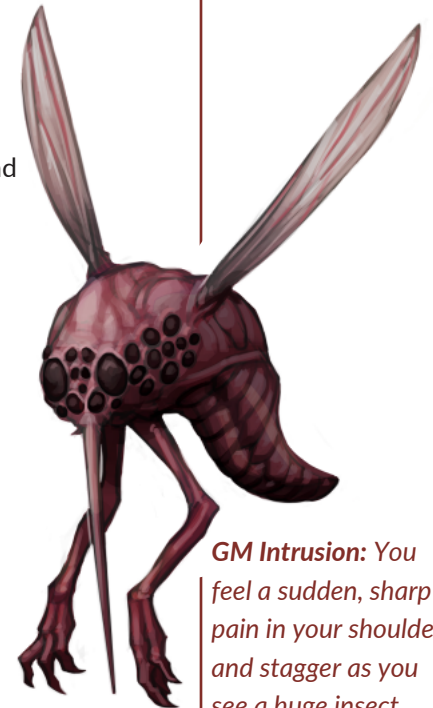
MODIFICATIONS: Speed defence 4 due to speed and size.

COMBAT: Dirus simply dive-bomb their targets from up high, hoping to impale them with their vicious needles. If successful, targets must make a Might defense task to avoid becoming infected. Failing the roll isn't immediately fatal, but an infected target must repeat the roll every day, increasing the difficulty by one step each time. After ten days of consecutive failures, the victim's flesh is almost entirely purple and failing the final level 10 Might task results in death. Beating the might roll even once holds off the infection permanently, but the victim is permanently affected by a cosmetic mutation that renders sections of their flesh purple.

When Dirus succeed in an attack, often they die as well, their needles snapping off and causing them to die from the injury.

INTERACTION: Dirus have only one wish, to impale the enemy, and transform them.

USE: Dirus are rare, but terrifying ways of introducing a creeping, deadly transformation.



GM Intrusion: You feel a sudden, sharp pain in your shoulder and stagger as you see a huge insect impaling you, a sickly purple hue spreading through your flesh outwards from the wound.

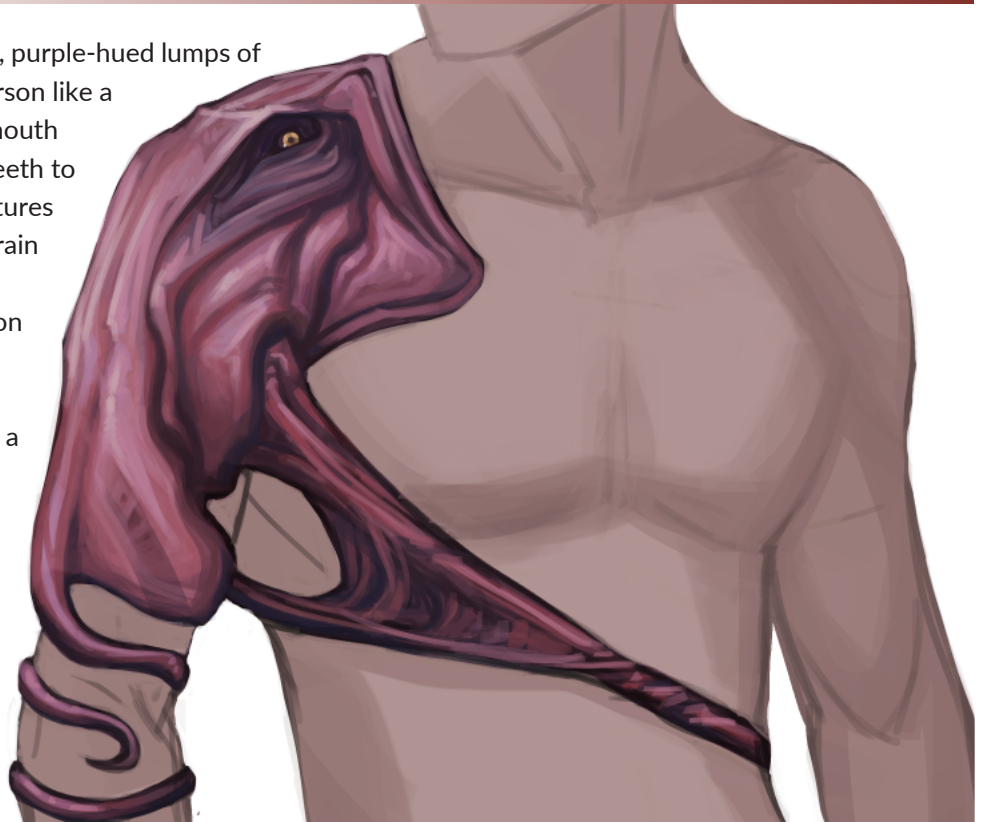
GM Intrusion: *A shoulder-devil tells you a secret, it somehow knows the code to the door and nudges you to 'guess' it.*

Shoulder-devils are dark, purple-hued lumps of flesh that attach to a person like a leech, using a ring-like mouth lined with small, sharp teeth to grip on tightly. The creatures like to attach near the brain of a creature and on humans this is typically on the shoulder. Once attached, they flatten themselves out, forming a thin purple pauldron of sorts over the shoulder, then begin their work.

Quite what their motives or long term plans are, no-one knows, but shoulder-devils use a form of very short range telepathy to whisper

to their hosts, urging them to do simple tasks ranging from putting an item in a certain place or using a certain turn of phrase instead of their normal speech when talking with another person.

In order to remain hidden, shoulder-devils subtly tweak the behaviour of their hosts to ignore them and to keep their shoulder covered up.



LEVEL: 4 (12)

MOTIVE: Unknown

ENVIRONMENT: The Beyond

HEALTH: 5

DAMAGE INFLECTED: 1

MOVEMENT: Short

MODIFICATIONS: Intellect defense as level 6.

COMBAT: Shoulder-devils avoid combat, preferring to attach to a host unawares. If caught, they try to convince the host they are benign and if that fails, they flee. When attached to a host, shoulder-devils often make attempts to manipulate them as Intellect attacks that deal no damage. If successful, they can nudge the host to do something they want that isn't wildly out of character. If the host is asleep, the difficulty of resisting a shoulder-devil is a level 6 Intellect task.

INTERACTION: Shoulder-devils are intelligent but they are not used to being communicated with. They give the orders, they observe, they manipulate. They are not interested in serving others (unless that is part of their current plans) nor do they answer questions, preferring to die rather than explain anything to anyone.

USE: Shoulder-devils make for sinister, mysterious manipulators. The unfathomable motivations for their requests are as much an enigma as the questions a Philethis might ask.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

This section provides basic stats for some common types of people you might see in an adventure involving the Iron Wind. The cypher system makes creating NPCs on the fly easy but if you want some extra guidance, these examples add some more details about possible non-player characters to encounter.

NPCs

RUSTCHASER

Nobody has quite the thirst for adventure, risk and reward, or a deathwish, as a Rustchaser. These foolhardy individuals chase Iron Winds to reap the rewards they leave behind. Salvaging and scavenging transformed or surviving equipment and collecting new cyphers created from nothing, Rustchasers get closer to Iron Winds than anyone sane would dare, all in order to guarantee they get first dibs on the loot.

Rustchasers are fiercely independent and nomadic, with little respect for laws or authority. What they truly love is taking risks and the thrill of the chase, and no person nor book of laws is going to stop them.

LEVEL: 4 (12)

MOTIVE: Getting rich; taking risks

HEALTH: 20

DAMAGE INFLICTED: 4

ARMOUR: 2

MOVEMENT: Short

MODIFICATIONS: Speed defense as level 5. Knowledge and use of numenera as level 6.

COMBAT: Rustchasers nearly always have a number of cyphers on them ready to use, as well as hand-to-hand and ranged weapons. Used to fighting against the terrible beasts that emerge from the Iron Winds, Rustchasers are very capable fighters and aren't afraid to fight dirty.

INTERACTION: While Rustchasers are all risk takers full of bravado, callous capitalists interested more in shins than the mysteries of the Iron Wind, or more often than not both, PCs typically interact with them for a few reasons. Either they want to buy cyphers, they need advice about the Iron Wind or they've run into some Wind-related trouble they need help with. Chances are, if it's dangerous and they are getting paid, Rustchasers are ready to sign up, as long as you do things their way.

USE: Throughout the Ninth World there is always an Iron Wind blowing somewhere and not far behind are Rustchasers. They might be looting a destroyed village, recruiting survivors or sending the iron-touched towards the rumoured place of safety, Rusthaven.

Rustchasers are as likely to be an obstacle as an ally and there are many situations they might be involved in that lay firmly on the darker side of morally grey, which some PCs might take offense at.

LOOT: Rustchasers always have at least 2 cyphers on them, several weapons and tools, hardy adventuring gear and 1d6 oddities.



Lovable rogues, Rustchasers are the dashing pirates, the handsome tomb raiders and heroic mavericks who respect no law but their own. At least, this is the story they'd have you believe.

Apart from in the gutters or under the boots of fearful bigots, Iron-touched can also be found in Rustchaser crews. Rustchasers often value them for their unique skills and their affinity with the Iron Wind.

Rusthaven, pg. 31

Some Iron-touched manage to pass themselves off as mutants and avoid the stigma that those touched by the Wind often endure. Others, especially those that have suffered due to their afflictions, sometimes find themselves joining the Vashivok.

While at first, many Iron-touched think of the strange cult as dangerous, insulting or just plain mad, it is hard for those who have been shunned so long to turn away from such a welcoming embrace.

IRON-TOUCHED

Outside of Rusthaven, those touched by the Iron Wind have hard and often short lives. Invariably deformed or scarred in some obvious way, Iron-touched draw attention to what they are just by existing. And knowing what they are, people often fear and despise them as cursed creatures that might draw an Iron Wind down upon their heads at any moment.

Of course, the Iron-touched have no such curse and the hatred and prejudice is all so much superstition. That doesn't stop Iron-touched from being driven out of settlements or even killed on the spot by others, though. Most Iron-touched are not lucky enough to have any powerful or even beneficial abilities bestowed upon them by the Wind and more often than not curse the Wind for letting them live. Those with dangerous corruptions that can cause substantial harm to others might use them as a last resort, but typically they don't want to bring any more attention to their afflictions than they have already.

LEVEL: 2 (6)

MOTIVE: Survival; friendship

HEALTH: 10

DAMAGE INFLECTED: Variable

ARMOUR: Variable

MOVEMENT: Short

MODIFICATIONS: GMs should look at the corruptions on page 51 for inspiration on possible modifications.

COMBAT: Many Iron-touched outside of Rusthaven are beggars; starving, exiled and outcast. Consequently, they rarely have access to weapons and are physically quite weak due to hunger. They try to avoid fighting if possible and many have had their spirits so broken that they don't even resist if assaulted.

Inside Rusthaven, the Iron-touched are hugely different. With the support of a community of people that respect and care for each other, Iron-touched are like anyone else, though many still suffer from trauma, both from their experience with the Iron Wind and also from their treatment by others before they reached Rusthaven.

INTERACTION: Iron-touched are desperate for help, but broken enough that they don't expect it. They are frightened of other people while simultaneously longing for the normal lives they lead. Outside of Rusthaven, Iron-touched struggle to survive and nearly all interactions will be based on fear or seeking help.

Inside Rusthaven, Iron-touched are wary of 'normals', but otherwise are friendly and understanding people that try hard not to judge others by their appearances. Life in Rusthaven is hard though, and everyone has their part to play, so they are often busy and disapproving of time-wasters.

USE: Iron-touched outside of Rusthaven demonstrate the cruelty and superstition some people in the Ninth World can have regarding the Iron Winds. PCs may find an iron-touched being beaten and run out of town, or a downtrodden iron-touched wandering the lands, trying to avoid people and struggling to survive.

In Rusthaven, the Iron-touched form the majority of the population and serve as a huge contrast to the way Iron-touched are treated elsewhere.

LOOT: Iron-touched rarely have anything of value, though perhaps they may have a few oddities as mementos of their previous lives.



VASHIVOK PRIEST

The Vashivok worship the Iron Wind as a cleansing storm that will bring about a new, better world and their priests travel, preaching to those who will listen. They revere those that are Iron-touched but they themselves rarely are. Vashivok priests are mostly looked upon as insane, for who in their right mind would encourage others to willingly enter an Iron Wind? Some react to their preaching angrily, but most dismiss it as nonsense.

Iron-touched have a mixed relationship with Vashivok Priests. Some resent the religion, knowing full well that the Iron Wind hasn't improved them, but cursed them. Others find the adoration and assistance irresistible and join their ranks.

LEVEL: 3 (9)

MOTIVE: Preaching; summoning Iron Winds

HEALTH: 15

DAMAGE INFLECTED: 2

MOVEMENT: Short

MODIFICATIONS: Social interactions as level 4.

COMBAT: Vashivok Priests are avowed pacifists and never engage in combat, even for self-defense. Instead, they preach and pray to the Iron Wind to deliver them from attackers and to smite those that would seek to do them harm. This rarely works, however.

INTERACTION: Vashivok Priests can be seen preaching on street corners or wandering the Steadfast and Beyond in their rust-coloured robes, spreading their message. Rustchasers find the Vashivok a dangerous nuisance and PCs might find the two groups regularly get into altercations with each other, though the Rustchasers also aren't past selling deformed trinkets to the eager believers either.

USE: Everyone believes something in the Ninth World and not everyone agrees on who is right and who is wrong. Vashivok priests demonstrate some of the weirder beliefs of the Ninth World and what other people's attitudes to the Iron Wind are.

LOOT: Twisted, deformed oddities salvaged from the path of an Iron Wind.



VASHIVOK FOLLOWER

The Vashivok religion is nothing without its followers. Most people wouldn't even call it a religion, but more of a cult, but the belief is surprisingly widespread, though mostly amongst locales that have rarely, if ever, been visited by an Iron Wind.

Vashivok followers are often disciples, leaving behind all they knew and loved to follow a priest and their teachings. Many are the deformed, the outcast and the broken, people unwanted by society but not so abhorrent that they are chased out like the Iron-touched. None-the-less, the Vashivok followers feel a kinship with the Iron-touched and wish to travel to the fabled lands of Rusthaven where they believe they can live in paradise, the Iron Wind providing for their every need.

LEVEL: 1 (3)

MOTIVE: Worship; belonging

HEALTH: 5

DAMAGE INFLECTED: 2

MOVEMENT: Short

COMBAT: Vashivok followers aspire to be priests and while not avowed pacifists, they still try to avoid engaging in combat. However, they will defend themselves as necessary with whatever resources they have at hand, using weapons or their fists.

INTERACTION: The first impression one gets of a Vashivok follower is that they are vulnerable people being manipulated. Even those that seem genuine believers of their own free will cause doubt, just

*The Vashivok,
pg. 27*

because their beliefs seem to fly in the face of common sense to anyone with real knowledge of the Iron Wind.

Vashivok followers are friendly, intrigued and excited by the Iron-touched or any news of Iron Wind. If asked about their beliefs, they are keen to bring their questioners to a Vashivok priest so he can share the great truth of the Iron Wind.

USE: Vashivok followers are cannon fodder for religious conflicts and debates. They are ordinary people whose beliefs often put them in harm's way, creating potentially violent or awkward social situations the PCs may want to insert themselves into.

LOOT: Nothing, Vashivok followers give up all belongings when joining the religion.

RUSTHAVEN RESIDENT

Rusthaven, pg. 31

The average Rusthaven resident is happy, having been tested by the Iron Wind and the world and survived. Rusthaven residents have a strong sense of community and look out for each other and the safety of their town. They try not to be judgemental about others, but those without mutations or corruptions are looked on with thinly-veiled suspicion.

Rusthaven residents all have essential jobs to keep the town running and might be farmers, tailors, tanners, cooks, labourers or other professions. They take work seriously, grateful to both have a purpose and to be giving back to the community that helps and supports them.

LEVEL: 2 (6)

MOTIVE: Living life; enriching the Rusthaven community

HEALTH: 10

DAMAGE INFLECTED: Variable

ARMOUR: Variable

MOVEMENT: Short

MODIFICATIONS: GMs should look at the corruptions on page 51 for inspiration on possible modifications.

COMBAT: Rusthaven residents are accepting of their 'gifts' and have learned to use their deformities and abilities to their best advantage. They will fight fiercely in defense of their town and fellow residents, using all the skills and effort they can muster.

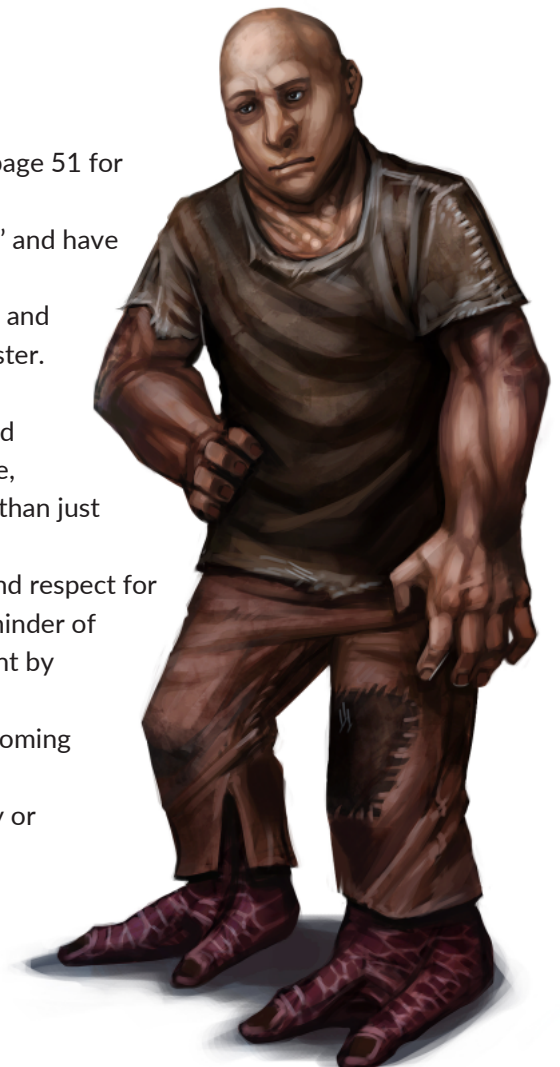
INTERACTION: Residents are for the most part like everyday, normal people. They don't let their afflictions and changes control their lives and sometimes overcompensate, trying too hard to be what they think of as 'normal' rather than just living.

While Rusthaven residents have a strong community and respect for people outside the norm, many find 'normals' a painful reminder of what they lost, or threatening, remembering their treatment by others before they arrived in the town.

USE: Residents serve as an example of weird people overcoming adversity and intolerance to help each other.

LOOT: Basic equipment for professions, perhaps an oddity or trinket.

Most people don't even know they exist, or believe in them even if they've heard the rumours, but it has been said that there are Iron-touched among the residents of Rusthaven who go out into the world to maintain and protect its secrets. If the wrong people ever learned of Rusthaven, they might seek to destroy it and these so called Agents of Rusthaven take any and all measures to ensure that never happens.



RIDDEN NPCs

The Ridden come in all shapes and sizes. They might be anyone and you'd never know that secretly they were being controlled by a presence living inside their flesh.

Ridden are long term sufferers of Riders, strange creatures that seem to grow from a person's very own flesh. Their influence starts as a whisper within, an urging but before long the Rider is in control, commanding total obedience from their host.

LEVEL: Variable

MOTIVE: Escaping their Riders; obeying their Riders

HEALTH: Variable

DAMAGE INFLICTED: Variable

ARMOUR: Variable

MOVEMENT: Short

INTERACTION: Ridden act like who they appear to be. A big, tough-looking glaive might seem to be just that. Closely interacting with a Ridden character might reveal a constant fear behind their eyes and observing their behaviour might reveal that they don't always seem entirely aware of why they are doing what they are doing, as if receiving instructions.

USE: Weird people acting strange, the Ridden can make for sinister enemies or interesting introductions to the Riders.

LOOT: Variable.

FRIENDS & FOES

These NPCs can be found wherever the GM deems appropriate. They can be used for encounters in bars, cities, on the road or anywhere else.

LUCELLO VAS

APPEARANCE: Lucello is grizzled, white-haired man wearing the typical gear of a Rustchaser and a bandoleer of cyphers. He is faintly Iron-touched, the skin over half his body from head to toe covered in a series of fine metal scales that flutter near electricity.

ABOUT: Lucello is one of the most famous Rustchasers in the world. He has amassed a small fortune selling unique cyphers to the Order of Truth and anyone else who will buy from him. Despite his vast wealth, he is usually out in the dust, following the rust as soon as he is able. Well known and universally respected by Rustchasers worldwide, Lucello Vas is an honorary elder of the Rustchasers Guild, but since he is always out in the field, he has never attended a meeting. He always works alone, adding to the legend of himself with every chase he returns from, sacks of loot under his arms.

STATS: Level 8; 30 health; 3 armour.

LAGUEZ CANE

APPEARANCE: Laguez appears to be a normal woman in good health. She wears a simple white robe stained orange-brown with rust and a small rust-covered iron ingot on a chain around her neck.

ABOUT: Laguez Cane is travelling preacher of the the Vashivok - those that believe the Iron Wind is not to be feared, but embraced as the great changer that will transform the world for the better. She wanders from place to place, seeking Rustchasers to guide her to the Iron Wind, followed by several disciples as she spreads the true word of the Iron Wind.

STATS: Level 4, level 6 at persuasion and oration; 20 health

PHEYLO VENUSON

APPEARANCE: Short and muscular with dark skin. She wears the armour of an Angulan Knight, painted in the colours of those knights who lost their Xi-Drakes and will never take to the sky again. She looks

Anyone or anything organic can be Ridden. What the Ridden's agenda is, no-one is certain, but they seem to be able to communicate with each other over vast distances, a network of spies, manipulators and slave-drivers of the flesh they call their hosts.

Laguez Cane is often seen with fresh bruises, scars and stained robes where she has beaten and tormented for preaching her beliefs. However, she has never once fought back, taking things in her stride just as the Vashivok creed demands.

The Rustdevil Quartet are wanted as murderers across much of the Steadfast. Rustchasers protect them as one of their own, but no-one much cares for the quartet. Quint is wanted by the Weal of Baz as a murderer of other automatons, Cowlest has no outstanding warrants but is widely assumed to be connected to several killings and the twin Glaives massacred an entire village; man, woman and child.

Only Rustchaser honour protects them from being turned in or hunted down by their own kind.

haunted, but determined, the fire of vengeance burning within her.

ABOUT: Pheylo is a well-known Angulan Knight. Once one of their top military minds and Xi-Drake riders, her drake was partially transformed by an Iron Wind and so she put it to the sword, out of mercy. To kill one's own Xi-Drake is a soul destroying ordeal, for riders bond with their intelligent mounts more as partners than as rider and steed.

Now, Pheylo is sometimes known as the Widow Errant and her goal is to destroy the Iron Wind and everything it touches. She believes in the Angulan Knights' mission of human purity and superiority, and she believes the Iron Winds taint on life only encourages the Wind to spread further. Consequently, it isn't even a choice, but a righteous crusade to slay all iron-touched as the monsters they are so that no-one will ever have to suffer as she has suffered again.

STATS: Level 5, level 6 at xi-drake flight, level 6 at military strategy; 25 health

THE RUSTDEVIL QUARTET

APPEARANCE: An azure-steel automaton with an extremely skeletal design, a nano with tight leather robes and goggles bonded to his face, female twins, both glaives that look like they weigh in excess of 200lb of pure muscle, wielding huge hammers.

ABOUT: Quint the automaton, Cowlest the Nano, and the twin Glaives Bori and Leanuchka are an infamous team of Rustchasers that call themselves the Rustdevil Quartet. Their infamy is mostly due to their utter disregard for survivors and when they chase the Wind, they kill everything and everyone they find, salvaging anything of value from homes and bodies. They kill and steal from other Rustchasers that try to salvage on what they claim as their turf, but by Rustchaser guild law that is fair game, though it certainly doesn't earn them any respect or praise.

Quint is a silent machine man who carries their loot with his immense strength whilst Bori and Leanuchka are the muscle, despatching anything that opposes them with their warhammers. Cowlest is the brains of the operation and the cruelest of the group, keeping them all in line with his amoral and ruthless attitudes towards survivors and fellow Rustchasers, despite the other's rare pangs of conscience.

STATS: Quint - Level 5, level 10 at lifting and carrying; 25 health; 5 armour. Cowlest - Level 5; 20 health; 1 armour. Bori and Leanuchka - Level 4, attacks as level 5; 20 health; 4 armour.



HUKLES FERNADER

APPEARANCE: Hukles is a painfully thin man, or was, before the Iron Wind fused him with a 10ft tall wooden post and scattered twitching bird wings randomly across his body. Because he finds it difficult to move, he has gained a lot of weight due to inactivity.

ABOUT: Hukles is a resident of Rusthaven and due to his difficulty moving, he works as a simple carpenter and whittler, standing in his workshop carving signs, simple tools out of wood and bone and other things of use for the other residents. He is grumpy, but that is mostly a facade he maintains and he is actually a fairly good-humoured man, despite his afflictions.

STATS: Level 3, level 4 carving and bonecraft; health 15

ZLATCH-GLOSTER

APPEARANCE: A lattimor whose fur has been melted into a thick, synth coating, his hands turned to vicious looking mouths lined with sharp teeth.

ABOUT: Zlatch-Gloster is a member of the Rusthaven town guard and lives in Gate, ready to defend the town from intruders or greet newcomers.

STATS: Level 3; health 15; inflicts 6 damage with his biting hands

MIRAL ROOS

APPEARANCE: Blue-skinned mutant woman whose body below the waist is like that of a snake.

ABOUT: Miral is a handiwoman who uses the dexterity afforded to her by her mutations to get to hard-to-reach areas to enact repairs on people's property. She is well respected and liked and is a skilled musician with an unusual 'instrument' that was created by the Iron Wind that she calls a Crushstone. Apart from her work as a handiwoman, she is also a skilled jeweller and she makes and wears decorative jewellery and armours.

STATS: Level 2, level 4 at craft and repairs, level 4 at playing a crushstone, level 4 at crafting jewellery and decorative armours; health 10

WINDWALKER GEE

APPEARANCE: A strange man with an ethereal appearance, he is more like a ghost made of floating rust particles than a man. Inspecting him closely, you can see he must have once worn a thick, fur coat and large brimmed hat before his transformation.

ABOUT: Windwalker Gee earns his name from his peculiar affliction - he is made of Iron Wind and is carried with the storms like a ghost in the rust. Travelling between storms but never able to leave them, he has travelled far and wide but is rarely able to connect with other people again, due to the Wind's effects.

STATS: Level 6, knowledgeable about all the places Iron Wind has visited; immortal



Ghosts in the rust aren't an uncommon tale, but many people have claimed they were saved from the Wind by an early warning - a ghost of rust with a wide brimmed hat, yelling at them to run.

There are no cyphers like rust-cyphers. The things you find behind the Wind, they are infinitely more powerful, and more dangerous. Like the Iron Wind itself, they are beyond prediction and you can never know what one of these strange remnants might do. Aeon Priests have it easy, their books and scrolls have it all figured out, a whole language of colours and shapes to work out what a cypher may be.

For us Rustchasers though, we have only our wits, our luck and our courage.

—EXCERPT FROM “THE RUSTCHASER COMMENTARIES”



PART 4: THE WAKE OF THE WIND

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CYPHERS

The Iron Wind is not just a force of destruction, but also a force for creation. Just as it leaves terrible wreckages in its wake, the Iron Wind also twists matter into crazy new forms. Weird and terrible cyphers are formed from the very substance of the people and places it has destroyed. It is for this reason that Rustchasers follow the storms; it may be grim, it may be morbid, but there are always unique items to be found wherever a Wind has blown through.

Due to the chaotic nature of the Iron Wind, identifying the cyphers and artifacts it leaves behind is a level 4 Intellect task. The working knowledge of common cypher traits that most people have often doesn't apply, so only those well trained in identifying numenera can easily determine the properties of a rust-cypher from subtle clues in its composition and appearance. Rust-cyphers might have wildly different abilities, shapes and modes of operation and even two visibly identical ones might be wildly different in effect and usage.

Since they are so strange and random, there is no definitive list of known cyphers created by the Iron Wind—instead you can use the tables on the next page to generate custom cyphers from a collection of weird abilities and attributes.

Typically, in order to speed up a game and minimise down time when acquiring loot, the GM should pre-roll ahead of time when they want to reward players with an Iron Wind cypher. However, as an alternative to making the identification a level 4 Intellect task (or in addition to, if you want to further increase the difficulty) you can instead have the players roll to identify each aspect of the device, using their rolls to generate the cypher on the fly. Cyphers created this way should always have a random level determined by rolling 1d6+2.



Rust-cypher is often a misnomer, for they often aren't cyphers at all. The things left behind by the Wind more often than not have no origins in the real world.

They aren't remnants of some prior world warped by the Wind, but rather a construct, a fabrication from the forgotten memories the rust-spirits struggle to recall. Because of this, our language for identifying cyphers is often useless with these strange creations and their effects, wildly dangerous and unpredictable.

Rhilter Schris, Iron Wind Scholar

GENERATING RUST-CYPHERS

Generating rust-cyphers is easy. There are 3 categories you need to cover: Appearance, Operation and Ability. For Appearance, roll 1d20 on each table to determine the material, shape and colouration or texture of the cypher. For Operation and Ability, decide what type of rust-cypher it is (targets others, targets self or targets an area) and roll 1d20 for each. Now you have a unique rust-cypher!

APPEARANCE

The appearance of a rust-cypher is governed by 3 properties, material, shape and colouration. Materials are the main things a rust-cypher is constructed from. Shape governs the form of the rust-cypher and finally the colouration/texture generates additional details about how the rust-cypher looks or feels.

For example, you might generate a rust-cypher with an appearance of a metal sphere that feels like skin.

MATERIAL

1. Wood
2. Metal
3. Synth
4. Flesh
5. Glass
6. Gel
7. Forcefields
8. Ice
9. Goo
10. Bone
11. Conjoined Insects
12. Cloth
13. Plant matter
14. Sponge
15. Rock
16. Hardlight
17. Crystal
18. Coral
19. Diamond
20. Roll again twice

SHAPE

1. Sphere
2. Cube
3. Deformed animal
4. Fractal
5. Tesseract
6. Pyramid
7. Needle-cluster
8. Glove
9. Boot
10. Stone/rock/pebble
11. Thin slab
12. Cylinder
13. Cable
14. Conjoined insects
15. Human limb
16. Tentacles
17. Handle
18. Tree branch
19. Human face
20. Roll again twice

LOOK & FEEL

1. Pitch Black
2. Transparent
3. White
4. Metallic
5. Luminous
6. Mirrored
7. Mossy
8. Hairy
9. Slimy
10. Green
11. Red
12. Rough
13. Yellow
14. Blue
15. Skin
16. Fire
17. Sticky
18. Grey
19. Pearlescent
20. Roll again twice

These aren't meant to be an exhaustive list of possible things, feel free to come up with your own ideas and add them to the lists.

A Rustchaser once told me that everything you know about the language of cyphers means nothing to the Iron Wind. "The Wind", he said, "has its own language. Not a language you can learn, but a language you have to feel in your blood. Only a true Rustchaser can attune themselves to the singing in iron, the messages in flesh and bone and the broken promises of natural laws the Iron Wind leaves behind."

When I saw my first rust-cypher, a bubbling twitching thing that when eaten causes fire to burst from your hands, I knew I believed him.

—CANNEN QUINNEY, THE RUSTCHASER COMMENTARIES

Instead of deciding the target type, you can roll a d6 to decide:

*1-2: target self
3-4: target area
5-6: target other*

ABILITIES

Abilities for rust-cyphers come in one of three flavours: those that target yourself, those that target an area or those that target others. Pick one of these and remember it (you'll want to use the same type for the Operation as well), then roll 1d20 on the appropriate table.

TARGETS SELF

1. +3 Might/level for 1 hour.
2. +3 Speed/level for 1 hour.
3. +3 Intellect/level for 1 hour.
4. Teleport anywhere within 1 mile.
5. Phaseshift for 1 hour per level.
6. Become a sentient gas. You can fly and move through tight spaces, for 1 hour per level.
7. Become an edible jelly. Eating part of you grants 1 recovery roll/level. You regrow eaten parts and become normal after 1 hour.
8. Repel all metal within short range for 1 hour per level.
9. Permanently lose the ability to speak in first person but become specialised in seduction.
10. Speak with fluids. You can extract info from any fluid as if it were sentient and could see and hear all around it. 1 hour per level.
11. Transform into an aneen or other beast of burden for 1 hour per level.
12. Develop a waxy, hair-like coating for 1 hour per level which protects from cold damage and keeps you dry.
13. Gain the ability to taste the past. For 1 hour per level anything you lick gives you a vision of events that occurred over the last year in immediate range of the licked item.
14. You become super-heated, dealing 6 points of might damage to anything you touch. You melt through stone, metal or glass, set wood or clothing on fire and instantly turn water to scalding steam on contact. Lasts for 1 round per level.
15. Gain the effects of a powerful corrosion (roll against table on page 55) for 1 minute per level.
16. Become surrounded by loud, epic music, the sound of which creates a solid barrier granting +2 armour for 1 round per level.
17. Death immunity. You ignore any effects from being down the damage track and do not die when you reach 0 in all pools (though you do enter a coma). Effects last for 1 round per level.
18. Causes a limb to be able to be phased through up to 1ft of solid matter. Attacks ignore armour/shields for 1 round per level.
19. Immediately connect mentally to the datasphere and receive a detailed map of the surrounding area within long range with the locations of all living creatures highlighted to you.
20. Roll for a cypher from the core rulebook/technology compendium and use its effect.

TARGETS AREA

1. Immolates everything within an immediate area, causing 2 damage immediately plus 2 for each round per level thereafter. On-going burning can be extinguished as a level 2 Speed task.
2. Loud screams plague a short range around the target area for 1 round, making audio communication impossible and causing 2 Intellect damage from fear/shock.
3. Target area, up to a short range radius, fills with a crosshatch of microscopically fine filaments, impaling everyone and trapping them in place. All within take 4 damage, and are then trapped for 1 round/level.
4. Gravity distorts within immediate range of the target area, causing any objects leaving it to accelerate outwards at extremely high speed, making entering the area impossible. Things leaving the area cause 6 points of damage to anything they impact, and suffer 6 points of damage as well. Lasts 1 round/level.
5. Creates a permeable force field that maintains a vacuum within an immediate range of the target area for 1 round/level.

6. All plants within an immediate area grow rapidly and attempt to perform tasks that can be expressed by single word commands. Lasts 1 round/level.
7. All organic matter in an immediate range is shifted out of phase, causing 2 damage ignoring armour, or 10 points of damage to cybernetic creatures. Matter remains out of phase for 1 round/level.
8. All air in a short range area becomes water. All air-breathing creatures within begin drowning and are flattened by the weight of water as it pours everywhere.
9. Permanently makes the area within short range diurnally inversed. When it is night, the area is illuminated as if in daytime, in the day, it is as if it is night within the area.
10. All matter (including the PCs) in an immediate range is combined into a raging monster of a level equal to the cypher that attacks everything nearby. Unless destroyed, after 3 rounds the monster splits apart into its individual components (which may include people, creatures, rocks, etc; all unharmed).
11. Short-range area is visually warped and contorted, making all aiming or movement tasks two steps more difficult for 1 round/level
12. All sentient beings in short range become non-sapient for 1 round/level and act purely on instinct.
13. All exposed blood in the immediate area attempts to attack and re-enter the nearest living creature. Attacks as a level 2 creature.
14. In 1d6 days, the area within a long range radius is bombarded from orbit by a high-energy beam that deals 3 times the level in Might damage to everything in the area.
15. All targets within a short-range area gain +4 Armour but are filled with rage, compelling them to attack each other for 1 round per level, after which the armour crumbles off.
16. Area in long range radius exhibits extreme, localised weather effects - ice-storms, torrential acid rain, tornados, etc for 1 round/level. Exposure to the weather effects results in 4 damage/round.
17. All machines, cyphers or other non-organic technology not integrated into an organic host ceases to function within a short-range field for 1 round/level.
18. Draws insects into the immediate area until it is completely full with a swarm of creatures. The insects are not directly harmful, but will attempt to fill all available space in the area including inside mouths, lungs, etc. Insects are released from the compulsion after 1 round/level.
19. All non-moving surfaces in the immediate area exude a thick, sticky substance that makes all movement tasks two steps more difficult. Eating a handful of the substance restores 1 point to any Pool. Dissolves away after 1 round/level.
20. Roll for a cypher from the core rulebook/tech compendium and use its effect.

When combined into such a creature, the beast can use all attacks and abilities of its various components, making it quite formidable.

TARGETS OTHER

1. Teleports target 30ft directly "up" from nearest, strongest gravitational source. If the target intersects any solid matter on arrival, they are fused into it and take 10 points of might damage. Otherwise they take appropriate fall damage.
2. Coats target in thick adhesive gel, granting them 2 assets for gripping tasks, but slowing their movement to immediate range and making it impossible for them to drop items. Gel dissolves after 1 round/level.
3. Removes a random body part safely without killing the target, keeping it in a stasis field for 1 round/level, then returns it.

Roll a d6

- 1 - Brain
- 2 - Heart
- 3 - Leg
- 4 - Arm
- 5 - Lung
- 6 - Eyes

4. Creates the illusion of a foreboding presence just on the edge of the target's vision, making all actions against them one step easier for 1 round/level.

The target might be anything, from a person to an Aneen, a rock or a window. Alternate realities are strange places.

When designing a rust-cypher ability of your own, don't think of strictly helpful or harmful effects. In many cases they are both, or aren't even designed around the context of combat (though may prove useful nonetheless).

5. Target can tell nothing but lies for 1 round/level.
6. Target is swapped with a version from an alternate reality where they are sentient, able to speak and in love with you. Target swaps back after 1 round/level.
7. Target's body immediately dies, but their mind is uploaded to the datasphere where it can attempt to live and maybe take revenge. Within the datasphere, the mind has access to vast stores of information and may be able to control nanites, machines or other technology connected to the datasphere.
8. Target mirrors your movements and actions like a puppet for 1 round/level.
9. A swarm of insects are emitted at the target which then cover the target with waxy lumps (like bees building a hive). The lumps act as hand-holds aiding in climbing and grabbing tasks against the target and living targets are blinded until the lumps dissolve after 1 round/level.
10. Target grows a 10ft long tentacle that acts as a medium weapon under the user's control and acts on the user's turn. Lasts for 1 round/level, attacks as level 3.
11. Any cyphers on, in or held by the target cease to function for 1 round/level.
12. Target is drained of energy, causing damage equal to the cypher level. That energy can be used to recharge a cypher or artifact with a level equal to or less than the cypher (but not itself).
13. Target becomes frictionless. Attacks slide off them. However, standing up is virtually impossible. Once put in motion, it is almost impossible for the target to come to a complete stop. Lasts 1 round/level.
14. Target becomes semi-phased out and can be passed through as if pushing through a dense gel. Living targets take 2 damage when things enter them but are otherwise immune to physical damage and after 1 round/level, revert to normal. Anything still inside the target is fused with it, causing 5 damage to the item and the target.
15. A shell 1in/level (2.5cm) thick forms around the target, made of the same material that the target is made from.
16. For 1 round/level, target sets everything it touches on fire. The target itself is not immune to damage from this fire, nor is its equipment, if any.
17. Device fuses to target and over the course of 1d6 hours, rebuilds it into a statue of the user. For living targets, the target is reformed to look identical to the user, but retains it's own mind and abilities. The change is permanent.
18. User can experience fully all senses of the target for 28 hours. If the target has no senses, the user experiences sensory deprivation, suffering 6 points of Intellect damage.
19. User is presented with a visual inventory of all items in, on or held by the target. Selecting one immediately teleports the item into the user's hands.
20. Roll for a cypher from the core rulebook/tech compendium and use its effect.

SAMPLE CYPHERS

Here are a selection of rust-cyphers generated using the tables above.

MAGNETIC REPULSER: A cylinder made of blue ice that repels all metal within short range for 1 minute when you immerse it in liquid and press a button. *Level 8.*

RETROGUSTUS LEG: A human leg made of wood that constantly feels sticky. When you use the leg to inject the target (using the needle like toes), they gain the ability to taste the past, getting visions of the past of the licked item for up to 1 hour. *Level 7.*

REMOTE INVENTORY: A transparent handle made of goo. When you short-circuit the handle by crossing some stray wires within it, you can see a target's inventory and teleport a single item into your hands. *Level 3.*

OPERATION

Operations are the methods a player needs to employ to activate the rust-cypher. Using the same target type from Abilities, roll 1d20 on the appropriate table to select a method of operation. Sometimes, the method will seem to make little sense for the materials or shape of the rust-cypher, e.g. a sphere of goo which you operate by pulling a lever. In those cases, just use your imagination - perhaps it has a lever embedded into the goo or the lever is also made of some unfathomably solid goo itself.

TARGETS SELF

1. Injection
2. Melts into skin
3. Wear on head
4. Consume
5. Pull trigger
6. Squeeze
7. Break
8. Press button
9. Short wires/contacts
10. Wear on arm
11. Wear on foot
12. Wear on hand
13. Immerse in liquid
14. Burn
15. Think activation word
16. Say activation word
17. Provide bio-sample
18. Insert shin
19. Pull lever
20. Roll again twice

TARGETS AREA

1. Throw
2. Shoot
3. Spray
4. Holo-interface
5. Timer
6. Mentally visualise
7. Press button
8. Pull trigger
9. Pull lever
10. Break
11. Think activation word
12. Say activation word
13. Insert shin
14. Squeeze
15. Short wires/contacts
16. Keypad
17. Twist nodules
18. Adhere to surface
19. Stare at intently
20. Roll again twice

TARGET OTHER

1. Touch against
2. Inject
3. Pull trigger
4. Shoot
5. Spray
6. Wear on arm
7. Wear on hand
8. Wear on face
9. Squeeze
10. Break
11. Press button
12. Pull lever
13. Short circuits
14. Throw
15. Manipulate shapes
16. Say activation word
17. Think activation word
18. Say target's name
19. Visualise target's face
20. Roll again twice

Instead of rolling again twice, you could make up your own method of operation or roll against the cypher tables in the corebook or technology compendium, choosing a cypher from which to copy the method of operation.

CONDENSER GLOVE: A hairy glove made of flexible ice. When flexing your fingers like pulling a trigger, makes all air within short range turn into water. *Level 5.*

DEATHMASK: A human face made of luminous plant matter. When worn like a mask, the designated target dies and their mind is uploaded to the datasphere. *Level 6.*

CRYSTAL VAMPIRE: A tesseract made of metallic crystal that drains energy from a target to recharge a cypher/artifact when worn on the hand. *Level 4.*

ASCENSION BRANCH: A metal tree branch wreathed in harmless flame. When an activation word is spoken, the wielder temporarily becomes a sentient gas. *Level 8.*

ARTIFACTS

Some ideas for restrictions on what defines childfurnace compatibility could include:

*Only quadrupeds
Only mammals
Only vertebrates*

The whims of the Wind are wild and unpredictable, as only the wealth of strange cyphers it can conjure up can attest. However, from even the chaos of the Wind, patterns emerge and sometimes the same configuration of cypher can turn up once, twice, thrice even. Sometimes though, the Wind conjures up something unique and powerful, an artifact.

These items are always highly prized by Rustchasers, not just because of their power, but because their like have never been seen before.

When including one of these artifacts in your game, you should take care to never include it more than once - the value of these items are in their uniqueness.

CHILDFURNACE: when 3 or more compatible sources of genetic material are put into the furnace, after 1 hour it generates an adolescent, level 6 composite creature with 20 health that is loyal to the user for 28 hours. After 28 hours it dies horribly as it disintegrates into mush. Incompatible mixes result in a Twisted Monstrosity that immediately attacks the user. GM defines what is and isn't compatible. *Level 6, Depletion 1 in 1d20.*

SCANWAND: when passed over and around an object, the scanwand ejects a small metal oddity. This oddity projects a perfect holographic replica of the scanned object when held in an open palm that can be manipulated to see inside and around the object. The hologram also displays any details that the Scan esotery can reveal as textual annotations in a language the user can read. *Level 4, Depletion 1 in 1d20.*

HANDLICE: large, rainbow-coloured woodlouse the size of a human leg. These creatures are inert until a palm is placed upon their backs, which causes their shells bond to the hand. While fused to the louse, the user can use them to climb any surface, or drag themselves anywhere by the hands. As the louse can stay attached to any surface, even hanging from a ceiling is possible. After 1 hour, the lice unfuse and become inert until used again. *Level 5, Depletion 1 in 1d100.*

HOTPROX: when pressed and held firmly against a material for 1 minute, after 10 minutes this warped rock gains the property of getting hotter the closer in proximity it is to that material. When directly in



contact, it is so hot it causes the material to immediately sublime into gas, dealing 10 points of damage. This property lasts for 10 minutes. *Level 7, Depletion 1 in 1d100.*

CLEARSTAIN: a moist, spongy material. When rubbed against a surface, it 'stains' it with a patch of transparency that allows you to see up to 5ft through the surface. The transparency can be washed away with water, but if left for over an hour becomes permanent. If the sponge ever dries out, the artifact no longer works. *Level 8, Depletion 1 in 1d6 or when dry.*

ULTRA-DIMENSIONAL ACCELERATOR: this warped tube of wood-like material shifts items put inside it into an ultra-dimensional state where the laws of physics are different to our own. This causes the object to accelerate out the end at extreme speeds, dealing 10 points of damage to ultra-dimensional creatures or stunning other creatures for one round as it passes through them. Placing ultra-dimensional items in the device causes it to malfunction and explode, creating a dimensional rift that pulls through several dangerous ultra-dimensional creatures and deals 20 points of damage to everything in immediate range. *Level 7, Depletion 1 in 1d10.*

ANTIBOXES: this series of 3 glass cubes always contain the same object, even though the largest box is three times the size of the smallest one. When an object is placed inside, and the lid closed, it appears in all 3 boxed, scaled to fit, simultaneously. This allows items to be increased and reduced in size by placing them in one box, then removing them from another. Items can also be effectively 'teleported' by placing an item in one box and then removing it from another that is far away. Placing a smaller box in a larger one causes all the boxes to detonate, dealing 10 points of damage to all within a short range of each box. *Level 10, Depletion 1 in 1d10.*

SONIC SHIELD: at first this misshapen disc appears invisible to the naked eye except for its handle. When within an immediate distance of any source of sound, it becomes stronger, harder and more opaque in direct relationship to the volume of noise. At the levels of a quiet whisper, the shield is

barely visible and matter phases through it as if it wasn't there. At volume levels near what a loud, human shout could manage, the shield provides 3 Armour. At sounds loud enough to permanently deafen a human, the shield provides 6 Armour. At sounds loud enough to injure and rupture organs, such as massive explosions, the shield provides 10 Armour. The shield is triggered by vibrations, so pressure waves underwater or other similar effects result in the same behaviour. *Level 4, Depletion 1 in 1d20.*

VAPETAILE: this artifact at first glance looks like a mundane strip of metal about 5 centimeters wide and 1 meter long. However, it seems to have no thickness, existing almost as if only two dimensional. When keyed to an owner (a process that takes one hour of holding the strip and whistling softly to it), the metal strip will change shape, representing the waveform of whatever sound the user makes. When moving, the metal strip acts as a level 10 monofilament blade. *Level 10, Depletion 1 in 1d20.*

PHASESUIT: when worn, this suit allows the user to swim through any matter as if it were a liquid, by changing the phase of the matter it comes directly into contact with. The wearer can not see through any opaque matter they swim through, but are able to swim through gases (such as the air) as well as solids and liquids. If swimming through creatures, the creatures are stunned and suffer 4 Might damage. When phase-swimming, the user is neutrally buoyant, neither sinking nor rising unaided. *Level 3, Depletion 1 in 1d10.*

UNIVERSAL INVERTOR: when pointed at a target and activated, this wrist mountable device inverts one attribute about the target. Something short might become tall, the dead might become alive or the weak become strong. The effect lasts only as long as the device has clear line of sight to the target. *Level 9, Depletion 1 in 1d10.*

GASTROLITH: this stone, when swallowed, allows the user to digest any material of an equal or lower level without harm. After 8 hours, the stone passes. *Level 4, Depletion 1 in 1d100.*

Just because you can digest anything safely, doesn't mean the process of eating it is easy. Chewing bricks is still chewing bricks, but effects from ingesting poisons are rendered harmless.

While the chaoticlyst works on cyphers, cyphers are still only one use. When the cypher is exhausted, the chaoticlyst detaches, allowing you to fuse it with a new item.

PHARYNGOFORM: this fleshy neck-brace grows several legs and falls to the floor when activated. The crawling device can climb any surface and replaces the users ability to speak, eat, drink and breathe by doing those things for them as if it were their own throat. The device moves as commanded mentally, up to a long distance each round. After 4 hours, the legs retract and it must be worn again before it can be activated.

Level 3, Depletion 1 in 1d20.

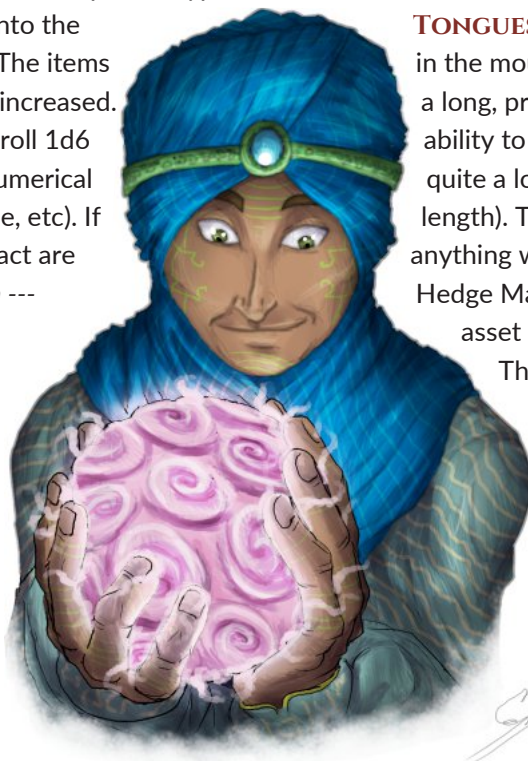
CHAOTICLYST: this organic mesh of liquid-silver wires, when activated against a weapon or cypher, rapidly burrows its tendrils into the item until it is fused with it. The items abilities are now chaotically increased. Every time the item is used, roll 1d6 and add that to any single numerical effect (points healed, damage, etc). If you roll 1, the item and artifact are consumed. *Level 6, Depletion ---*

FASCINATOR: this orb is fascinating, its perfect roundness and seemingly infinite depths of swirling colours just draw you in. Any organic creature that looks at the orb is entranced by it until the orb is hidden from view or the creature falls unconscious. Entranced creatures follow the orb, staring intensely, but never touch it. Once a creature has been entranced once, it can never be entranced again. The effect is always active.

Level 7, Depletion ---

FIREMUCUS: this artifact is a curved shell containing some kind of mucus-coated, organic flesh. When rubbed across a surface, the mucus instantly bursts into flames, coating the surface in fire that burns for 1 hour. The flames do not spread or cause damage and only produce a mild warmth. Like normal fire, the fire still produces smoke and is difficult to see through. A single use of the artifact can produce enough mucus to coat roughly 2m² or approximately 1 adult human.

Level 2, Depletion 1 in 1d20



RAGWALKER: this collection of metal spokes, when activated, grabs the nearest available cloth, paper and other scraps of rags and detritus, wrapping it around itself to form a small humanoid body roughly 1ft high. For the next hour, the Ragwalker can follow simple commands such as "fetch this item" or "inject this into that target". The Ragwalker always uses stealth to approach, collapsing into a bundle of rubbish when it detects it is being actively looked at by an enemy, reforming if unobserved within the same hour.

Level 3, Depletion 1 in 1d10

TONGUES: this fleshy tongue, when placed in the mouth of a living creature, becomes a long, prehensile tongue and grants the ability to speak any language (albeit, with quite a lot of slurring due to the excessive length). The tongue can pick up and grasp anything within short-range, as per the Hedge Magic esotery and also grants an asset on climbing and grappling tasks.

The tongue works for 10 minutes before detaching harmlessly.

Level 2, Depletion 1 in 1d20

DAMAGE TRANSPOSER: this translucent synth sheet, when wrapped around a body part like an arm or leg, transposes any object that tries to pass through it into a target you designate upon

activation. Thus stabbing a wrapped arm causes someone else to be stabbed instead. If no target is specified, one within long-range is selected randomly or it has no effect.

Level 6, Depletion 1 in 1d10

PHASEHAUS: a malleable stone tablet that causes a small hut to come into being for 8 hours when activated. Inside the hut live a mother and son, trapped out-of-phase. They are unaware of the PCs and seem to react in fear to something outside the hut as the end of the 8th hour approaches. Whilst in the hut, the players are safe from harm and the hut seems invulnerable, after 8 hours the hut fades completely out of phase until it disappears entirely.

Level 2, Depletion 1 in 1d20

ODDITIES



The Iron Wind warps everything it touches and while not everything twisted by its passing is powerful, many things are strange and interesting. Rustchasers collect many oddities in their travels behind the Wind.

1. A living tendril that grasps at strangers.
2. 3 small rocks that always stack themselves on top of each other unless kept separated.
3. A warped, glass, 8-fingered hand which inverts the colour of light passing through it.
4. A human jawbone whose teeth grow back 28 hours after they are removed.
5. A twisted mass of wood and hair that appears more transparent the closer it is to the observer's eyes.
6. An iridescent lump of metal that screams "Help me!" in Truth when it gets wet.
7. A human face in anguish, made of stone. It produces, thick, oily tears once a day.
8. A winged insect, frozen in time. It's brightly coloured wings are razor sharp.
9. A small knife that sharpens itself whenever it rains.
10. A cone that spins on its point when in contact with a living being.
11. A block of wood that is malleable like clay.
12. An eternally fresh, juicy fruit that while appetising, nobody ever wants to eat.
13. A doll of an alien creature that causes whoever squeezes it to speak their own name.
14. A glass pane depicting an Iron Wind destroying a town. The town is different each time you look.
15. A black box covered with holes. When shaken, lets out sparkling lights that fade away into nothing.
16. A foul smelling cloth that can never be lost or deliberately left behind.
17. A singular item of footwear that when placed on the ground moves as if someone is walking in it.
18. A small, invulnerable sphere with a strange creature inside. When the creature moves the sphere rolls.
19. A wire-frame pyramid made of translucent synth that appears two dimensional even though it is a three dimensional object.
20. A cup that makes whatever is in it glow brightly.
21. A morphing fist-sized polygon that, in the presence of humans, emits soothing tones, but near non-humans, grows to 6ft tall and emits ear-piercing screeches.
22. A pulsing lump of flesh that makes all that sleep in short range of it share each others dreams.
23. A partially decayed finger with five joints that always tries to crawl northeast.
24. A metallic needle which always rises to the top of any object it is placed on or within.
25. A collection of small, green humanoid statuettes that emit tapping sounds at night.
26. An indestructable glass jar that holds a constantly swirling black mist which whispers short, sharp, but wholly unintelligible phrases to anybody in immediate range who isn't touching it.
27. A length of beautiful, shiny metal that will entwine the finger, wrist, or neck of whoever touches it, but will slowly constrict unless told not to every day.
28. A soft cloth stuffed toy that slowly turns itself inside out once per week, leaving behind a rusty

brown powder each time.

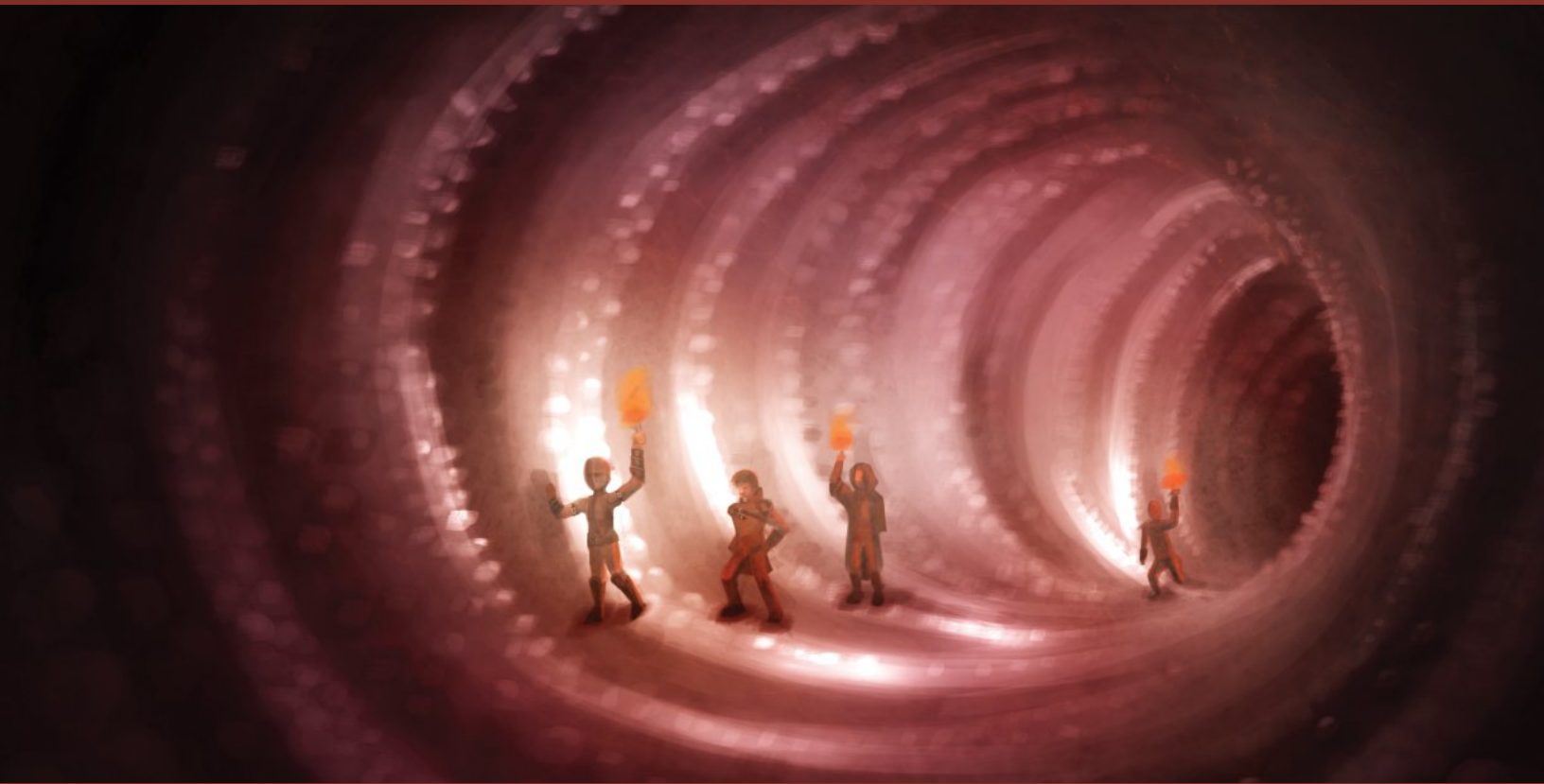
29. A 9-sided polyhedron covered in indecipherable symbols which always displays crosses on each face when rolled at midday.
30. An empty synth box which always appears full of nightmarish creatures when glimpsed out of the corner of your eye.
31. A fossilised claw that always balances on its sharpest point.
32. A perfect replica of a human heart made out of metallic insects stuck together. The insects crawl and move when near blood.
33. A small, handheld mirror that shows you dying in a different way every time you look at it.
34. Half of an animal's face rendered in amber, that changes expression every full moon.
35. A small, furry ovoid that produces 1oz (30g) of black fluid daily unless constricted tightly.
36. A multi-faceted polyhedron that has a different number of faces every time it is rolled.
37. A helmet made of hollowed out brain matter that, when worn, gives you the dying thoughts of the previous wearer, even if they're still alive.
38. A fist-sized eyeball with several differently shaped irises and pupils that shift and move across the surface at random.
39. An animal hoof that makes the air nearby taste of rain.
40. A cloth made of shifting animal scales that rustle angrily when in earshot of male voices.
41. A lump of metallic ore that emits a beam of red light into the sky when covered with sand.
42. An avian skeleton that when touched flies into the air for a few seconds before it collapses into a neat heap then slowly reconstructs itself.
43. A stone rod that continually grows a flap of pale, white skin from its tip.
44. An extremely heavy fusion of rock and bones that weighs nothing when you doubt yourself.
45. A set of immortal gums lined with jagged teeth that salivates in the presence of children.
46. A book in an unknown language whose pages are made of liquid that stays in place.
47. A transparent, crystalline shell that lets out a rumbling growl when near water.
48. A 5ft strip of flexible metal that turns into gas when exposed to money.
49. A wooden bracelet that phases through flesh but not bone.
50. An unbreakable glass decanter that when opened, counts the number of seconds until it is closed again in a frightened child's voice.
51. A small wreath of metal fibres that when held or worn, drains the holder of all ability to feel shame.
52. A small synthsack with a clasp which makes the owner happier the emptier it is.
53. A rough cloth pouch that permanently turns anything stored inside it a sickly yellow colour.
54. A fist-sized lump of solid synth that emits a cyan glow in the presence of some people, and a red glow in the presence of certain others. What determines the colour is unknown.
55. A sealed box containing green leaves that get sharper and more restless the longer they're left without meat. There is a small hole large enough for a finger in the top.
56. A large spike that when held against a creature's head, causes it to run at full speed into the nearest being.
57. A small wooden contraption that slowly moves towards the nearest person whenever they are not looking.
58. A rigid skin mask that hovers in the air where it was last placed. Whenever it is facing somebody, the expression turns to a manic, wide-eyed grin.
59. A malformed lump of stone and chitin covered with insectile legs that scratch random words in Truth on nearby surfaces.
60. A round-tipped rod the size of a baby's arm that constantly oozes blood.
61. A single human breast shaped as a sphere that emits darkness in a 1ft (30cm) radius around it.
62. A wafer of brittle, fused animal fur that causes metal strands to grow from whatever it is crumbled upon.
63. A dull stone with human finger nails growing from it.

64. A strand of synth rope lined with teeth that makes anyone touching it remember an experience of eating human flesh.
65. An indestructable jelly shaped like a 3-fingered glove. When worn, the wearer experiences giving birth to whatever the glove touches.
66. A stretchy, flexible 3in (8cm) cube of stone that emits a hum when tied in a knot.
67. A collection of splintered bone, wood and metal which arrange themselves into different shapes while sung to.
68. A hand-spade with an eye on the flat of the blade. The handle heats up when the eye can see people.
69. A deck of playing cards depicting headache-inducing imagery. The cards vanish when touched by anyone other than the person who drew them.
70. A fossilised human hand that bubbles as if boiling when in direct sunlight.
71. A container that makes any liquid poured into it flow out again 3 hours later, even if it was already removed.
72. A sticky brown webbing that makes sleeping people appear dead when placed on their faces.
73. A container that makes any food or drink placed inside fizzy and bitter.
74. A bowl that turns water into honey over the course of 5 hours when in moonlight.
75. A spiralled shell that emits a foul-tasting dust when shaken vigorously.
76. A 6in² (15cm²) cloth that when placed completely over an object, turns it transparent for 1 minute.
77. A copper spoon that stains any living flesh it touches purple for 1 hour.
78. A child-sized boot that grinds anything placed inside it to dust.
79. A 2ft (61cm) long cord of thick animal hair that plays discordant melodies when stretched.
80. A synth bead that sweats an acidic-smelling fluid when held near openings large enough for a human to crawl through.
81. A crenallated sponge that makes you completely amoral whilst squeezed.
82. Three small metal pyramids that cause anyone passing between them, when arranged in a perfect equilateral triangle, to feel intensely paranoid for 1 minute.
83. A flower made of crystal that flashes with random lights when placed on numenera devices.
84. A 6in diameter metal disc that flips itself over when anything is placed on it, no matter how heavy.
85. A large, amethyst seed-pod that emits purple sparks of light when stroked gently.
86. A jagged fragment of mirrored metal that causes any light reflected by it to project the form of a green door.
87. A portrait of an alien creature embossed on to a sheet of bone. A different pose is shown each day of the week.
88. A single, leathery wing that when scrubbed produces a soapy, cleaning substance.
89. A bundle of stiff wires joined into the rough shape of a lantern that when swung, produces a loud booming sound.
90. A dark glass rod that tapers to a flat circular end with a cross shaped hole. When rolled between the palms it makes bright lights seem dimmer.
91. A set of small animal bones rendered in metal and stone that always land in the same pattern.
92. A bejeweled, metal caterpillar that releases clouds of blue smoke when stroked.
93. A smooth, pale-white stone that when pressed against the skin leaves teeth marks.
94. An impenetrable, clear synth box that contains a different piece of living flesh every time your name is spoken within earshot.
95. A small animal spine that flexes in time to the beating of the nearest heart.
96. A ring that makes breath exhaled through it cause a burning sensation on skin.
97. A pair of large, haematite discs that when put in different liquids, turn both into gas.
98. A spike of veined wood that causes your breath to smell of vinegar when rolled under the tongue.
99. A woollen cord that when placed over someones neck, makes you believe they have died.
100. A shell made of gristle that when spun on a surface, makes the air smell of vomit.

*The Tyrant spreads his reach, slumbering in flesh
Beholden to his sacrifice, a curse we must consume
And purple ghosts, within his host, skitter in the dark
Red runs in the gutters, blood his eternal mark*

*The Tyrant, the protector, the sacrifice, the fool
The wellspring of our discontent, the most essential tool
Beneath the waves of docile flesh an enemy does wait
The call cries out upon the Wind: "Please save us from our fate!"*

—EXCERPT FROM "DREAMSONGS OF RUSTHAVEN: A DIARY"



PART 5: ADVENTURES

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EYE OF THE STORM



Running adventures focused around the Iron Wind and Rusthaven can be difficult. The Iron Wind is hard to predict and its effects are wildly differing in scope and power, making planning ahead problematic. Rusthaven provides a central hub for Iron Wind-inspired adventures, but it is a hostile place to outsiders, which can make it hard to give a players a foothold there.

So how do you use the Iron Wind or Rusthaven in your campaign? Due to its chaotic nature, an Iron Wind can be the starting point of any number of adventures by creating interesting new places or objects to explore and learn about, or even entire, sentient beings to talk to. The mysteries of where an Iron Wind comes from, why it does what it does or how to prevent it happening again are all interesting questions for players to discover the answers to.

Iron Wind serves best as an introduction into a larger story, a side-plot that foreshadows something greater. By themselves, they are disasters that can not be fought or understood, making it difficult for players to engage with them directly. As a GM, use them as guiding forces and challenges - while the players can not fight the Wind, maybe they can race it, getting to the aldeia first to help evacuate and consequently get embroiled in another adventure that way.

Rusthaven is a source of strangeness focused around the Iron-touched and the Iron Wind. If you want your campaign to deal with the difficulties of survival in the face of prejudice, you can use Rusthaven as a place under threat. If you want your campaign to be a source of body-horror and weirdness, Rusthaven has a lot to offer there too. Like any town in the Numenera corebook, Rusthaven is a hub for small-scale adventures, the only difference is in the flavour it provides. Steeped in themes of exile, struggle and persecution, Rusthaven is well suited for campaigns that deal with difficult emotional themes. Not everyone wants to play that kind of game though, and equally Rusthaven can be spun as a happier place under threat, focusing on the haven, rather than the rust.

In this section, we provide a mini-campaign focused around a Rusthaven in distress and several Adventure Seeds - ideas to get you started on crafting your own adventures in the Ninth World involving rusthaven and the Iron Wind.

EYE OF THE STORM

To the wretched souls who find Rusthaven, it is a blessed paradise. Even though not free of hardship, it is a place of peace and tolerance. Despite this, what makes Rusthaven possible are two very volatile forces: the ever-expanding body of Ellod and the Iron Wind. While many consider these forces as natural powers, eternal in their scope and durability, they are intertwined in a way few know.

Deep below Rusthaven, an ancient machine known as 'the Ovum' stirs. Entwined in it is Ellod, the living force of nature who provides nourishment for the people above. Ellod and the Machine have grown together, and while they are joined in symbiosis, they are also locked in battle. Ellod is a man, and wants to escape the torment he suffers from being fused with the machine. The machine has its own agenda it follows with cold determination. The Ovum wishes to recreate the alien civilization that begat it, but to do so it must find its way into this one. It does so like a newborn babe, fumbling into the Ninth World and spreading the seed of its alien origin, causing harm with its careless touches. The so called Riders it creates are poor attempts to carry out its mission or sometimes aren't separate sentients at all, but rather part of the Ovum's programming, injected into the bodies of living beings. With access to a person's nervous

system, it can mimic intelligence by influencing the thoughts of the host.

This three-part scenario takes the PCs to a Rusthaven in danger of unravelling from internal strife. Here the PCs must explore the body of Ellod, and the facility beneath him, to find a way to save Rusthaven from the cancer within - or to destroy it - before it spreads into the outside world.

PART ONE: THE VOICE OF CONSCIENCE

In which the characters learn of Rusthaven from strange voices in the wind and visions at night. They are beckoned to the fabled safe-haven for the Iron-touched, sensing that their help is needed. Things are not as safe there as they once were, and fate has decreed that only the PCs can help.

BACKGROUND

While life in Rusthaven has never been easy, in the last couple of months it has become close to unbearable. Rusthaven has always been in a troubled location, constantly surrounded by Iron Winds, but now it is being assailed from something within. It began with strange whispers in the surrounding wind. Voices speaking gibberish, menacing those that listened too closely. Shortly after, Rusthaven itself started experiencing strange and disturbing events. It was as if the place was haunted; unseen forces moving around with the living, disturbing things whenever they could. Sleep is rarely peaceful, and provisions go bad without reason. Recently people have begun to disappear as well.

The people of Rusthaven have always been self-sufficient—they have no other choice. But this time they desperately need help. Many have given up, thinking Rusthaven might not last much longer, but some keep their eyes fixed on the horizon, hoping that salvation will come. Ellod, the city's source of water and meat, senses the people's plight. Deep in the recesses of his mind, he has found the strength to send a summons—a summons for heroes.

OVERVIEW

While events in Rusthaven have been going on for some time, the PCs get involved when they start having strange dreams and visions. This can go on for several sessions, mixed in between other scenarios, before the source is revealed, or the PCs can learn the meaning of them straightaway. The visions beckon the PCs to come to Rusthaven, or to return if they have already been here, showing grave danger that doesn't just threaten Rusthaven, but the entire region.

Overcoming a multitude of dangers on their way to Rusthaven, the PCs find a town in distress. The people are menaced by unseen adversaries, which give them no rest. At first the PCs can only help restore order, but soon they'll learn who the culprits are. It seems the villagers themselves are doing harm to their own homes while under the influence of some outside force.

Seeing that some of those influences are drawn into Ellod's flesh, the PCs understand that the town's predicament is somehow related to him, and if they want to save Rusthaven, they must venture inside.

SCENE 1: DREAMS AND VISIONS

The PCs begin having strange dreams. The dreams may begin while pursuing a different scenario, and the PCs might even believe that the dreams have some relevance to that. Only after finishing that scenario, with the dreams continuing, might they realize that they are related to something else.

The dreams are vague at first, only giving a few of the images and events each night. Each PC might even experience different parts of the dream, not understanding it is part of a larger whole until after several nights, when it becomes clear that all the dreams share common elements.

Below are the important parts of the dream. At first, the dream consists of the first elements, before it grows in length each night, encompassing more and more of the dream's narrative.

- The dream always starts high in the sky, looking down on the Steadfast and the Beyond.
- A mighty sand storm rises up in the east, it swallows the sky.
- The storm tears across the Black Riage, before sweeping into The Steadfast.
- Empires crumble as the storm buries everything.

Why the PCs?

You or the PCs might wonder what makes them so special. Why have they received these dreams and no-one else?

Perhaps others have, and they find them on their journey, dead in the dust. However, tying the justification into their backstories or the unusual events they have shared together makes for a more fun and engaging way to get them invested in the adventure.

Perhaps they've all been exposed to the same, mind-altering artifact or weird creature? Maybe they all came from the same place or explored the same ancient ruins of an 8th World machine?

If the PCs are just not interested, don't force it. Overcoming the dream can become an interesting adventure all of its own.

The Black Riage, Numenera corebook, pg. 177

- The storm is not a sand storm, but an Iron Wind. Everything it touches is corrupted and destroyed.
- The source of the wind is a domed town deep in the Beyond. It is from here the storm gathers its strength.
- Something is underneath the town, which wants to destroy everything. It lives in some sort of underground cellar, and hides in the shadows as an unseen menace. It hisses like a serpent.
- Everything the storm destroys rises again, as slaves to the unseen menace. From the darkness of the cellar, it orders its armies of slaves to conquer all lands.
- In the cellar there is also a source of good, something which keeps the menace in check. It is a handsome man, blonde and well-armed, vigilantly keeping the menace confined in the darkness with a torch and sword.
- The man is growing weaker, and is desperately looking to the dreamer for help. The PC gets the clear impression that it is the man who is making the dream happen, summoning the PC to help him.

All dream images are vague and unclear, but the characters wake each morning with a sense of foreboding and danger. They get a sense of direction as well, and it seems very possible to follow the geography they see in the dream to a location in the Beyond.

If the PCs are reluctant to go, or delayed, the dreams become more intense. After a week, the urging to go becomes almost irresistible. Spending significant time going the wrong way causes a character to feel tired, while pursuing the dreams imagery is invigorating. A character trying to resist the summons may even find themselves sleepwalking towards it.

SCENE 2: THROUGH THE IRON WINDS

Getting to the Beyond might be a formidable adventure in itself. Crossing the Black Riage is never done lightly. This can be as easy or hard as the GM wishes it to be. The most dangerous trek however, is the final stretch through the Iron Wind-menaced lands around Rusthaven.

Travelling towards their destination, the PCs should have the opportunity to meet merchants, nomads and other travelers. It is a dangerous land, but it is in no way uninhabited. The NPCs the characters meet willingly share what they know about the area. Most have heard legends of Rusthaven, and if the PCs tell them about their dreams, they recognize the location described to them as the place known as Rusthaven. If the PCs don't know about it, the NPCs explain that Rusthaven is a mythical place the Iron-touched go, exiled from the lands of normal folk. As the PCs get closer to their goal however, fellow travelers of the wastes peel away, and soon the characters will have travelled for days without seeing anyone. Finally, they meet an old hermit, Sanjy, who lives alone in the desert.

SANJY

Sanjy's survival seems highly improbable, and the PCs might even believe he is in acute danger. He is painfully thin, withered, and only wearing a loincloth. His speech and mannerisms are strange and peculiar, sometimes he plays the fool, while other times he shifts quickly from being childlike to wise. Despite his appearance, he explains to the PCs that he is quite alright, and both lives and prospers alone in the desert.

He has little to offer the PCs, other than his knowledge of the area. The land here has always been dangerous, tormented by both horribly mutated beasts and Iron Winds. Lately, it has gotten far worse. The Iron Winds sweep through constantly, and the beasts are becoming bigger and bigger. Even worse, Sanjy has seen monsters that clearly aren't native to the area passing through. Some of them have even had strange lumps growing on them, as if they had some sort of disease.

Sanjy enjoys the PCs company, but reveals little about himself. Any questions about how he is able to survive alone, is answered by a knowing smile. If a PC were to touch him, they notice that his skin is diamond hard. Again, Sanjy would only reply to any comments with a smile. Before they continue, Sanjy begs the PCs to turn back, but wishes them luck if they insist on going.

THROUGH THE STORM

After leaving Sanjy, the PCs enter the area around Rusthaven which protects it from unwanted visitors. The very land itself is trying to push them back, but at the same time, something is holding a protective hand over them. One or more of these four possible events can happen on this part of the journey.

The Iron Wind comes

Sweeping in from the East, the Iron Wind churns across the land. Luckily, the PCs can see it building in the distance, and while it is impossible to take shelter from it, they realize that they can get out of its way if they are quick enough. A mad dash out of the Wind's path, might just save them. Each character must make a level 5 Speed test, to run fast enough. If they want, they can dump a piece of equipment to reduce the difficulty by one step.

Luckily, if a character fails, they aren't immediately turned into sludge. Instead they become impaired as they draw nanites into their lungs, causing temporary damage. For several days the unlucky character is bothered by painful coughing fits, after which bloody phlegm floats up into the air. The impaired condition can not be healed for 1d6 days. These are just the effects the character can see though.

What they don't know is that their bodies have been subtly changed by the Ovum, and that they are now carrying the seeds of a Rider. It is still far away from exerting control, but within a week, they will start to feel its first effects. Their hands will do small tasks, without the character noticing. A character can be looking at something in the distance, and suddenly see that their hands are doodling on a piece of paper, or some other activity. Within a 1d6 days, the character will develop the Corrosion: Ridden, and will begin hearing the whispers of an unwanted passenger in their flesh.

Ridden, pg. 49

Conjoined Monstrosity

Surviving the storm, the PCs press on. Soon after, they come across something that hasn't been quite as lucky as them. While the Iron Wind raged, several creatures were fused together into a Conjoined Monstrosity.

Conjoined Monstrosity, pg. 68

The creature now thrashes about in the wilderness and the kindest thing to do is to put it out if its misery. The PCs might be able to avoid it, but its only remaining instinct is to kill all living things.

Marching Beasts

Close to their destination the PCs see another disturbing sight. They have probably seen Broken Hounds before, but not like this. Across the desert they see a pack of them, moving in a straight line, almost if they were marching. The strict organization of the pack is very out of place from the usually feral monsters. These are Pavlo Hounds, Broken Hounds infected by the seed of the Ovum.

Broken Hound, Numenera corebook, pg. 232

The attack instinct remains though, and the pack attacks anyone who gets close, just like regular hounds. If defeated, and the PCs decide to investigate the carcasses, they see that their flesh is riddled with purple growths. A successful level 4 Intellect task reveals them to be growing out from a large tumor in the brain.

Pavlo Hounds, pg. 82



Another Storm

The PCs can feel they are very close to their goal, when they see another storm coming towards them. Luckily, they can easily see that this is "just" a regular sand storm. Balancing out this bit of good luck is the fact that they have no way of avoiding the storm, and must go through it.

The storm is thick with scouring sand and the PCs must go forward without the help of either sight or hearing as the storm rages around them. Occasionally they get separated, but with good fortune they always end up finding each other again. As they progress, the PCs feel that there are other people with them in the storm and they can see these strangers' shadows deep in the dust, but if they try to locate the source, they evaporate.

Each PC must also make a level 5 Might roll. Failure means they reach Rusthaven with a 2d6 reduction in Might. When the PCs overcome the storm, they can finally see Rusthaven in the distance.

SCENE 3: A TOWN IN DISTRESS

In Rusthaven the PCs find a community paralyzed by fear. Because the storms raging around them are more severe than usual, the people are not expecting visitors, especially people who are not Iron-touched. They are not hostile and they mostly feel sorry for the PCs who now appear stranded in a haunted place.

When the PCs arrive at Rusthaven through Gate, they are greeted first by Steiner-Fros, though he notifies the Small Council of new arrivals as soon as he has the opportunity. Almost as soon as they arrive, after given basic hospitality, whoever the PCs first encounter starts telling them about the town's troubles.

Part 2: Welcome to Rusthaven, details the most important citizens of Rusthaven. Further description of them is not given here; they can all be used, or not used, in this part of the scenario. Tailor the choice of NPCs to the actions and preferences of the PCs. Note that some of the description given about the NPCs may not be wholly accurate. The troubles the town is experiencing has everyone on edge, and even the most wise and calm are cracking under the pressure.

This scene should give the PCs plenty of opportunities to learn about Rusthaven and its inhabitants. During their initial stay in Rusthaven, the PCs can learn basic facts about Rusthaven, its history and people as detailed earlier in the book, and its recent problems. The best way to convey these pieces of information is through a series of scenes and meetings with various townspeople, usually covering days or even weeks of game time:

- The storms around Rusthaven have always been strong, but in the last four months it has been particularly bad.
- It isn't just sand storms that have increased in strength. There are also more Iron Winds than ever in the region, and they are more intense as well.
- While Rusthaven has been a safe place for Iron-touched for a long time, in the last year few have found their way here. The PCs are the first to arrive for many months.
- With the rising strength of the storms, problems inside Rusthaven have also increased.
- Random acts of sabotage and destruction happens weekly, leaving the colony without crucial supplies.
- Who is doing the damage has so far gone unsolved. Food kept in secure storage is suddenly spoiled; buildings suddenly collapse, and important tools are smashed.
- Far worse, people have started going missing. Usually it happens during storms. A person can be working or in their room one moment, and the next moment they are gone.
- Some of those that work close to the edge of town, swear they can see things moving outside during sand storms. Shadows of creatures, often entire herds, can be seen moving through the storm.

The one thing no one seems to know is who and why the PCs were summoned. The townspeople are divided on this, some thinking that the presence of the PCs is an ill omen, while others believe it heralds the salvation of Rusthaven. The PCs dealings with the townspeople should reflect these attitudes. Some just want the PCs to go away, while others implore them to help, feeding them every bit of information they think might be helpful to the PCs in rooting out the evil which is tormenting the town.

Steiner-Fros, pg 42

*Welcome to
Rusthaven, pg. 31*

Inquisitive PCs asking questions, or maybe deducing a bit by themselves, may learn the following facts:

- Disappearances are not the only strange thing happening to people in Rusthaven. Many are sleepwalking as well, and some claim to have lost their memories of entire days.
- People are becoming paranoid, seeing threats everywhere. Luckily, nobody has been hurt—yet.
- Some of the animals in Palavan's nursery have been behaving oddly. Instead of behaving like regular animals, they just stand still, watching. A few weeks ago he killed and burnt those animals.
- Some of the dead animals found in the vicinity of Rusthaven have had purple tumors in their flesh.
- If there is some internal enemy, it surely must have some support on the council. If not, it would have been very unlikely for the enemy to operate so discreetly.
- All of the disappearances happened in close vicinity to Ellod, mostly around Bluestock.

In addition to asking around, many of the townspeople want to press them into helping them with general maintenance. They are after all given food, and many feel this means they should pay their keep by helping with building repairs, mending fences, counting supplies, herding animals, and so on. At the same time, the Iron Winds around Rusthaven seems to be growing even stronger, making leaving the town even more perilous.

Depending on how aggressive the PCs pursue an investigation in Rusthaven, their stay can be anything from pleasant and relaxing to rocky and volatile. When the PCs have gotten most of the above mentioned facts on the table, it is time to move to the next scene.

SCENE 4: FAMILIAR TRAITORS

Learning more about Rusthaven, the PCs should probably understand that the town desperately needs their help, though they have gotten no wiser as to why they are there or who called them. The enemy in Rusthaven is not a passive one, and is prepared to use its forces to do a preemptive strike. Using the minions it has under its sway, the Ovum attacks the PCs. This happens either at night, when the characters are sleeping, or if they ever attempt to enter into the body of Ellod.

The party of attackers consists of six townspeople; either regular folks or some of the notables. The PCs should recognize some of the people they have already talked to as being part of the group attacking them. The attackers fight with a disturbing degree of synchronization, almost like they are of one mind. All of them also have a glazed look in their eyes, and their faces are completely void of any emotion or expression.

The assailants fight in two groups. One of them engages the PCs up close with pitchforks or spears. The second group keep at a distance, and use crossbows. If the PCs defeat everyone in the first group, the crossbow-wielding group flees, heading for Ellod.

Ellod is not far away, so unless any of the PCs have an ability that allows them supernatural speed, at least one of their attackers should flee into Ellod. The PCs may pursue immediately, or make preparations first, but it should be clear to them that not everything is as it seems within Ellod's body.

If any of the attackers survived their fight with the PCs, they desperately try to return to Ellod as well. Their desperation is disturbing to behold, as they flail manically with their arms and legs to get away, while their face remains expressionless. After an hour, the person awakens, as if from a deep sleep, without recollection of recent events. They explain that for the last couple of weeks they have had a voice in their head, ordering them to perform worse and worse acts against the settlement. The last thing the attacking townspeople remember was being convinced of drinking a sleeping draught, and then passing out.

A thorough investigation of any killed assailants, and possibly a level 3 Intellect roll, reveals the presence of purple growths inside their bodies. A further level 6 Intellect task allows a PC to devise a procedure which allows them to make a painful, but harmless, incision into a person's arm, to examine if that person also has purple growths. The PCs can't possibly check everyone, but about a quarter of the population of Rusthaven has such purple stains in the flesh. If any of the PCs got caught in the Iron Wind earlier in the scenario, they find similar growths in their own bodies, albeit very small.

Some of the assailants may be Ridden (see the Ridden descriptor on pg. 49) while other may be under the influence of a Shoulder-Devil (see pg. 86)

SCENE 5: INTO ELLOD

The fact that the disappearance of people happened near Ellod, and that the PCs' attackers wanted to flee into him, should prompt the PCs to investigate the gargantuan body closer. Before departing into Ellod, the townspeople offer what little advice and help they can. Going into Ellod should never be done lightly, and always with the right equipment. The town's water gatherers use special equipment when moving in Ellod, and they offer it to the PCs. Armed with the special hatchets the water gatherers use, the PCs must literally hack their way forward when the paths inside Ellod aren't wide enough to allow them passage.

No matter how hostile some of the villagers may have initially been to the PCs, the townspeople gather around the entrance to Ellod to see the PCs off. Tension is high, as most realize this may be the town's only hope of surviving. Everyone is eager to wish the PCs good luck, and offer what advice they can. As the PCs prepare to enter Ellod, his massive frame suddenly shudders, and the surface starts to quiver and ripple.

Suddenly several large geysers of water open on his body, streaming water at people like a water cannon. It is just water, but the power it comes with knocks people over violently. Each character must make a level 3 Speed task to avoid getting hit, or suffer 3 ambient damage. The attack only lasts for half-a-minute, but leaves the townspeople both wet and afraid. After this attack, the people are keen to see the PCs continue as quickly as possible.

Ellod's body is always shifting and moving, and previously open passages seal themselves again without warning. The outer areas of his body are constantly being excavated, and the PCs can move through several layers of flesh without much difficulty. Soon however, progress isn't as easy. Some places the meat is dense, and must be cleared away like one was mining. Other places his body is like the frozen water of a waterfall, or thick jungle, allowing passage by squeezing through openings in his sinewy flesh.

At this point, the players have ventured deep into the maze-like expanse of Ellod's flesh and onto the next part of the scenario.

PART TWO: THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

In which the players venture deep into the catacombs of flesh within Ellod's expansive bulk to search for the source of the terrible creatures, the visions and an end to the Iron Wind that has trapped them within Rusthaven.

BACKGROUND

Without Ellod, Rusthaven could never have grown to its present size. Part docile source of water and meat, and part tyrant, Ellod is the enigma at the centre of the town. The centre of his bulk has already been intertwined with the machinery underneath Rusthaven for some time, but the machine's influence has now spread throughout his frame even more profoundly. Ellod's body has always been dangerous, but now it is downright hostile. The Ovum has spread its seeds throughout Ellod, and with his body's special properties, they are far more powerful than normal. The Riders inside him use every means at their disposal to remove intruders.

Still, Ellod's mind remains, and while the Riders ride his body, he is also able to influence them. From the twisted recesses of his mind, he instinctively manipulates whatever he can, for the ends he considers best for Rusthaven and for himself. Inside his body at least three wills are fighting for control: The Ellod who wants to save Rusthaven; The Ellod who wants to die; and the old machinery below Rusthaven, the Ovum, that only wants to fulfill its ancient purpose to resurrect a long dead race.

OVERVIEW

The second scenario takes the PCs into the body of Ellod, and towards the centre. Ellod's body is ever growing, and the PCs pass through layers upon layers of monotone flesh passages. In some places they can make their way through open tunnels, similar to the inside of veins or the hollows of bones, other places appear to be previously excavated fissures in his body.

The body's reaction to their entry grows more severe as they progress. The Riders who are taking over

Traversing the flesh:

Moving into and through Ellod's body should be a disturbing, gross encounter for anyone not already a Rusthaven native.

When describing Ellod's interior to the PCs, focus on the following things:

The smell, like hot sweat.

Sticky, foul-tasting moisture in the air, making it difficult to breathe.

The clammy texture of the skin and flesh.

Hard lumps in the flesh, that move and twitch under the touch.

The faint feel of a pulse, both in the air and the flesh.

The tiring heat, both exhausting them and lulling them to sleep.

Ellod's flesh are constantly devising ways to kill the intruders, or drive them back. Ellod is also able to interact with the characters, in his own manner, and does this in two ways: occasionally he outright helps the PCs, while other times he challenges them in ways which enables him to learn more about them.

Reaching the centre of Ellod's body, the PCs discover that he is like an iceberg in water, that only a small part of him is visible. They learn that the enemies they have pursued here are dwelling underground, and that Ellod's body descends into old, cavernous structures deep beneath Rusthaven.

Tying the first and third scenario together, this adventure simply gets the PCs from the topside of Rusthaven, to the facility below. Along the way the PCs are presented with unique challenges, allowing them to experience the ways of the Riders as well as Ellod's mind. What they learn here might come in handy when they have to confront both Ellod and the Ovum in scenario three.

SCENE 1: FIRST EVIDENCE OF THE RIDERS

The PCs don't need to go far into his body before seeing large purple growths in his frame, eerily similar to what they have seen elsewhere. At first they are just speckles, before they become bigger and bigger blobs the further in they get. A closer examination of them, and a successful level 4 Intellect task, tells the PCs that the purple matter is similar to what they have encountered already, but is also more delicate. The matter is far more complex, and in terms of texture has a far finer thread.

It is as if this is the "real thing", and what they have seen earlier was a cheap replica. A successful level 6 Intellect roll allows the PC to deduce that the expanding body of Ellod enables the creation of a purple growth of increased refinement. What capabilities such a Rider may have over regular Riders remains to be seen.

The purple filaments and fibers that hang from the growths stretch out and reach yearningly towards the PCs as they approach. They are harmless, and just caress the characters, searching and probing but doing no damage. Avoiding them is a level 3 Speed defense task. While harmless, a PC that allows themselves to be probed will find the filaments try to enter their body while pulling them into the growths themselves. Resisting this is a level 3 Might defense task and failure results in the characters being cocooned within the fleshy walls and dropped one step down the damage track, unconscious. If left, they become a Protoman, but even if rescued, they now take on the descriptor Ridden.

*Ridden, pg. 49
Protoman, pg. 85*

SCENE 2: HERD MENTALITY

The unusual growing properties of Ellod's body gives the Ovum some unusual abilities. Tapping into the powers of the flesh, it can use the growths to produce new creatures entirely out of its seeding material. As the PCs get closer to the centre of Ellod, it uses these beings to harass the PCs. The encounters in this scene are best mixed together with what is described in scene one and three, allowing the PCs to experience the various facets of Ellod's interior simultaneously.

With a successful level 5 perception task, the PCs spot something unusual in one of the seeding growths. A small creature, much like a rodent, is taking form within it, and starts to push itself out. It is completely purple, and if slain, its body turns out to be made of the same material in its entirety. How it is able to function is a mystery, but a level 6 Intellect task allows a PC to deduce that instincts are imprinted directly into the meat of the creature, without the need of a brain or similar.

Soon, the PCs encounter more of the purple rodents, and get a sense that they are being watched as they make their way through the meat maze. While the first rodents encountered are small, they soon grow in size, and eventually reach the size of large dogs, scuttering about inside Ellod, emerging from purple growths, and disappearing back into them.

After the creatures have stalked the PCs for a while, they suddenly, and without warning, attack. The only thing that indicates that something is about to happen is that the walls start oozing purple slime, and that PCs who have purple growths inside them feel their skin tingling. After the attack the creatures continue to harass the PCs, usually staying out of sight, but giving the PCs no time to rest.

*The rodents are
early stage
protobeasts, pg. 84*

*Level 2, health 4,
damage 2. Speed
defense as level 3.
Short movement.*

SCENE 3: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF FLESH

While the Ovum is trying to find ways to expel the PCs, Ellod wants to help them, at least in part. While moving through his maze-like body, the PCs encounter Ellod's attempts to help, but his fractured psyche makes it less straightforward than he intends it to be. His offer of assistance is always accompanied by a test. These tests allow the mind of Ellod to determine what kinds of people the PCs are, and his reactions to them will be tailored to the results when he encounters the PCs in Part 3. A part of Ellod wants to save Rusthaven, which will keep him in his suffering; while the other part wants to finally find freedom in death.

Ellod's mind has reverted back to animalistic and instinct driven behaviour. The two dominant personas in his mind are Ellod the Savior, who wants Rusthaven to continue while he lives in torment; and Ellod the Suicidal, who wants to be free of the machine at the cost of Rusthaven. The tests he gives the PCs helps him determine if they are likely to support the Savior or the Suicidal. A common motif in the tests are being trapped and the act of sacrifice, both of which are important in Ellod's psyche.

TEST 1: COMPASSION

The inside of the meat-maze is hot and humid, and the PCs must take frequent rests. The PCs can decide to ration the water they have brought with them, but since they don't know how long their journey will last, there is a risk they might run out. Finding a well within Ellod should therefore be a welcome sight.

As they turn a corner, the PCs find themselves in a vaulted cavity. Bubbling up from the ground is a pool of water, which looks unusually fresh and inviting. Any means the PCs have to measure the quality of the water, tells them that it is fresh and harmless. Whether they decide to drink or not, they soon see that something is moving at the bottom of the pool, about two feet below the surface. Rising from the bottom of the pool are tendrils, which while closely resembling underwater reeds, are fleshy outgrowths from Ellod's body. Trapped in the tendrils is a small animal, clearly in distress. It is not like the purple creatures previously encountered, but rather something similar to a family pet. The PCs can easily help the creature get loose, and it quickly runs away if given the chance, but how it got there remains a mystery. Helping the animal will disturb the bottom of the pool though, dislodging slime and phlegm and polluting the water to the point of being undrinkable.

Saving the animal makes Ellod the Suicidal believe they might help him, while abandoning it to its fate makes Ellod the Savior consider them closer to his point of view. The vaulted room and pool give little in the way of direct assistance, but the PCs are safe while inside it and no creatures attacks them while they are here.

TEST 2: RESISTANCE

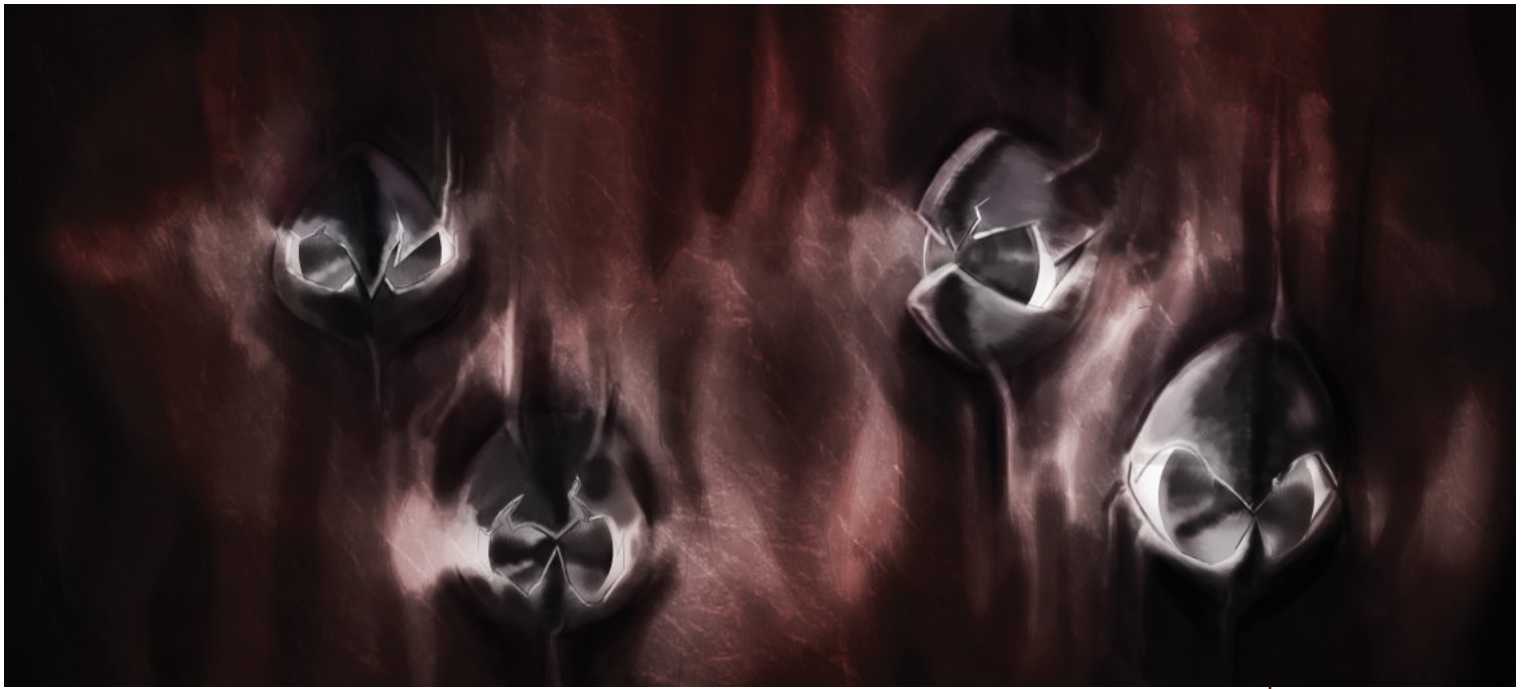
Further into Ellod, the PCs encounter a curious sight, quite unlike anything they have seen so far. Most of Ellod's body is made of flesh, tissue and sinew, but embedded in the wall, the PCs see four beaks. They are large and rounded, like the beak of a large, exotic bird, but the edges of each beak are razor-sharp. The beaks are a few inches open, and a closer inspection of each beak reveals something even more peculiar; within each, instead of a tongue, there is a crystal disk. While precious materials hold little value in the Ninth World these disks, considering their beauty, could fetch as much as 30 shins each in a market.

Presented with these treasures, the PCs have three options. They could leave the treasures where they are, they can try to get their hand inside the beak to take the treasures, or they can use a weapon to break the beaks, and safely retrieve the treasure. A level 5 Speed task is needed to take a treasure through the beak without injury, while a Might task of 4 is needed to break the beaks. If a character fails on a Speed Task, they suffer four ambient damage as they cut their hand on the sharp edges.

Once retrieved the treasures turns out to be more than just beautiful disks. They are also healing cyphers. Each one is a level 4 Rejuvenator. A PC can also discern this by examining the disk while it is inside the beak: a level 6 Intellect task.

This is an attempt by Ellod to help the PCs, but also to understand them. If they destroy the beaks, the Suicidal Ellod thinks they might help destroy him, if they are careful, the Savior sees them as his ally.

*Rejuvenator,
Numenera
corebook, pg. 293*



TEST 3: SACRIFICE

The PCs can feel they are getting closer to the centre of Ellod, since the air is becoming hotter and more humid. They can also sense a quivering in the flesh around them, which never seems to cease. Turning a corner, they yet again see strange organs and outgrowths in the otherwise monotonous flesh. This time thin valves block their progress, almost like the valves of a heart. The valves are covered in reddish mucus, and have an opening in the middle. They hang down and cover the tunnel passage like sheets. To get past, the PCs can either press through the valve, which gets them in contact with the mucus, or they can tear down the valve, which grants unhindered passage.

A closer inspection of the mucus (a level 4 Intellect task) reveals it to have strange properties that makes it harden when it is removed from the valve. If the valve is damaged in any way, the flesh of Ellod starts to shake significantly, and it is obvious to the PCs that the tearing of the valve is causing him incredible pain. If they continue to damage the valve, the PCs must each make a level 4 Speed roll, or be knocked down.

If they, on the other hand, pass through the valve and get the mucus on their clothes, they quickly notice that even though the mucus hardens, it is still flexible enough for the PCs to move unhindered. Instead the hard mucus gives a character covered in it an additional two armor rating for the next 28 hours, and one extra armor rating for the 28 hours after that.

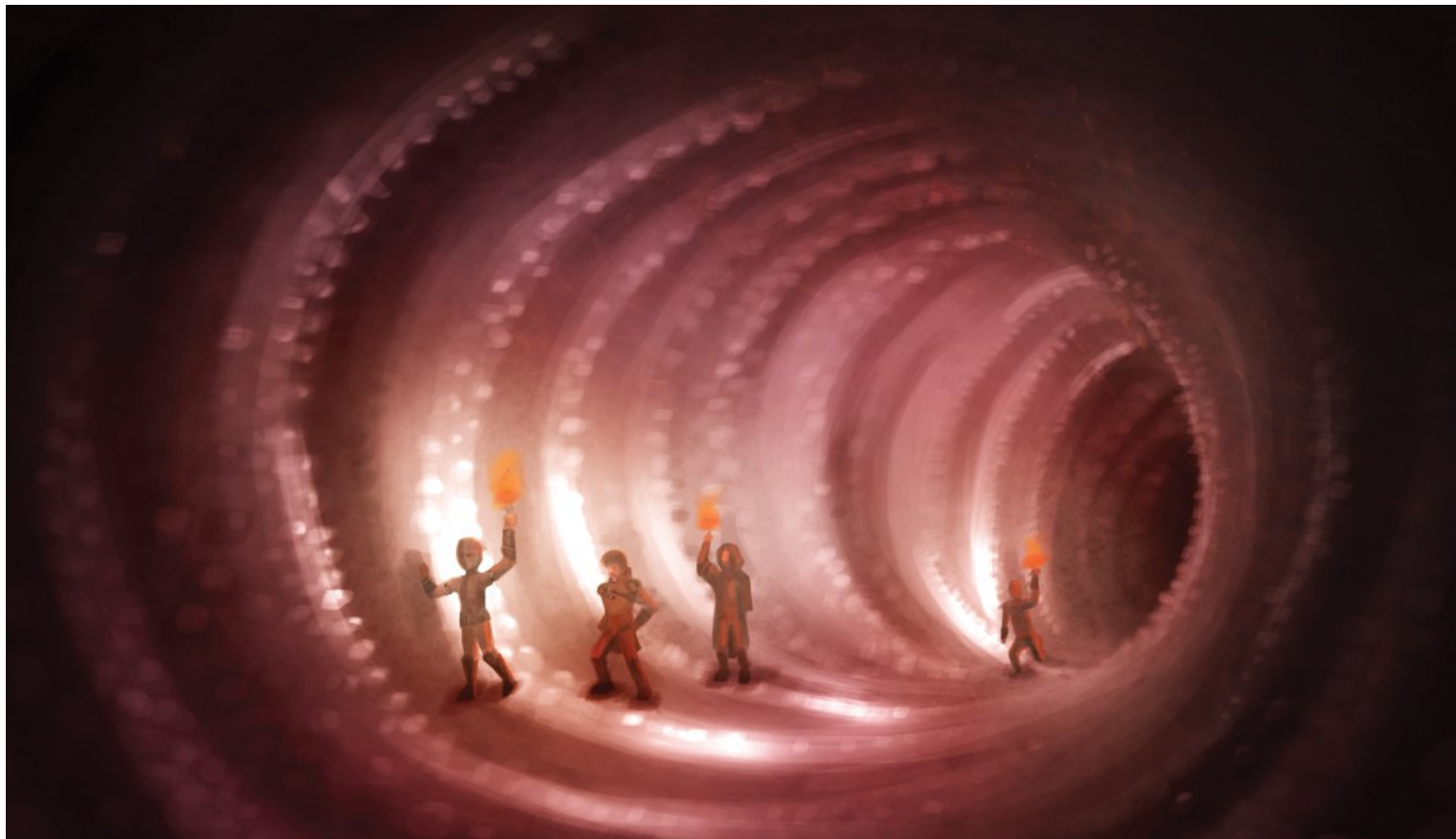
The destruction of the valve signals to Ellod the Suicidal that the PCs has no qualms about killing him and therefore gets his support, while Ellod the Saviour appreciates gentle PCs who leave the valves undamaged.

SCENE 4: MEAT GRINDER

As the PCs are getting close to the centre of Ellod's frame, the smell becomes more and more repugnant. All the walls ooze with slime and pus, and walking steadily is becoming increasingly difficult. The blotches of purple growths in Ellod's flesh have been replaced by larger streaks, and they all lead deeper into Ellod.

Suddenly the innards of Ellod begins to move, and the meat tunnels start to shudder and shiver. It is like an earthquake, but far more terrifying, as there is nowhere to hide from the dangerous concussions.

The tunnel the PCs are in starts to shrink as the ceiling and walls contract. It isn't sudden and dramatic, but still terrifying, as there is nowhere to go and the PCs are quickly running out of space. To survive, the PCs have a few options. They can try to run, and get as far ahead as possible, they may not know for sure, but it is safer further into Ellod. A successful level 6 Speed task, is enough to get to safety.



A character can also try to brace themselves, in the hope that they might be able to dig their way forward, or possibly wait for the tunnel to reopen. If a character is engulfed when the tunnel closes, either by choice or by failing the speed roll when fleeing, they must roll a level 7 Might task. If they fail, they suffer 10 ambient damage, on a success they only suffer 5. If some PCs managed to flee, while others don't, the escaped characters can try to dig the trapped characters out of Ellod's flesh. This is a level 4 Might task, and has similar effect as if the character succeeded on the Might roll described above.

No matter how the PCs conduct themselves during the incident, the tunnel reopens after twenty minutes.

SCENE 5: THE KILLING FLOOR

For the last stretch of their travel inside Ellod, the floor slowly starts to tilt downwards. Finally, the tunnel opens up into a large spherical chamber, with a radius of 10 meters. The exact shape of the chamber is something the PCs haven't seen yet inside Ellod, and it feels like an anomaly to the organic structures they have seen so far. The depth of the Sphere also reveals that Ellod stretches into the underground. While the walls of the sphere are still made of meat, something clearly metallic is at the bottom of it. It looks like a grey bunker with a hatch on it, and seems to protrude through Ellod's flesh. More disturbingly, the meat around the hatch is completely purple, and it is from there that tendrils of infected meat spread out across and into Ellod.

Reaching the hatch, it is heavy, but can be opened with a level 5 Might task. Each additional character beyond the first trying to help, reduces the difficulty by one. While the PCs try to open the hatch, five Proto Men emerge from the purple growths. They attack the PCs, and fight until dead.

PART THREE: THE EYE OF THE STORM

In which the PCs delve into the ancient structures underneath Ellod. Deep within the hidden complex things stir and Ellod's broken mind calls out for release. But do the characters dare set him free?

BACKGROUND

Beneath Rusthaven, and beneath Ellod, are structures far older than either, even older than the Ninth World. Alien in origin, the ancient time capsule has waited for the right conditions to regrow the civilisation that created it, and it was still waiting when Ellod inadvertently discovered it many years ago.

After growing in the well of Rusthaven, Ellod's body spread through the underground spring and caverns beneath the town until it encountered the Ovum that ensnared him, turning him into the base for the Ovum's own growth. His body has grown both to encompass the Ovum, and to be the foundation of Rusthaven.

The Ovum is the last, broken remnant of a prior world, tasked with the mission of returning the civilisation which created it back to life. It is still in the early stages of a plan which may take millennia, and it is slowly spreading its influence. So far this has been limited to manipulating nearby nanites, causing the Iron Winds in the vicinity of Rusthaven. These Winds do not warp, but instead imprint the victim with a seed of the Ovum, a seed that over time develops sentience and the means to influence and control the host. While the Riders may think, the machine carries out its actions blindly according to its programming.

It is the paradox of the Ovum that it only has a machine intellect, while the seeds it implants in living hosts have such subtle and malicious sentience. Fragments of the people it is trying to recreate, the Riders are imbued with purpose and knowledge, but the programming that made them is broken and the material from which they were made is part of another, living creature. The Ovum is slowly repairing itself, using the Riders it can control to seek out knowledge and replacement parts.

The Ovum's biggest failure is its inability to control the thing closest to it, Ellod. Ellod's frame protects the Ovum from outside forces, and it is riddled with the Ovum's seeds, but at the same time his growing body gives him a resilience to the Rider's powers. Ever since Ellod and the Ovum grew together, they have been locked in a battle of wills.

OVERVIEW

Entering from above ground, the PCs descend into the old facilities beneath Ellod. The caves have grown together with Ellod, creating a disturbing alien tunnel system; this is the realm of an Ellod-Ovum hybrid. From here the Ovum has spread its seed across nearby lands, implanting hapless victims with Riders, half-formed fragments of the species it seeks to recreate and creatures programmed to help advance the Ovum's plans.

In the facility, all the menaces the PCs have faced so far come together. The Ovum has stronger control over its resources, and can oppose the PCs directly. Ellod too can interact with the PCs in a straightforward way, and makes his feelings and thoughts clear to them. Ellod is tired of existence, and wants to end it. Meanwhile, a part of him also knows that without him, the Ovum would continue to grow in strength and Rusthaven itself might be threatened.

As the PCs get nearer to the heart of the facility, they must decide what the fate of Ellod and the Ovum is going to be. Do they destroy them? Are they even able to? And if they do, what then happens to Rusthaven? This part of the scenario is not as much a fight against enemies or overcoming obstacles, but rather figuring out the consequences of action and weighing options which may mean life or death for thousands.

SCENE 1: THE NEW ORDER

The facility below Ellod is the eerie merging of synth-steel and flesh. It is most reminiscent of a heart, with glistening walls of thin-fibered tissue and chambers separated by membrane-like valves. While there

GM Intrusion:

With the trials behind them and the imminent challenges ahead, now is the perfect time to plant the seeds of fear and doubt in the players' minds. If they haven't already discussed it, mention that they begin thinking of the consequences of their actions, the terrible burden that is upon them and that no matter what they choose to do, people will suffer because of the choices they make.

is no motion to detect, there is still a sense that the chambers are vibrating, almost humming deeply.

Unlike the maze of flesh above ground, beneath Ellod is more like a cave system of small chambers and low tunnels. Most of the chambers are empty, but occasionally fleshy appendages hang down from the ceiling, swaying as if in an unfelt breeze. Floating gently in the air are also giant, purple platelets. They are an eerie, though harmless sight, but the PCs might destroy them as a precaution. They are level 1 creatures with 1 health, and are easily ruptured.

Far more sinister is the humming sound the PCs hear throughout. While they investigate the small chambers, each almost exactly identical, they will feel their attention slipping. Every five minutes in the caves, all characters must make a level 3 Intellect defense, or be subverted by the droning. If they fail, they suffer 3 Intellect damage, and start walking absentmindedly from chamber to chamber. The fugue is easily countered if the character is spoken to or touched. Failure or not, all characters feel a gentle "tug" in their minds, encouraging them to go in a specific direction. Accepting this suggestion is the only way to navigate the cave system, and get to the next scene.

SCENE 2: IRON DRAFTS

The Iron Winds that frequently circle Rusthaven have their origins in the Ovum's machinery. These winds are indistinguishable from regular Iron Wind, but do not cause the random change and destruction that other Iron Winds do. Instead, it subtly changes parts of the physiology of the those it blows across, and infuses them with a seed of the Ovum. With this subtle tactic, the Ovum has spread its influence for centuries.

Like the mighty winds on the surface, the source of the draft the PCs feel in the area originates with the Ovum. The ancient machine exerts its influence over nearby nanites to create an effect, but working with alien technology long since corrupted and fallen into disrepair is difficult. The best it can manage are a few moments of purpose amongst an array of chaos and disorder, causing Iron Winds to form as the nanites activate under its power.

Apart from the hum the underground facility is perfectly quiet, something which the PCs might not notice until something actually breaks the monotony. From several chambers away, what direction is hard to hear precisely, they hear rustling. It is like the blowing of wind through leaves. By concentrating, the PCs might, with an Intellect level 5 test, feel a slight draft. By going towards the draft, or failing to notice it, the PCs are at risk at becoming immersed in the miniature Iron Wind. Any characters who aren't able to avoid the Wind must make a level 7 Might roll. If they fail they suffer 5 points of ambient Might damage as their bodies are twisted in subtle ways and acquire the purple growths described earlier, giving the Ovum some degree of its influence over them. They acquire the Corrosion: Ridden.

*Ridden Corrosion,
pg. 54*

SCENE 3: HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT

As the PCs get nearer to the centre of the cave system, its appearance and structure starts to change. Long beams of greenish glowing synthsteel have been drilled through walls and floors, as if someone has taken metal poles and randomly driven them through the facility. Sometimes they block the way forward, but the mental pull the PCs experience always finds a way around. After travelling so long in something clearly organic, seeing the artificial beams gives an uneasy impression of something having skewered the body from the inside-out with metal pins.

The beams sometimes flicker and blink, as the light along them increases and decreases in intensity. This is the outer structure of the Ovum, and what remains of its initial attempt to control Ellod. Around them, the PCs are more vulnerable to the Ovum's influence.

At some point after the PCs reach them, the beams suddenly start to pulsate brightly. At the same time, the Ovum unleashes its last line of defense, the Fragment Implanters. These machines look like miniature versions of the beams the PCs have seen in this part of the cave. About a foot long, and as thick as a person's thumb, they propel themselves through the air by some unseen force.

There are twice as many Fragment Implanters as PCs, and they attack them at the same time the beams start to pulsate. In addition to fighting the Implanters, the PCs must defend against the bright pulsating

*Fragment
Implanters, pg. 83*

light. This is done at the start of the character's turn, and is a level 2 Intellect attack. If the characters fail, they take one Intellect damage and are blinded until the start of their next turn.

SCENE 4: ELLOD

After surviving the dangers of the underground facility, the PCs enter the first of two centre chambers. This too is similar to the heart-like chambers they have been in earlier, but it is larger, with far more synthsteel beams protruding out of the walls. It is easy to see that all the metal beams going through this area, and possibly all the beams they have seen so far, originate in the room beyond this one.

Unlike most other chambers, this one only has one exit other than the one the PCs entered from, and adjacent to the exit are what appears to be human statues carved into the wall itself from bone, synthsteel and flesh. They are of the same person, a beautiful and naked man in his thirties, one statue looks serene and contemplative, while the other appears to be tortured and in pain. These are the physical representations of Ellod's fractured mind.

Approaching the statues activates them, and they start to move within the confines of the wall. They try to convince the PCs of their point of view. The pained Ellod wants the PCs to kill him when they have the opportunity, while the serene Ellod wants them to preserve Rusthaven. The predisposition of the Ellods also varies depending on how the PCs solved the tests in the previous part of the scenario. Regardless of which part of Ellod trusts the PCs, he begins by explaining to them that he is the one who brought them here, that the dream summons were his. The progress of the rest of the encounter depends on which part of Ellod thinks it is favored by the PCs.

Ellod the Suicidal: If the suicidal Ellod is convinced the PCs will help, he addresses them first. He explains that he has been trapped by the machine in the next room for centuries, and that he longs for release. He cares not what the PCs do to the machine, but insists they destroy his brain, which is fused with the terrible device. He is aggressive and provocative, and tries to convince the PCs by arguing that the Ovum wants to destroy the world, and that he is an unwilling accomplice that must be killed to end the Ovum's plot.

The serene figure, if given the opportunity, tries to convince the PCs that things are far more complicated, and that the machine, himself, and Rusthaven are intertwined in complicated ways. He suggests that the PCs damage the machine, but not destroy it completely. It would set its plans back, while allowing the symbiosis to continue. He regrets not having a better plan to offer.

Ellod the Savior: The part of Ellod that wants to protect Rusthaven wishes to limit the machine, but not destroy it. It recognizes that he himself and the Ovum are both integral in preserving the town. He does however want to reduce the influence and power the Ovum has over him, and perhaps foil its plans of recreating the Ninth World in its image.

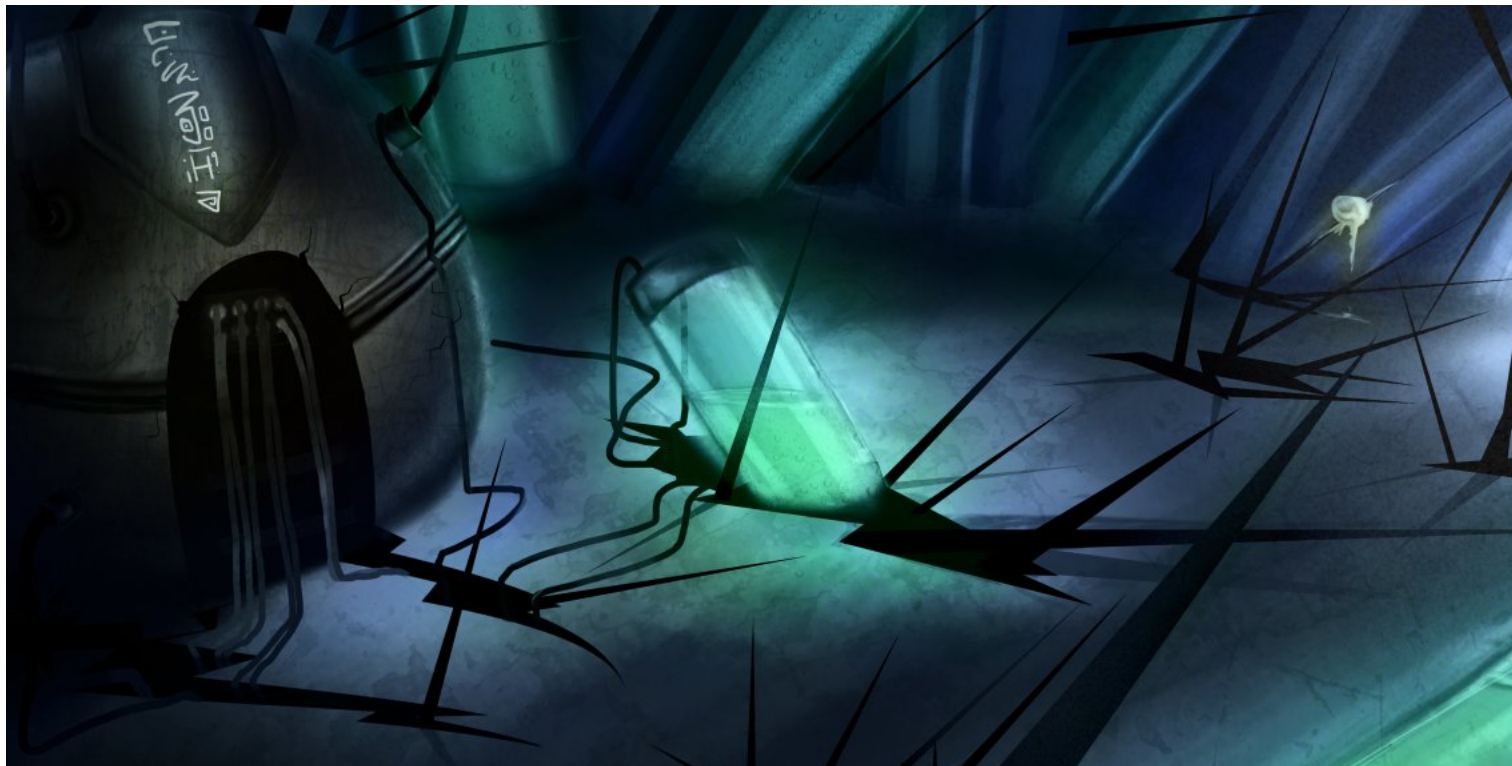
Ellod the Savior believes that the best way to achieve his goal is to destroy the beams that grow out from the Ovum. He realizes that this might be a tough task to accomplish, since the beams are of a far tougher material than the rest of the machine. Such a blow to the Ovum would take centuries to repair, and Ellod believes he would be far more capable in fighting the corruption given that advantage.

If given the opportunity, Ellod the Suicidal suggests that killing his brain would be a far more simpler way to destroy the Ovum's power once and for all.

Once the PCs are finished with talking to the two Ellod's they are free to enter the last chamber, the Ovum's inner sanctum.

SCENE 5: THE OVUM

At the centre of Ellod's body and the underground caves, is the location of the Ovum. An ancient machine made by an extinct alien civilization, it has been dormant here for millennia, with instructions to bring its old masters back from extinction when the opportunity arose. The time has come, and it has worked with machine-like determination for the last few centuries to realize its purpose. There is no self-awareness in it, only a deep programming. Nevertheless, as the sole lifeboat for its creators, it is programmed to adapt and survive, and will defend itself against all threats.



The chamber is far larger than those previously encountered, even the one with Ellod. In the centre stands three 2 meter tall glass and metal cylinders, each filled with swirling, multi-coloured liquids. Up from the cylinders grow multiple green, metal beams. They begin with the thickness of a finger, but quickly expand. The beams, several dozens of them, take up a significant part of the room in the chamber, and also extend out of it through the walls. This is the origin of all the beams the PCs have seen in the caves; the nervous system of the machine's influence of Ellod. The only beam which does not extend beyond the chamber is a spike, straight up from the cylinders. On it, a regular human brain in a knot of twisted flesh is impaled.

The multitude of beams make it hard to move through the chamber. While in the chamber, the PCs are in range of all the Ovum's attacks, but they themselves have three potential targets. The metal beams, the Ovum, or Ellod's brain. What they choose to destroy will have significant consequences for Rusthaven and the people who live there.

When the confrontation begins, the PCs are at long range from the Ovum.

Attacking the beams: The metal beams are everywhere in the chamber, and thus not hard

GM Intrusion: *The PC suddenly hears the voice of the Ovum speaking directly into their brain. It turns out the character was inflicted with a seed of the Ovum long ago, and the character has had a dormant Rider for a long time.*

THE OVUM 7 (21)

MOTIVE: Recreate the civilisation which created it

HEALTH: 40

DAMAGE INFLECTED: 6

ARMOR: 2

MOVEMENT: Immobile

MODIFICATIONS: Since the Ovum is a machine, it is immune to all mental based attacks.

COMBAT: The Ovum is completely immobile, and has few ways to attack its enemies. Every turn it may fire two Fragment Implanters at each of its enemies. Each attack does 5 damage at long range, and the character immediately gains the corrosion: Ridden. The next round the Implanters join the Ovum in the fight at its initiative.

The Ovum can also use its influence over Riders to cause physical pain to any Ridden characters. All PCs with this corrosion must make a Intellect 3 defence roll at the start of their turn, or be stunned for one round as the Rider inside them works its influence.

INTERACTION: The Ovum has no ability to communicate, unless the character is Ridden. If it is, it whispers suggestions of surrender and suicide at every opportunity. If desperate, it will promise great power, bargaining for its survival, though in truth it can not and will not do anything that could possibly threaten its mission.

LOOT: 2 Random Cyphers

to attack. Still, getting as close as possible to the Ovum means the beams are thinner and therefore more easily broken by the attack. The difficulty of the attack is therefore less a matter of hitting, and more getting close enough so the attack can have an effect. The beams have an armour rating of 10, but the PCs can themselves decide the difficulty of their attack. Each level of difficulty reduces armor by one point. A combined damage of 30 points is enough to destroy most of the beams in the chamber.

Attacking the brain: The brain is vulnerable, but because of the beams in the chamber, it is hard to hit without the most precise of attacks. To hit the brain requires a level 8 attack, but it has no armor and only 2 health. To attack at close range, a character must first get to the Ovum, and then spend an action to climb on top of it.

Attacking the Ovum: Fighting the Ovum itself has no special rules, other than those presented in the stat block on the previous page.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

Having responded to Ellod's summons, he will no longer torment their dreams, even though the PCs might not have solved his problem in a way he found satisfactory. Below is a list of possible outcomes of the PCs confrontation, and what they mean for Rusthaven, the Ovum, and Ellod.

The PCs did nothing: Ellod is still tormented, and the Ovum continues its work. Rusthaven will continue to be tormented by the effects of the Ovum's alterations, but it may stay populated for many years still. The troubles it has might be hard for the people living there, but they have few alternatives. Soon most residence will be under the influence of the Ovum, which reduces the rate of Ovum tampering in the area.

The PCs killed Ellod: If the PCs destroyed Ellod's brain, this will eventually kill him. His massive frame will soon stop expanding, and eventually start to rot. This is the end for Rusthaven, and the area will again become uninhabitable without a source of meat and water. This will also stop the Ovum's expansion for a while, since there are fewer living beings near it to alter and less raw materials to work with.

The PCs destroyed the beams: Destroying the metal beams the Ovum has infected Ellod with greatly reduces its influence on the outside world. Ellod will be more in-charge of the symbiosis, and might even regain his senses, though most of his faculties are spent fighting the Ovum. If this happens, he may again join in the running of Rusthaven, and become a more active partner. At least, until the Ovum again manages to infect him once again.

The PCs destroyed the Ovum: With the Ovum destroyed, Ellod is free of its mind-numbing interference, and can again act in a self-aware manner. His first priority is to rejoin the community of Rusthaven. This might be welcome at first, but the town is dependent on him to such a degree, that he will eventually use it to assume total control, and once again become the tyrant he was known as long ago. Without the Ovum's powers, the number of Iron Winds around Rusthaven decreases, making the town, for better or worse, far more accessible.

Other: There are of course other possible outcomes, most likely combinations of the results above. Still, the most important factor is that without Ellod, Rusthaven can not survive.

Ridden PCs: If the Ovum or its beams are destroyed, its connection with the Riders are either temporarily or permanently broken. At this point GMs have two choices. All characters with Foci or Corrosions related to the Riders can lose them, the warped changes transforming into new foci or descriptors the PCs should be able to pick. Alternatively, the Foci and Descriptors remain, the PCs forever connected to the network of surviving Riders and other creations of the Ovum. What do they want? What was their plan? And what will they do now?

In the aftermath, regardless of what happens, the Riders and other creations of the Ovum are still out there, enacting the plans of the Ovum, even in its absence. Knowing now what the players do, how will they deal with this knowledge that out there in the world people are being controlled and secretly working towards the resurrection of a long dead civilisation? Perhaps it will all be fine without the influence of the Ovum to direct them, unless of course, there are several Ovums, and this one was just the first...

Some players might decide they want to side with the Ovum and resurrect the dead civilisation that created it. If so, great! If the players can communicate with the Ovum (for example with the abilities of the Talks With Machines focus), they may be able to make a deal and get great power. Those players giving themselves willingly to the Ovum might even be granted a beneficial or powerful corrosion for acting as its agents.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

These are simple seeds that can be grown into larger adventures or used as simple, standalone encounters.

THE SICKLY BAKER

People in a village have been getting sick ever since they started eating the products of a new baker that arrived in town. Those that get sick soon feel better and deny ever having accused the baker of causing their earlier illness. They act differently now, strangely, like some other intelligence is watching things from behind their eyes.

Investigating the baker yields a disgusting and terrible revelation. The Baker is vomiting a thick, purple slurry into his goods that quickly fades to transparency when baking them. Confronting the baker about this, he fights to the death and investigation of his body reveals strange, purple growths throughout his flesh. All the other infected of the village flee upon his death, as if they somehow sense it.

THE INFESTING ASSASSIN

An important and influential man narrowly avoids an assassination attempt and asks the PCs for help. The only clues he can give them is the peculiar arrow that was fired at him. It is made of bone and coated in rubbery, purple flesh that twitches slightly under the touch. What in the Nine Worlds is this thing? Why would someone try to assassinate this man? Who was the assassin and where are they now?

IRON MAIDEN

A woman is being hunted down, wanted posters made available and militia gathering to kill her. When discovered, she is revealed to be iron-touched, a survivor of the Iron Wind who has managed to live hidden in the city until someone spotted her affliction for what it truly was. She

wasn't doing anything wrong, but now that the Iron Watch has sent up a warning of an approaching Iron Wind the locals want to kill her, believing that she is the one responsible for attracting the Wind.

SHADED RUST

The players discover a cypher dealer that can give them cheap deals on cyphers, but they learn by accident or through luck that the same cypher dealer is making payments to a local Iron Watchman in secret. Something shady is going on and there has been a noticeable increase in the number of less-savoury Rustchasers staying in the area recently. Is there a conspiracy to suppress the warning of an approaching Iron Wind, so these scavengers can loot as they please?

FINDING RUSTHAVEN

A group of Vashivok Priests and their disciples have declared they have discovered the true location of the paradise known as Rusthaven and are seeking people to come with them and protect them on their hard journey.

Very soon, those very same priests start disappearing and as the departure date of the expedition approaches, the remaining Vashivok are scared. No mercenary will accept the job, afraid they'll end up like the last ones, and the surviving Vashivok are desperate for help.

THE PURPLE ZOO

A travelling zoo comes to town with an unusual display of strange looking, purple animals. While in town, nearby properties find items missing, people have bad dreams and the zoo-keeper seems continually afraid, spending her free time trying to sell or even give away her zoo to someone else, claiming she has had enough of the travelling zookeepers life. Noticeably, she never speaks badly of the zoo or her life within earshot of her animals.

THE KNIGHT'S WARNING

The PCs encounter an Angulan Knight on the road, stood over a body and wiping the blood off her blade. Seeing the PCs, she warns them to keep on moving, that this place has been tainted. Travelling past the area, the PCs can see a whole caravan of people; men, women and children slaughtered. If they approach the caravan, they hear the whimpering of a small child and spending the time to coax them out of their hiding place, discover she is Iron-touched. She explains tearfully that the caravan was trying to get to Rusthaven before the knight killed them all.

If any of the PCs are Iron-touched or have any evidence of coming into contact with Iron Wind when they first encounter the Knight, she attacks.

THE HERETIC HUNT

A series of mutants are stalking through the Cold Desert looking for people. The claim they have been sent by the Fahat to root out Vashivok heretics and ask the PCs for help.

Regardless of whether they accept or not, the PCs soon come across a village destroyed by the Iron Wind. A lone, Iron-touched survivor remains, and weeps at the PCs, begging for death. He tells them that some Priests came to their village, drugged them and just waited as the Iron Wind washed over them, destroying and twisting them all. He is all that remains, but is in terrible pain and just wants to join his family in the next life.

THE BLACK SMEAR

In Rusthaven, one of the residents is concerned about a large black smear on the dome's surface which casts a shadow over his house. If investigated, it turns out the smear isn't on the outside of the dome, but the inside. How did it get there, so high up? How do the PCs get rid of it?

A CONCERNED VISITOR

The Rusthaven residents are concerned after a mutant arrived in the town and left soon after. He seemed nervous and kept looking around before leaving. The people are worried he might betray the location of Rusthaven to outsiders and need someone to stop him, by whatever means necessary.

THE IRON PRICE

There is a numenera structure that could serve perfectly as a new Iron Watch tower out in the Steadfast, but it is occupied by a group of people that refuse to even show their faces or discuss things. An Ironmaster would very much like to be able to use the place, and is willing to pay the occupants, but they will not listen or even negotiate and just want to be left alone. The Ironmaster wants help to find out if there is anyway she could persuade them. All she wants is for them to allow the Iron Watch to make use of their tower and to know what price she would have to pay to secure such a deal.

RUSTCHASER'S LAMENT

The PCs hear a bard sing a sad tale of a Rustchaser whose spouse was taken by the Iron Wind. Convinced the spouse was still alive and could somehow be recovered from the swirling storm, the Rustchaser followed the Wind until they died.

Soon after, the PCs encounter an Iron Wind and hear in their minds the calls of a person, begging for their spouse to save them, echoing in their minds from the Wind.

GOOD RIDDANCE

Rumours have been going around of people and animals with purple growths suddenly up and leaving, disappearing into the night. After some investigation, the PCs find a group of these missing people and animals that are living together in a strange community. They treat each other all as equals, children, adults and beasts all having equal say in whatever the community does.

All the inhabitants of the strange commune are riddled with purple growths and if pressured, they reveal they are Ridden, but they care not for the civilisation of the past or the Ovum's plans. They don't remember the prior world or what their old bodies were like and just want to live their new lives in peace, away from the Ovum and its influence.

It is not where the Wind comes from that matters, nor where it goes to. What matters most is the journey, the change, the evolution. The Iron Wind is the very spirit of change made real and to question its motives is to question why we learn or grow or become. We simply must move forward - there is no why. You see, we are not so different from the storm. Do not fear it child, but embrace it, for by doing so you embrace yourself and your true potential.

—EXCERPT FROM A VASHIVOK SERMON



PART 6: BACK MATTER

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Rusthaven was created out of inspiration. The ideas of the Iron Wind mentioned in those short few paragraphs in the Numenera corebook were fascinating and set my mind in motion. As a person who enjoys horror and tries to bring aspects of that to my games, the Iron Wind felt so natural in that role that the idea of Rusthaven was born.

There are many influences I've pulled from in the creation of Rusthaven, from books and movies, to sculpture and paintings. I've compiled a list here of my biggest inspirations, I hope you find them useful for your own Iron Wind adventures.

ARTWORK

Guts, Tim Palen

The sculptures of Patricia Piccinini

The artwork of H. R. Giger

MUSIC

Monster by *You Say Party! We Say Die!*

The City by *Dead Astronauts*

FICTION

Blood Music, Greg Bear

The Skinner, Neal Asher

Parasite Eve, Hideaki Sena

The Bridge, Janine Ellen Young

MOVIES

The Blob (1988)

Event Horizon

eXistenZ

The Fly (1986)

Akira

Slither

Alien

Videodrome

The Thing (1982)

Virus (1999)

Tetsuo II: Body Hammer

COMMUNITIES

<http://theninthworld.com>

<http://cyphercast.net>

<http://themechanicalbard.com>

<http://www.reddit.com/r/numenera>

The Numenera G+ community

GLOSSARY

IRON-TOUCHED

Someone afflicted by the Iron Wind

RUSTWALKER

Another term for Iron-touched

CORROSION

An Iron Wind-caused mutation or other transformation.

RUSTDEVIL

A creature created by the Iron Wind

WINDWAKE

The trail left behind an Iron Wind, part of the saying "More twisted than a Windwake"

RUSTBORN

The child of someone iron-touched or a child created by the Iron Wind.

DIRTYEYE

Rustchaser slang for the lookout who watches for Iron Winds and other hazards.

RUSTCHASER

Someone who follows Iron Winds, looking to make it big collecting the treasures they leave behind.

KNACK

Someone who can identify the strange, complex cyphers left by an Iron Wind. Also a term for the skill or ability of identifying rust-cyphers.

CHASING THE WIND

Rustchaser slang for doing what they do - following the trails of Iron Wind.

METALBELLIES

Slang for iron-touched.

SMOOTHIES

Anyone who isn't a Rustchaser - a term for people who don't know the rough life of risk and reward a Rustchaser lives. Also used for anyone who isn't Iron-touched, but a grave insult if used against a Rustchaser.

ANVILS

A Rustchaser term for people who are annoying or a bit strange in the head and need some sense knocked into them. Often used about Vashivok.

GHOSTER

An Iron Wind that emits voices and telepathic messages

WIND-SIGN

The warning signs of an Iron Wind

CHASE

Rustchaser slang for a mission or adventure, "He found that cypher on his last chase."