

Whisper Campaigns



Requires the Numenera corebook
by Monte Cook Games

Whisper Campaigns

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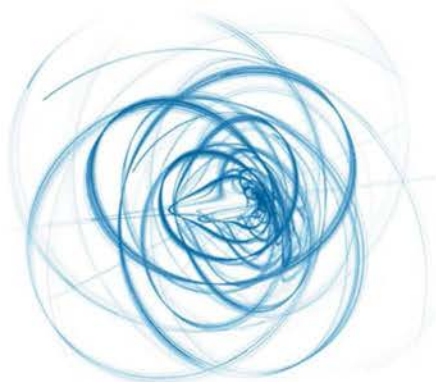
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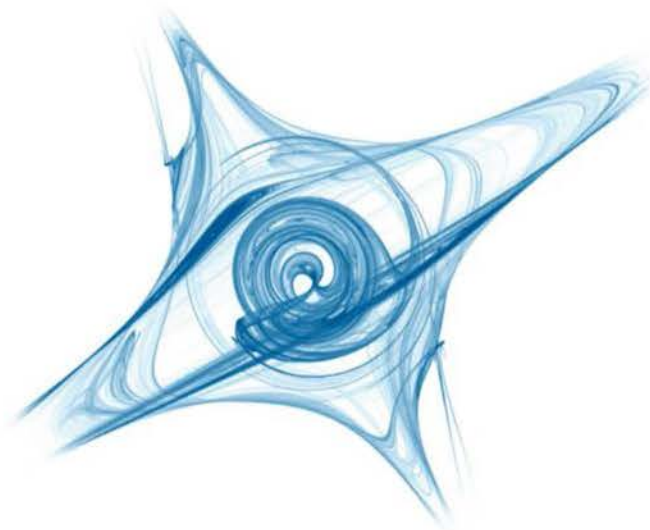
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Everywhere there was death in the garden and blood on the flowers...

Parades of cheering onlookers roared at the quiet, final sounds of collapse. The grounds had been arranged so that duels and skirmishes could break out even in the densest crowds, and the baying spectators lapped up the grim spectacle. Emphan moved cautiously. He was less concerned about being thrown into the midst of a fight than seeming troubled by it. Above all, he knew he must fit in. The target would slip away if anything seemed amiss. Making his way toward the encampment, he casually stepped over teeth in the grass.

The great tent was constructed of metal sheets, cruel weapons of the border wars now won. Patches bore indentations where rock and bone had been crushed underneath. It would take little effort to press them flat again, but reminders like this were woven into the fabric of their society. He remembered a meeting between his father and the Thanos of Urdis, back before the slaughter had started. They had come in peace, and Emphan read in the great chamber while they discussed strategy for quelling a rebellion that had begun brewing. "Wars continue until all that made the vanquished separate disappears," he heard them say. The message was everything his father disagreed with, and everything the Urdis stood for. It was the rift between them over the Anamun, those beings who first gave both clans the knowledge of Change.

Emphan walked through a field sensor numenera. No alarms, no alerts. The cypher strapped under his cloak was designed to specification, it seemed. He had steeled himself for the task ahead, but immediately upon entering the outer camp he was struck dumb, standing in appalled silence. The revelry outside was a dim candle to the brilliance of spectacle before him.

Tables and chairs flew through the air as noblemen and tycoons expelled every base urge. The Great Impresario of Thriest was battered, bloody, and laughing manically at the feet of the Triad of Mullen; vines sprouted from the mouth of what used to be Cryt the Meek, willed back to life by an enraged and drunk Ventenseer; an emissary of House Laythra hiding the glint of sharp metal even now; two women dressed in the style of House Filodoxis chatted gaily, casting winks to men who then set upon one another as viciously as ancient rivals: madness had descended upon the crowd and nothing was forbidden.

These were sensible men, or if not sensible then at least not craven monsters. Their power came from intrigue, from the game of great persons and their institutions. But word of how the Urdis celebrated victory had spread far and wide, and the powerful know not kindness in their joy.

This was the toyrnfach, the path of Change that embraced destruction. He doubted if the Urdis kept up the old stories both sides once told, or the shared language they told them in. In killing his family the Urdis had to kill part of themselves, for they had been one clan once. You cannot claim victory until the enemy disappears. Emphan shook his head at the thought. He gathered himself and then deftly moved through the crowd, managing to pass unharmed through the next field sensor.

Here things grew quiet. This area was reserved for the Urdis and their closest allies. Emphan scanned his surroundings quickly and saw a sight more horrifying than all that came before, and so he grew still. Before him was a tapestry of shifting metal ten times the height of the tallest man in the crowd. It mapped out each and every member of the Urdis royal family in extravagant fashion. The piece must have been worth more than most merchants could ever hope to earn, and yet it was merely another expense for the upcoming tournament. Emphan knew all the names and connections by heart, but they may as well have read “Enemy” for all the respect he had for these titans. The ostentatiousness of the piece and the unthinking devotion of the crowd sickened him, but no more so than he had been every day since childhood.

What stopped him now was the gilded inscription high above: This Machine Surrounds Hate and Forces It to Surrender. His family’s words, stolen and corrupted by the people they had called brothers for so long the records noted no time before. Words that now reminded him not of his proud heritage but of his parents’ bodies strung up in the streets. Words better left dead.

The strong clasp of a hand on his shoulder roused him from the reverie. He turned and saw a familiar face in the crowd: the son of their highest stewards.

“Pondering on greatness, I see.” His mouth twisted into a grin and Emphan knew the man didn’t recognize him. They had played together as boys in the great gardens of his home, but Emphan was dead now. Why should he recognize the dead when surrounded by so many? “It’s inspiring to see others stopped with the power of Urdis. Twenty years since my family saw the error of their ways and joined the Machine, and I still wake up astonished every day by how far we’ve come.”

The force of the statement hit him in the stomach. He gritted his teeth and nodded, unable to speak. Somehow he forced a smile, and the traitor walked back into the crowd. Emphan had lingered long enough. With one hand he slicked back his hair and gently pushed through to the courtyard ahead. There was no commotion here, but the familiar sound of his footsteps barely registered. In the rare silence he found himself staring at a gardener pruning the bushes. Markings and brands across her body told the story of her captivity, but the care with which she tended the land said much more. Emphan knew these grounds. Once they had been a great

landscape overlooked by every person traveling through. The soil could barely sustain spare grasses, but this woman had tended this patch of land into something more. Her dedication was revered by his culture, the pinnacle of *erenfach*: Change through growth beyond the self. Even now she worked with love for something she would never see come to pass. The camp had been built around this sole bit of verdant green and the best patch had been chosen for Yrvan's private garden. To that end the woman cut apart the life she had nurtured, slaving away for a civilization that relished only in building ugly works and uglier truths. But the din of envy drowned out any sorrow he had for her. Behind every movement she made was appreciation for a life well lived. He felt only for the life he never would.

There was only one gate left, but no sensor had been placed here. None was needed. Only those of the highest rank would dare enter this last chamber. Yet something was off. The Thanes had condemned all that brought together his family and them, but all around the last entrance was bright, shifting color: the mark of Anamun. It made no sense as a final insult. Only the first line of the royal families were aware, and as far as the Urdish knew that consisted of a single man. He considered turning back.

But he couldn't. Sense or no, he had come too far. He pushed the great hardwood doors open and strode in.

Emphan froze. The man before him was the frailest creature he had ever seen, so meek as to disappear into his throne and robes. Urdish values required the execution of elderly persons in power; those who couldn't defend their claim had none. And yet here sat the greatest of the Thanes, so weak he seemed unable to rise. Around him bickered a handful of advisors. Vile curses flew casually and everyone had at least one hand on a weapon. Emphan might have thought these towering brutes each other's most hated enemies if he hadn't seen their ways before.

In their *de facto* rage they missed the entrant, but under the cowl grew a smile. One bony finger emerged to point at Emphan. His time was up. Without comment or pretense he willed to life the device strapped on his chest, and all grew still. Then waves of force flew outward. The advisors were torn asunder. Flesh stripped from their bodies in layers, down to the bone, until nothing remained. But the old man stood, unharmed. He moved forward faster than possible, pushing against an invisible crush turning the walls to dust. Seconds later Emphan saw him face-to-face. Here was the Beast, embodiment of sorrow and hate. Emphan pulled the second trigger.

Silence.

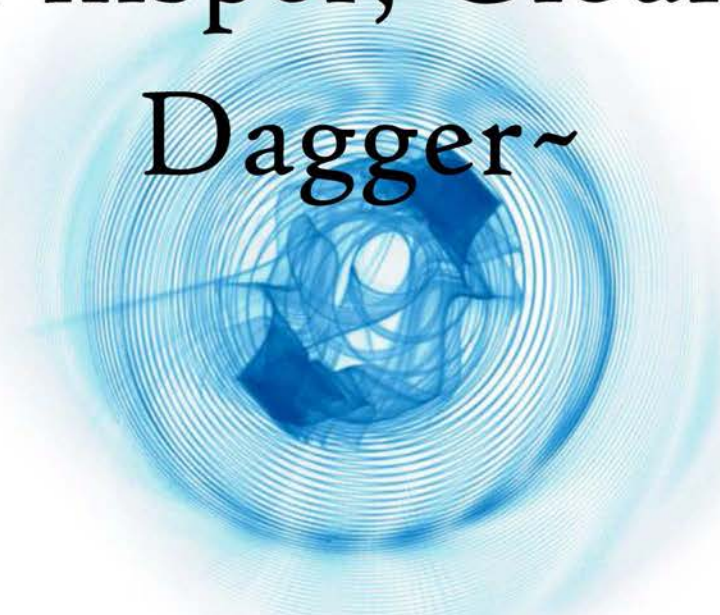
He didn't know how much time had passed when he opened his eyes, but he knew there wasn't much left. His body had been torn asunder, his legs and arms barely gory stumps. Vision came in spurts, and all he could smell was smoke and death. Suddenly things grew clear, and he saw a being kneeling before him, and made no sense. The façade of humanity had been burnt from Yrvan. His face had been shed off but enough remained to be recognizable. The vision underneath was much more awful: a shifting kaleidoscope of fluorescent color. An opening parted where a mouth would have been:

"Child, it is good to see your clan remained. Our kind thought you lost, and in losing you so imagined our purpose ended. Your fathers were better men than those we led next, but they couldn't change. Our kind is made of change, and so we moved on. Now you have closed the circle. We are thankful. Sleep now, and know your people's rise will come again."



Chapter I:

~Whisper, Cloak & Dagger~



Political Games

What do we mean when we say that a game is “political?” Usually we use the term to indicate that the “powers that be” are involved in the motivations of the campaign. The duke has asked the party to spy upon his political rival. The queen asks that the adventurers speak on her behalf in a neighboring nation. Politics, to the untrained ear, means that the political movers and shakers are involved.

But this is false, isn’t it? Just because the source of an adventure is politically powerful or the adventure is politically motivated does not mean that the game or campaign is itself all that political. The adventure in this case is likely quite normal for fantasy, involving exploration or capers, but not the kind of player maneuvering that would make the game itself actually political.

So, if political games are more than just political motivations, but instead games in which the

machinations of politics are at the fingertips of player characters, how do we run that kind of game? What tools do we need and which plots should we construct?

In this chapter we’ll take a look at the political campaign. We’ll explore what a political game actually is, how to run one, and how to have fun doing it.

Step One: Player Buy In

Political machinations, on the part of the players and their characters, are what make a game truly political. They’re capable of making a game truly exciting as well. In order to pull this off the players must be directly involved in the intrigue in question. Like a dungeon crawl, political scenarios should involve potential gains and likely dangers.

The gains and losses are going to be positions of status, personal favor, fame, power, wealth and other spoils of status and stardom. These are there for the taking by players willing to play along and work to achieve them.

Playing a game about political intrigue can't be done without clear intention between the GM and the players to do so. A GM who forces political situations on a group won't get much buy-in from the players and true intrigue likely won't rear its head. For politics to work as a premise, everyone involved needs to agree that this will be the focus of the game. At least for a while.

In addition to having an agreement that this will be the subject of your game, the players need to learn to become actors in the political drama. They must learn the dance of politics, either initiating or reacting to political situations in a way that allows politics to be interesting.

This can be hard for some players, as intrigue is a skill and not everyone enjoys the process of failure that can accompany first tries. It's important that the GM make allowances for this, not punishing too harshly for blunders at first.

Initial Problems

Some players see a simple solution to every situation that doesn't go their way: combat. Characters in these kinds of games are equipped with fantastical powers and advanced weapons training that allows them to walk with a bit of confidence, knowing that whoever gets in their way can ultimately just be killed.

At times combat can be a real problem, particularly if assassination becomes the only political maneuver the group knows how to pull off. However, there's nothing intrinsically wrong with this strategy. Players can have a lot of fun with being bold and ruthless, but they should understand that this is not the usual dance of politics, and that they're cutting themselves out of the other options when they take power by force rather than subtlety. A good political mastermind bides her time, assembles all the important pieces on the board, and strikes with force when the time is precisely right.

Another difficulty can be lack of inspiration. Players who have never thought to roleplay a

character who solves problems by lying and cajoling may not have the first idea what to do to gain status in an alien political landscape, full of already powerful and seemingly all-knowing adversaries. Players have a tendency to clam up in this situation, deferring to their more politically savvy party members for guidance.

To mitigate this problem and add terrain to the political landscape, the GM should be ready to have NPCs come into the picture, with offers to let the player characters work for them in their own machinations, or with suggestions as to ways the party might advance themselves.

It has often been said that the best games give players difficult and meaningful choices. NPCs with conflicting offers of alliance or threat allow the players to decide who they want to side with in the political world. This is important. Not only does this give the players agency over their alliances, but it can also make them a few enemies, a useful tool for the campaign.



Common Plotlines

The following are a few useful plots and premises to run in a game about political intrigue.

Base of Power. An important person has died or moved to another kingdom, leaving behind a vacuum of power, such as a criminal empire, an important business, a network of spies, or a prominent place in the royal court. It's a race against time as the party works to secure these resources or this position for themselves, likely making at least one enemy in the process.

Betrayal. A patron or ally of a PC uses them in a gambit that will likely get the PCs killed, revealing unforeseen motivations and plots. Who does this patron really work for? Has everything been a set up for this betrayal?

Call to Arms. The kingdom goes to war and everything changes. Some nobles must leave court, due to their positions in the military. Others must journey to protect their castles and other holdings. The young are sent to fight, stealing away friends and contacts. War means new priorities and debts. It means assassination attempts and potential alliances with other nations. It means the deaths of prominent leaders on the field of battle. It is an amazing turn of events and should be used once the GM has established the regular way in which the court operates in times of peace. This is a contrast with peace, a time full of opportunities and tragic losses.

Cruel Successor. After the death of a beloved ruler or title holder all eyes fall on the new appointee. But the heir makes it clear that things are now going to change. Implementing draconian policies and causing terror throughout the land, this new face is not what the people want. What's worse, the new jerk seems to like the PCs, and

uses them for all her machinations. The PCs are torn between an opportunity for advancement and the prospect of having their popularity tied to an unpopular ruler.

Death Threat. The party learns that one of them is marked for death by an expensive and capable hired assassin. Who has done the hiring and why? Can the player characters survive the impending assault? Can their political lives survive the measures they must take to protect themselves? Is this just a rumor created to throw the PCs off their game? This plot has the advantage of adding a great deal of suspense and pairs well with other plots, such as the Royal Ball or the Throne War.

Lower Class Unrest. Those who serve decide they've had enough and the haves become the target of the have nots. The player characters are likely among the haves, causing them to suffer indignities and attacks at every turn. What are they willing to do to re-establish order? Will they side with the mob and work against their fellow nobles? This could lead to a complete overthrow of the current order, with the players directly involved in the events.

MacGuffin. The "MacGuffin" is a term for an item that everyone is trying to get. In Numenera this is often a powerful piece of technology. It might cure disease,



alter the body, transfer consciousness, create a portal, cause pleasure, or create visions of the past. The MacGuffin might also be a person, leading to the tried and true kidnapping plot. Whatever the case, the players hear about or are entrusted with the item and are forced to drop everything to protect or locate the MacGuffin. The political fallout is of great importance in this kind of plot.

Paranoia. Evidence has come to light implying that the court has a number of spies from a rival nation, an arcane organization, or another species entirely. Accusations fly as nobles work to take advantage of the paranoia, planting evidence against each other. This muddies the waters, making it even harder to track down the real spies before they make their move.

Royal Ball. A major court event is coming up and many plots are afoot. How will the players navigate the political minefield? Do they know who to talk to and who to snub? What happens when they find themselves in the middle of three political plays at once, and not enough time to take advantage of it all?

Secret Society. An elite and clandestine organization has contacted one or all of the PCs and offered to induct them in the initiate levels of their secretive conspiracy. Do the player characters dare turn them down? How far up does this conspiracy go and are there counter conspiracies working against them?

This plotline has great potential for creating paranoia, involving powers from other nations (or worlds!), and giving the players a clear path to greater power through a hierarchical society. They'll be given secret missions and Numenera equipment, leading to a spy game in the courts of the Steadfast.

Sins of the Father. It turns out a close relative of a PC is doing something really dangerous with numenera, or courting treason. The authorities are beginning to figure it out. Does the party put its neck on the line in the name of family?

Snowball Effect. It starts with something small, like a slight or a misunderstanding that escalates into an insult, and then an angry assault, and then a planned

attack, and then a full blown civil war. When will it end, and what side do the players take in the conflict? If at all possible, have the players be present for the initial event that causes things. Let them stew in the knowledge that they could have stopped it if they'd only known.

Territorial Dispute. Two prominent power-players are constantly in conflict over a location or resource, causing massive casualties. The PCs, as neutral parties, have found themselves in the place of arbiters and diplomats, but whoever they side against now wants them dead.

Throne War. A major leader dies and succession does not go smoothly. Everyone in a position to take power begins throwing everything they've got at the opportunity, calling in favors, expending Cyphers, and leading violent coups. Every major appointed position is up for grabs, as the new leader can change the political landscape with a word. Everyone therefore has a stake in supporting the winning side, making the stakes high for the entire court.

Unwanted Appointment. A PC is given a position of power in the realm that takes them away from the centers of power or that places them in a position to make enemies easily, such as a judge, executioner, or truth detector. Who set them up in this way and why? How can they get out of their duties gracefully or find a way to make their new position work for them politically?

Weird Problem. Something strange is going on at court. People are behaving unusually and odd effects are going on all the time. This is a mystery solving plot with political implications. Ultimately the cause of the problem turns out to be something powerful and dangerous, potentially instigated by a member of court in their attempts to gain power through numenera they've acquired. This is a great way to inject more weird into your intrigue game by grabbing a monster from the Numenera Bestiary or core book.

Life at Court

Courtly life manifests in a number of ways in The Steadfast, depending on the kingdom and city in question. In some, the capital city serves as a center of court, with the reigning royal the center of it all. Even in such centralized courts it is likely that many smaller gatherings and cliques serve as the real battleground in political games.

Balls and parties in particular serve as hubs of activity. This is because of a number of factors. For one, your enemies will be there too. This makes it easy to keep an eye on them, noting who they associate with and who seems to hold them in contempt. Additionally, the very nature of a party is that of one-upmanship, with partiers competing to be the most admired, the best dressed, and to give the best gifts to the host or guest of honor.

Hosts compete to throw the most extravagant, artful, and best attended events, using the occasion to prove their popularity and power. Such displays can be risky, for they often inspire jealousy, not to mention offer your enemies a chance to take a look at your home security situation.

At more official court functions the atmosphere can be somewhat less competitive between hosts, but no less ruthless overall, as courtiers attempt to impress their ruler and those who truly hold the reigns.

Other political set pieces can take the form of artistic salons, theatrical or gladiatorial events, marriages, funerals, military speeches, building dedication ceremonies, and even expeditions. Any chance that those in power get to intermingle can become the stage for intrigue.

Private Affairs

This is not to say that the bulk of politics takes place in public. Quite the contrary. Small groups of like-minded politically influential individuals often form around a common cause and meet in seclusion. These meetings, while ripe for eavesdropping and Cypher-

Positions at Court

The following positions are common in the nine kingdoms of The Steadfast as appointments at court. Players can work to achieve them or potentially buy them as a Position long term benefit, if the situation makes sense.

Advisor. Expert and confidant to a lord.

Chancellor. A high office holder, usually in charge of a large part of the nation's governance.

Chaplain of Truth. Advisor to the court and representative of the Order of Truth.

Concubine. Social companion and pleasure provider to a lord.

Cup-Bearer. Highly trusted individual, in charge of filling the cups of lords at court to guard against poison.

Cypher Master. Charged with checking members of court for Numenera they shouldn't be carrying.

Glaive Keeper. Organizer of gladiatorial games.

Herald of Arms. Official court messenger.

Hostarius. Guardian of the ruler's property.

Master of the Hunt. Organizer of hunting expeditions for the court and its ruler.

Master of Shins. Chief treasurer of the realm.

Seneschal. Master of daily administration and servants in the castle or palace.

based spying, form the basis of most political machinations. For though an individual can wield power in a small arena, a group can tackle a problem from a number of different angles.

Being invited into a select group is an honor not all get to experience. Extending trust to new members is not something the politically savvy do lightly. More often, PCs find themselves forming a conspiracy among each other.

Groups of courtiers circle each other warily on the stage of political theatre, testing each other's motivations, information networks, and power. They almost never strike directly at one another, instead battling things out through cat's-paws and seemingly innocuous accomplishments, such as acquiring meaningless court titles and uncounted tracts of land to lord over.

Courtly Descriptors

Use the following Descriptors to help build characters suited for courtly intrigue, House rivalries, and whisper campaigns.

Deceptive

You're a slippery one, always spinning tales, capturing others in your gossamer web of lies. Sometimes you can't even remember the truth, you've told so many fibs to cover your various and sundry activities.

You gain the following benefits:

Manipulative: +2 to your Intellect pool

Skill: You are trained in all tasks related to telling lies, pulling tricks, and generally deceiving others.



Slippery: You are trained in resisting mental attacks and attempts to read your mind.

Inability: You find it hard to tell the truth. You just don't have it in you. You suffer a one shift penalty to the Difficulty of social tasks in which you don't lie.

Initial link to the Starting Adventure (choose one):

1. You've manipulated everyone into joining up.
2. You heard gossip about this group and decided to join.
3. Your tricks have earned you certain enemies and this group seems against them.
4. You live for the thrill of danger and that looks to be what the party is up to.

Esteemed

You have a talent for enlarging and defending your reputation as an upstanding member of society. You are well respected at court and given a bit more leeway than your peers.

You gain the following benefits:

Poise: +2 to your Speed pool

Station: You begin with the Position long term benefit, representing an official duty or noble title you've been granted.

Skill: You are trained in courtly etiquette tasks.

Unassailable: It is difficult for others to attack your reputation. You enjoy an Asset on social interaction tasks directly related to defending your honor and name.

Rival: You begin play with an enemy, gained through jealousy or betrayal. This person will stop at

nothing to see you destroyed, preferably after seeing your name be dragged through the dirt.

Initial link to the Starting Adventure (choose one):

1. You're the only one with the reputation needed to put this group together.
2. You've gained the trust of the powers that be, and they've assigned you to this mission.
3. People bring information to those in power, and that knowledge has led you to the group.
4. You're always using your power to stick your nose into various plots throughout the realm.

Informed

You are knowledgeable of the secret comings and goings of many different cities and regions in both The Steadfast and The Beyond. Your information may come in handy, but it also garners you dangerous enemies.

You gain the following benefits:

Savvy: +2 to your Intellect pool

Sources: Choose 3 areas of potential news such as regions, markets, Houses, or courts. You begin with a Contact in each area. Wherever you go, informants pass along information to you about what's going on in those areas.

Skill: You're trained in interactions that involve gathering information from others.

Dangerous Knowledge: You are constantly sought after for your information, by friend and foe alike. You are often harassed and even attacked for what you know. Your GM should make it a point to have this happen at least once per game session.

Initial link to the Starting Adventure (choose one):

1. You've got the inside information to get the group started.
2. Your contacts let you know about this cohort forming.
3. One of the other PCs used to be a valuable information source for you.
4. Your enemies are after you and you're using this group for protection.



Protective

You're a loyal ally or member of a noble House. You put yourself into harm's way because you want to protect those you care about or serve. You've learned the best way to do that is to stay vigilant and be ready for anything.

You gain the following benefits:

Human Shield: +2 to your Might pool

Skill: You are trained in tasks related to detecting danger, including noticing ambushes before they happen, as well as spotting hidden weapons. This could come from intuition or decades of training.

Defender: When you Take the Attack (Numenera corebook pg 101), throwing yourself into the line of fire, you do not take the additional point of damage from the attack.

Initial link to the Starting Adventure (choose one):

1. You're the unofficial bodyguard of one of the other PCs.
2. You seem trustworthy enough to join.
3. You're an old, close, friend of one of the PCs.
4. You're worried about one of the PCs and have joined to keep them safe.

Seductive

To some, sex is power. You fit into that camp nicely. Through careful control of circumstances and your own mystique, you've learned to tantalize others, gaining power through the mere suggestion of intimacy.

You gain the following benefits:

Charms and Whiles: +2 to your Intellect pool

Skill: You are trained in seduction tasks.

Take Advantage: You enjoy an Asset on all social interactions that involve manipulating those you've seduced or attracted using the seduction skill.

Inability: You know people, not books. You

suffer a one step penalty to the Difficulty of tasks that relate to recalling information and knowledge.

Initial link to the Starting Adventure (choose one):

1. You've seduced at least one of the PCs and are using that past to get involved in this plot.
2. You're on the prowl for a new conquest and this seems to be a way to meet people.
3. You need to get away from court for a while. You may have seduced the wrong person.
4. You're always up for anything.



Intrigue Cyphers

The following system is intended for extremely political games and should not be employed if you're just dabbling in politics. It's a system for allowing political maneuvers to feel as daring and fun as can be by leveraging the existing systems in Numenera for employing one-time powers, such as Cyphers. In this case however, we'll be using something called an Intrigue Cypher.

The premise is as follows: just as powers are more interesting if they're at times a limited resource that changes from session to session, so too are political maneuvers. If a character could be specialized in seduction maneuvers they'd begin to employ seduction at every opportunity, which would lead to every game session going very similarly, as the same old trope gets played out over and over again. This is not to say that characters shouldn't pick up skills related to specialization in political maneuvering, just that the plot of any given courtly intrigue game is spiced up by the same level of careful choice and limited power use that combat is, through a combination of focus and opportunity.

Tools of Intrigue

An Intrigue Cypher is not a physical thing. It's a debt, an inside line, a connection, a bit of blackmail. It's the stuff of political theatre - an opportunity and the will to seize it. Each character can hold a number of Political Cyphers equal to the number of regular Cyphers they can hold without issue, but having them does not displace regular, physical Cyphers. The coming and going of these Cyphers represents the fundamentally fickle nature of courtly politics.

Example: Gen the Glaive can hold two Cyphers, according to her type and tier. She has two regular Cyphers and two Intrigue Cyphers. She could get one more regular Cypher and suffer the consequences of combining Cyphers, but she couldn't get an extra Intrigue Cypher. Her limit of two is a hard limit for these special Cyphers.



Each character in a political intrigue-focused campaign begins the game session with a new set of Intrigue Cyphers equal to their maximum. At the end of the session they are gone. Any they use are gone as well. Thus each character has essentially a hand of cards to play in the game of politics. It's important to note that since the Intrigue Cyphers go away at the end of the session, to be replenished by new ones at the beginning, PCs have an incentive to use them all up over the course of the game.

Intrigue Cyphers cannot generally be traded. They generally represent a personal connection, debt, or emerging opportunity. Certain Cyphers exist as exceptions to this rule, and will say so in their description.

Why Does This Work?

Intrigue Cyphers are useful tools in roleplaying for a number of reasons. First, for players who've yet to develop a sense of what's possible in the world of intrigue, they offer a starting point and a reason to be useful to the group. Second, Intrigue Cyphers offer one-time use maneuvers that the GM might not want in every game, but might want from time to time. Just like the powers in regular Cyphers.

Take assassination, for example. The kind of infrastructure needed to deploy assassins includes great wealth, seedy connections, and probably a position of power. Once a character is in this situation (no small feat) they can probably send wave after wave of assassins, a role normally played by villains and other NPCs. All this, just so a player can have the thrill of assassinating a rival during a political maneuver? Why put yourself through this as a GM? Why put your players through it?

A debt of honor or bit of leverage over a potential assassin, enough to get them to pull just one job, is just what the situation needs. This is the point of Intrigue Cyphers and it's not far off from the point of regular Cyphers as an alternative to all-powerful spells and abilities. Single use powers offer a more thrilling, infinitely replayable experience.

Anoetic vs. Occultic

Not all Cyphers are created equal, and this is true of Intrigue Cyphers as well. Anoetic Intrigue Cyphers represent simple maneuvers that generally require no roll. This means they're not confrontational, but rather about positioning. Examples include selling off a family relic for quick shins, calling in an old friend for backup, or relocating to a safe house. For the most part these are actions that affect you, rather than someone else.

Occultic Intrigue Cyphers are the true maneuvers in the game of politics. They're gambits pulled in order to advance yourself and your allies, and there's no small amount of risk involved in their use. These are things

like humiliating someone at court, setting up an ambush, or calling in a spy. Just like physical Occultic Cyphers, they take up two slots.

Level and Skill

Each Intrigue Cypher has a Level, which represents its power and difficulty. In the case of Occultic Intrigue Cyphers, this difficulty level must be overcome using a skill roll. Each Occultic Cypher has a skill listed. This is merely a suggestion as to which skill might be used when attempting this roll. If a player has a plausible reason to use another skill, by all means use it instead.

Intrusion

Each Cypher comes with a suggested GM Intrusion. Just a fun way that the GM can make the situation more interesting. In some cases this should be a normal Intrusion, on just one player, especially if the Cypher is Anoetic. However, if more than one PC is involved in a Cypher, such as with group activities done through Occultic Cyphers, the Intrusion might need to be a group one, in which case each affected player receives an XP.

Time

Using an Intrigue Cypher is not instantaneous, or even a one-round action. It takes time. Generally speaking an Anoetic Cypher will take a small scene to wrap up, such as a meeting with a potential ally. An Occultic Cypher will be much longer, taking perhaps days of set up and a large scene to resolve.

At all costs, the GM should time these maneuvers to create tension and plot. Let the players use their Anoetics to set up their gambit, but make the timing of their Occultics happen to fall at the same time as other important political events in the court. The players can set up an ambush, but it has to happen in the servant hallways at the royal palace during the queen's annual ball, and so on.

Intrigue Cypher List

Roll 1d6 twice to determine an Intrigue Cypher. Or just print out the following pages, cut out the cards, and deal them out randomly until everyone's Cypher limit is reached.

1	1 Acquired Technology (Anoetic)	4	1 Hideout (Anoetic)
	2 Ambush (Occultic)		2 Humiliation (Occultic)
	3 Assassination (Occultic)		3 Imposter (Anoetic)
	4 Backup (Anoetic)		4 Inheritance (Anoetic)
	5 Believable Lie (Anoetic)		5 Kidnapping (Occultic)
	6 Betrayal (Anoetic)		6 Massive Bribe (Anoetic)
2	1 Break In (Occultic)	5	1 Mentor (Anoetic)
	2 Called Away (Occultic)		2 Object of Desire (Anoetic)
	3 Cat's Paw (Occultic)		3 Otherworldly Assistance (Anoetic)
	4 Clandestine Meeting (Anoetic)		4 Quick Shins (Anoetic)
	5 Ear to the Ground (Anoetic)		5 Rising Star (Occultic)
	6 Elected Office (Occultic)		6 Rumor Mill (Anoetic)
3	1 Enemy of My Enemy (Occultic)	6	1 Seduction (Occultic)
	2 Escape Plan (Anoetic)		2 Seized Holdings (Occultic)
	3 Favor Trading (Anoetic)		3 Spy (Anoetic)
	4 Friend in High Places (Anoetic)		4 Tip Off (Anoetic)
	5 Friend in Low Places (Anoetic)		5 Valuable Information (Anoetic)
	6 Heist (Occultic)		6 Wrest Control Away (Occultic)



Acquired Technology (Anoetic)

Level: 1d10

Effect: You gain access to a useful piece of numenera through your contacts, House, etc. The Level of the Cypher determines the Level of the device. Normally the object is a regular Cypher, but if you spend 2XP when you use this the item is an Artifact chosen by your GM.

Intrusion: The item has been misidentified. It has an entirely different power than the one you expect.

Ambush (Occultic)

Level: 1d6

Skill: Stealth

Effect: You set up a moment alone with your target, when the ignorant fool is most vulnerable. Just you, your party, and the lucky sucker. The Level of the Cypher is the total number of people on your side who will make it to the "event", including you.

Intrusion: The target catches wind of the ambush and is able to round up 1d6 guards to defend them.

Assassination (Occultic)

Level: 1d6

Skill: Persuasion

Effect: You hire or otherwise cajole an assassin into working on your behalf. The skill roll for this Cypher represents your attempts to manipulate the target and those around her into being at the right place at the right time for your assassin to strike.

Intrusion: The killer succeeds, but there is some evidence tracing the act back to you, your party, or your noble House.

Backup (Anoetic)

Level: 1d10

Effect: You call in some muscle to help you in a pinch. You gain a number of Level 2 minions equal to the Level of the Cypher, who will help you for one major scene or Occultic Intrigue Cypher. This may be used with the Seized Holdings Cypher to serve as your military force for taking the location.

Intrusion: The people you call in are weakened from a prior battle.

Believable Lie (Anoetic)

Level: 1d6

Effect: You lie your way out of a situation, without the need for a roll. You probably had this cover story prepared in advance.

Intrusion: Your lie can't possibly be true and your target realizes this later.

Betrayal (Anoetic)

Level: 1d6

Effect: Someone working closely with your target turns against them, aiding you in your efforts. Provides an Asset on a related Occultic Cypher roll against the target.

Intrusion: Turns out the person helping you was a double agent, working for your foe the whole time. You still get the Asset on the roll, but your foe is tipped off to your involvement.

Break In (Occultic)

Level: 1d6

Skill: Stealth or Lockpicking

Effect: You've got an easy way in and out of your target's mansion or other secure location. The Level of this Cypher is the number of things your party can accomplish while inside before getting noticed, such as stealing a specific object, pilfering various valuables, or planting evidence of some kind.

Intrusion: You get caught on your way out.

Called Away (Occultic)

Level: 1d6

Skill: Persuasion

Effect: You convince those in the right positions to send your target away from court to take care of some important or made up task.

Intrusion: You are sent away as well.

Cat's Paw (Occultic)

Level: 1d10

Skill: Persuasion

Effect: A target individual is convinced to make a political move on your behalf. You grant this character a Cypher from among those your party controls, and they run off to implement the maneuver. The Level of this Cypher is the maximum Level of target you can affect.

Intrusion: Your cat's paw does something wildly unexpected with your Cypher.

Clandestine Meeting (Anoetic)

Level: 1d6

Effect: You set up a one on one meeting with someone. No guards, no allies. Just you and them.

Intrusion: They try to attack you at the meeting.

Ear to the Ground (Anoetic)

Level: 1d6

Effect: You get inside information about a "political" topic of your choice - who is the queen sleeping with, how many guards does the duke have, etc.

Intrusion: Your rivals hear what topic you're asking around about.

Elected Office (Occultic)

Level: 1d10

Skill: Etiquette

Effect: You arrange to get elected or appointed to a position of authority. The Level of this Cypher determines how important the position is (3 = jester, 6 = dignitary, 9 = duke, etc.). You gain the Position long term benefit at no cost.

Intrusion: You gain the enmity of a person who was also up for the job.

Enemy of My Enemy (Occultic)

Level: 1d6 + 2

Skill: Persuasion

Effect: You arrange for two individuals of your choosing to become bitter foes. If this Intrigue Cypher is Level 7 or higher it can be used on two institutions instead of people.

Intrusion: Both of them now consider you an enemy as well.

Escape Plan (Anoetic)

Level: 1d6

Effect: You leave the current scene, without further harm.

Intrusion: One person manages to follow you.

Favor Trading (Anoetic)

Level: 1d6

Effect: You pull a few strings, allowing you to exchange Intrigue Cyphers with one of your party members however you see fit, within the limitations of your Cypher caps.

Intrusion: One of the Cyphers is lost in the process.

Friend in High Places (Anoetic)

Level: 1d6

Effect: You call in a favor from someone at court. They effectively act as a Contact for you for the rest of the game session, as well as someone who can get a few things done here and there.

Intrusion: This person is working for one of your enemies. If you don't have an enemy, you do now.

Friend in Low Places (Anoetic)

Level: 1d6

Effect: You call in a favor from someone in the criminal underworld. They effectively act as a Contact for you for the rest of the game session, as well as someone who can get a few things done here and there.

Intrusion: This person is working for one of your enemies. If you don't have an enemy, you do now.

Heist (Occultic)

Level: 1d6

Skill: Larceny or Stealth

Effect: You have inside information on how to break into a very secure location, filled with numenera, shins, or other valuables. The Level of this Cypher is the number of objects you're able to steal before someone notices what's going on.

Intrusion: You get caught by the guards or the rightful owner of the goods you're stealing.

Hideout (Anoetic)

Level: 1d6

Effect: You head to a safe house you have set up. Only characters of a Level higher than the Level of the Cypher could find you here.

Intrusion: Someone dangerous is waiting for you at the safe house.

Humiliation (Occultic)

Level: 1d6

Skill: Persuasion

Effect: You destroy the reputation of someone at court, through a carefully orchestrated set of events. This person loses one title or position for each Level of the Cypher.

Intrusion: You humiliate yourself as well, significantly harming your status at court. All court interaction tasks are at one higher Difficulty for you for the next month.

Imposter (Anoetic)

Level: 1d6

Effect: You manage to find a peasant who looks just like someone at court. If you pay them enough they'll pretend to be the target. Think of all the wonderfully illicit things you could do!

Intrusion: The peasant wants A LOT of shins.

Inheritance (Anoetic)

Level: 1d10

Effect: You happen into some shins: 100 per Level of the Cypher.

Intrusion: There are strings attached to this money; a task you must perform in the name of your House or Knighthood.

Kidnapping (Occultic)

Level: 1d6

Skill: Stealth

Effect: You set up the right circumstances to capture someone. This person must have little to no combat ability, such as a child or pampered aristocrat.

Intrusion: A witness saw your crime and attempts to blackmail you over it at great cost.

Massive Bribe (Anoetic)

Level: 1d6

Effect: You scrounge up the money or favors to pay off nearly any servant, soldier, guard, or bureaucrat. You may use this to gain access to places you shouldn't or to know things that are very secret. Use your imagination.

Intrusion: The person you bribe feels guilty and tells their boss about it after doing what you wanted.

Mentor (Anoetic)

Level: 1d6

Effect: Someone at court decides to take you under their wing for a time. This person serves as a court Contact for a number of weeks equal to the Level of this Cypher.

Intrusion: The mentor is utterly overbearing and insufferable.

Object of Desire (Anoetic)

Level: 1d6

Effect: You learn that you have within your possession something someone at court would kill for. You choose the person, the GM chooses the object.

Intrusion: The target is willing to kill you for it, and is trying to.

Otherworldly Assistance (Anoetic)

Level: 1d6

Effect: A being beyond this world, such as an extradimensional thing, a datasphere AI, or a sapient nanite cloud has taken an interest in you for unknowable reasons. They will provide assistance in a creative and strange way when you use this Cypher.

Intrusion: The otherworldly thing does some harm to your plot as well. Who could have guessed?

Quick Shins (Anoetic)

Level: 1d6

Effect: You find a way to make some quick shins. You gain 100 shins per Level of this Cypher, but you likely had to sell off something valuable to your House or Knighthood.

Intrusion: Whatever it was you sold was actually some kind of powerful Numenera and now it's causing some real problems all over court.

Rising Star (Occultic)

Level: 1d6

Skill: Persuasion

Effect: You are seen as an up and comer at court right now. You gain a new Intrigue Cypher once a week for a number of weeks equal to the Level of this Cypher. A Level 4 Rising Star Cypher gets you 4 more, but it also gets you noticed by everyone at court.

Intrusion: Your ascent gains you a powerful enemy, who sees you as a major threat.

Rumor Mill (Anoetic)

Level: 1d6

Effect: You spread a rumor of your choice among the court. This may provide an Asset on related interaction rolls.

Intrusion: The rumor changes dramatically over time. While still similar to your intent, it adds a complicating factor you don't necessarily want.

Seduction (Occultic)

Level: 1d6

Skill: Seduction

Effect: You set up the circumstances to seduce a major member of the court, powerful leader of the military, etc. For each Level of this Cypher you may ask one favor of them and they will grant it.

Intrusion: Another lover catches you two together. Jealousy ensues.

Seized Holdings (Occultic)

Level: 1d10

Skill: Warfare

Effect: You take control of a major holding of another member of the court. The Level of this Cypher determines the size of the holding (1 = home, 3 = mansion, 5 = keep, 7 = castle, 9 = palace). This can only be used if you have access to troops or guards of some kind capable of making the assault.

Intrusion: Many of your troops die in the battle, causing you trouble within your House or Knighthood.

Spy (Anoetic)

Level: 1d6

Effect: You have someone spy on your target, learning what they're up to in general or some specific fact about their life. Your choice.

Intrusion: The spy is caught just after sending you a report. The caught spy likely rats you out.

Tip Off (Anoetic)

Level: 1d6

Effect: Someone decides to provide you with information you didn't know you needed.

Intrusion: The information puts you on a bit of a wild seskii chase. It's possible that this whole thing was a distraction set up by your enemies.

Valuable Information (Anoetic)

Level: 1d6

Effect: You possess extremely useful information, to the right person. You could perhaps trade this information with them for a favor.

Intrusion: The information is actually false.

Wrest Control Away (Occultic)

Level: 1d10

Skill: Persuasion or Intimidation

Effect: You forcibly take control of an organization. The Level of this Cypher determines the importance of the kind of group you can grab (3 = a minor noble clique, 6 = a relatively important bureaucracy, 9 = a knighthood or army).

Intrusion: Someone powerful notices your machinations and takes offense at your ambition.



Chapter II:

~Blood & Lines~

A House of Cards

Nobility has not always ruled the day in the Ninth World. There have been times and places where those of so-called noble birth were not the de facto leaders and beneficiaries of society. Over time, those who had advantages to power, through numenera or unusual abilities, tended to take the reins. As centuries passed, families with inherent powers or storehouses of important artifacts came to become known for those things. They came to rule because they had what others didn't.

The nobles of this emerging age are unlike those of our own world's medieval period. They are a breed apart. Just as pompous, vainglorious, and ignorant, they possess something unique. Sometimes it's a numenera, sometimes it's a symbiotic creature. Sometimes it's a "magical" curse of the blood that some see as a blessing.

In any particular case the circumstances that brought the family into prominence are unique and steeped in mystery. The strange nature of each House creates paranoia, secrecy, and isolationism. It is us against them, say each of the Houses, and they believe it because it's true. Waging a war of influence and status that spills out into the world as assassination, actual war, and violent overthrow, they are the true monsters of the Ninth World.



~House Apoksis~

Many weep at the loss of greatness humanity has suffered, living as children lost in the darkness. House Apoksis scoffs at such foolishness, calling those who pine for a forgotten age soft and useless. Those who live in the Ninth World are a part of a great moment in history, when human beings standing on the ashes and bones of their ancestors pick themselves up, kick the dust from their clothes, and build something grand and new.

No other House or governing structure is as talented or focused on relearning the lost arts of technical knowhow as the Apoksis. Engineering, mathematics, operation and application of the numenera, all these come under the inquisitive eye of House Apoksis, and this expertise has made them very rich and very powerful.

Most believe that House Apoksis is full of talented artificers who, given access to the best educations and all the funding they could need, become the Steadfast's premiere architects, mathematicians and engineers. The truth is that for the last century and a half, the House has been under the direction of an ancient AI named Yangin who offers its knowledge and expertise to members of the family for a price.

When children of House Apoksis reach puberty, they make a journey to the Star Dome, seat of the House. The Star Dome gains its name from the great hemispherical structure that dominates the house. During the day, the dome reflects an unknown night sky, clear and ever changing. During the night, the dome's reflection changes to an iridescent violet color that shines like a beacon. Once the child arrives at the house, they are taken down into the vaults, where Yangin's automatons maintain several work room laboratories. Yangin then implants the child with a direct neural interface linked to its consciousness that allows it to transfer knowledge and images as needed.

Appearing as well dressed inventors, the family travels all the world, offering advice on a variety of projects.



Besides charging a premium for their services, House Apoksis often requires that they be able to install one of their mechanical sculptures in various locations. Always different, the sculptures seem to serve no practical purpose. Often made up of many different materials, they contain complex self-moving parts and bizarre, seemingly useless gears. In reality, the AI is having the family install these devices around the Steadfast as a way of taking over the remnant technology from past civilizations.

Rise to Power

If the rumors are to be believed, the founder of House Apoksis was a drunkard who won the Star Dome palace in a game of dice. Whether or not one believes the tale, the fact remains that after acquiring the house, the Apoksis family quickly gained prominence around the land as technical experts for hire.

Some speculate that the family discovered an ancient vault containing lost knowledge from a previous age, and spend their time rifling through its secrets. The Order of Truth has on numerous occasions begged access to the family vaults. They are always turned away. There is even a rumor that the Order tried to infiltrate the house, and that all of the agents perished upon reaching the vaults. Both the Order and House Apoksis deny such claims, but tension certainly exists between the two.

"I have little time for your petty games. Just tell me what you want and be off with you."

-Leah Apoksis

Influence and Holdings

The House puts little value in large numbers of holdings, preferring to receive shins for their technical skills and innovations. Need a bridge over an impassable river, House Apoksis is there. Need water

for your crops, well wouldn't an aqueduct from the mountains be just the thing. Many of the nobility have come to see the presence of an Apoksis sculpture on their lands as a sign of wealth and prestige, for only the most powerful can afford their services.

Very rarely, the House will seek to acquire new lands, offering access to their formidable knowledge in compensation. These acquisitions rarely make sense to those outside the family for they infrequently contain valuable resources or strategic locations. Most think this to be the fumbling of a naïve academic house, but some have begun to ask the question: "What do they know that we do not?"

Ties to Other Houses

House Apoksis has ties to almost every noble family in the Steadfast. At some point or another, those in power must turn to the Apoksis for the expertise. In the recent decade House Moirana has been heavily employing the Apoksis in designing new weapons and siege equipment.



Actively opposed to House Apoksis is House Narrkonis. Given the disease which gives them special relationship with numenera, House Narrkonis has stumbled upon part of the purpose for the mechanical sculptures. While they don't know about the "data god," they are aware that the sculptures can exert force over the numenera, and actively campaign against House Apoksis and their technicians.

Recently Yangin has become concerned that the technological eyes employed by House Iiama might be able to detect the transmissions that the AI sends to the members of the family. Yangin has begun work on a way to neutralize this technology, and desires the family to acquire it a pair of the eyes, preferably with a live specimen attached.

Major Players

Leah Apoksis. High Lord of House Apoksis, Leah spends most of her time in the family palace, sketching out designs for useful inventions. Everything from sculpture to civil engineering can be found in her work room, which looks more like an attic stuffed full of many generations worth of junk. Leah has a hard time focusing on the mundane details of running the House, preferring to work on designs from her latest download from Yangin. To help with the task, Leah has programmed a mechanical bird named Chrip to help her remember the various tasks she needs to attend to.

Crothus Apoksis. Crothus is the weapons expert who has been tasked with working with House Moirana. Possessing a somewhat cold and logical outlook, Crothus takes pleasure in designing the most efficient weapons possible. Many have come to fear the designs coming out of Crothus' workshop, and some have even named him "war criminal."

Irene Apoksis. Famed for architecture and sculpture, Irene has made a name for herself designing fantastic buildings in the largest cities around the Steadfast. Particularly well known for her marble statues, few realize that she has placed numenera within them, allowing the House to see and hear what goes on around them.

Apoksis Focus

Serves a Hidden Master

You are a devoted servant of Yangin, and for your loyalty you are rewarded. Constantly fed information from the Datasphere, you are a conduit to information from earth's ancient past. The data come so fast you can hardly understand most of it. You've learned to enter a meditative state to best receive the information flow and piece together your strange god's wishes.

Suggested Minor Effect: You recall a small piece of useful information related to your current task.

Suggested Major Effect: You experience a memory of someone performing this task in a bygone age, granting you one bonus level of skill in the task for one roll.

Suggested GM Intrusion: Yangin provides you with instructions as to what you must do to please it. The task usually involves placing a particular numenera at a particular location. Should you dally in completing this task, you will lose access to the benefits of your Focus until the task is done.

Connection: Choose one other PC. This character can get through to you even when you have entered the data trance, awakening or alerting you to dangers. They can even attempt to talk you down from a combat trance as a Difficulty 4 persuasion task.

Tier One

Trance. You are trained in the meditation skill. You may use it to enter a deep trance state, which allows you to better understand the information your neural link provides. Entering a "data trance" for ten minutes grants you an Asset on your next technical task, such as repair, crafts, or numenera. While in this trance however, you are essentially helpless. Enabler.

Tier Two

Answers (2 Intellect points). You ask Yangin a question with a simple answer. The god will respond to you after you've completed your next task for it (as per the suggested GM Intrusion above). Action.

Tier Three

Unearth (3 Intellect points). You learn the direction and distance of the nearest small numenera device, items such as Oddities, Cyphers, and hand-held Artifacts. Alternatively you may spend 5 points and learn similar information about the nearest large numenera machine. Action.

Tier Four

Combat Trance (4 Intellect points). You enter a walking trance for ten minutes, during which time you become a killing machine. The GM takes over control of your character, having you battle anyone nearby, and dealing 2 additional damage on each hit. Action to initiate.

Tier Five

Dataflow (5 Intellect points). You force your connection to the Datasphere out into a nearby numenera device or automaton, overloading it with information. The dataflow disables the device for one hour. Action.

Tier Six

Cut Connection (6 Intellect points). You sever your connection to the Datasphere and your god. Doing so has its disadvantages, but the upside is that you become attuned to the physical world, rather than the world of information. For the next three hours your maximum Intellect pool is five lower and your maximum Speed pool is five higher. Action.

Data Mastery. You are specialized in meditation. Enabler.

~House Athana~

The patient path is the one that leads to the greatest reward. These words have guided House Athana for centuries. Ruled by an elite circle of immortal elders, no other house is as good at taking the long view as House Athana.

Bred for exceptional beauty and grace, children of the house are often considered nothing more than well trained beasts of burden whose purpose is unending service to the elders of the family. In the most extreme cases, youth are selected to become hosts for the elders, who completely destroy their personalities. Only a select few every generation are talented enough and ambitious enough to be selected for the process of transition. This process is a closely guarded secret of the House, with most members of the family kept in the dark.

When a family member is gifted the rite of transition, they are taken deep within the bowels of the house to the Vault of Memories. A large ovoid chamber made of a silvery metallic substance, the Vault is dominated by a tall translucent violet crystal pillar known as the Chamber of Souls. When they place their hands upon the pillar, their consciousness is imprinted, allowing them to transition into new hosts whenever they please – usually when they grow tired of their current body.

“Patience, child. Patience. The time will come when you can make your revenge. In the interim, have you noticed your rival’s wife eyeing you with a smile? Do not give in to her seduction, but make him think you might.

He’ll notice her interest in you, causing paranoia and strain within their marriage. Much more useful than a mere tryst. One more distraction from the game.”

-Javis Athana



While technically any human body can be used, a shared bloodline makes the process easier, allowing the elder to transfer to a relative at any distance rather than needing the body to be brought to the vault as with a stranger. As a result of so few being given the rite of transition, politics within the house are quite cutthroat, with members constantly trying to prove their worth to the elders.

Some members of the house take a different path, not trying to gain the rite of transition, but rather proving that they are just valuable enough to keep around for their limited single life.

Rise to Power

House Athana is in the unique position of having surviving members from the founding of the House some three hundred years ago. Founded in the kingdom of Navarene, the House initially consisted of a wealthy family of land barons. No different from any other noble house, the destiny of the Athana was forever changed when the current leader of the House, Javis Athana, took power.

Wanting to make a name for himself, Javis gained a productive piece of land from another family by marrying the only daughter of the deteriorating lord. At first this seemed to be like any other land grab, but soon it was discovered that there laid within the land of this family an ancient grey fortress predating the existence of the Steadfast by many hundreds, if not thousands, of years.

Excited by this discovery, Javis quickly transferred the family to this fortress, naming it the Grey Keep. Soon after the move, Javis discovered the Vault of Memories and unlocked the use of the Chamber of Souls. No one knows when the first transition occurred, but since that time the most successful, ruthless, and ambitious members of the house have enjoyed immortality.

Influence and Holdings

House Athana has grown from its humble roots as land barons into a large and thriving enterprise with its fingers in many pies around the Steadfast. Still highly influential in Navarene, the House has also sought to have members of the family placed within the hierarchy of the Amber Papacy and the Order of Truth.

The family has a unique tactic when it comes to gaining influence among the other Houses and nobility of the Steadfast. They are a huge promoter of interfamily marriage, often offering substantial dowries for other families to marry their various children. They then wait until offspring are born to that House and use their unique abilities to possess the newest member of the “family” and use their new body to gain greater power for the Athana. This tactic has given the House access to the secrets behind the other Houses, making the Athana one of the most well-informed families in the Steadfast.

Deep within the Grey Keep lays the secret office of records, where the complex genealogy of the family resides. Most recently, the House has been focusing on acquiring access to and knowledge of the numenera, believing that control of the former wonders will determine who will rule in the coming centuries.

Ties to Other Houses

House Athana is one of the best connected Houses in the Steadfast, given the family’s desire to have blood ties to all other nobility. In public, House Athana is often seen as a builder of compromise, seeking to build peace between the other Houses. Anyone with historical knowledge will quickly point out that often times this “peace” benefits only the Athana, usually far past the memories of any current political players.

The few exceptions seem to be House Filodoxis, whose children seem immune to the possession

technology of transition, and House Laythra, who flat out refuse to marry anyone from the House, the latter making the Athana elders suspect that they have learned of the family’s abilities.

Major Players

Javis Athana. Absolute autocrat of the family, Javis is currently occupying the body of Nathan Athana, a handsome young man who recently “inherited” the title of High Lord within the family. Javis is patient and slow to act, preferring to wait out political rivals and enemies of the house. His patience may give him a somewhat benign façade, but Javis is absolutely ruthless when it comes to gaining power for the House.

Elsbeth Athana. One of the first members of the House with whom Javis shared the secret of transition. Elsbeth has dedicated herself to the mastery of the numenera and lost technologies. She currently occupies the body of Gavin Athana, a middle aged man who was placed within the leadership of the Order of Truth.

Elaina Athana. Preferring to wear the bodies of elderly matrons, Elaina has taken it upon herself to run the family’s extensive breeding programs. She currently occupies the body of Maria Athana, a well-known busybody and matchmaker within the nobility of the Steadfast.



Athana Descriptors

Immortal

You have employed the numenera of your House to move the patterns of your brain into a new host, granting you youth with the wisdom of age. You have lived hundreds, potentially even a thousand years, and this vast knowledge gives you a decided edge against youngsters playing at politics and intrigue.

You gain the following benefits:

Wisdom: +4 to your Intellect pool.

Old Memories: You are trained in an area of knowledge of your choice.

Arrogance: Your age makes you scoff at the actions of lesser beings. You may only spend Effort when it's clear that you must. You should never spend Effort for seemingly simple tasks.

Initial link to the Starting Adventure (choose one):

1. You've manipulated these fools into doing your bidding, now you're coming along to make sure the job is done properly.
2. You're shopping for a new body.
3. Your family's legacy is threatened by this group's foes.
4. One of the players is secretly one of your long lost descendants. You're protecting them out of a sense of duty to the family and your own legacy.

Youthful

You are a young member of House Athana, with a strong and attractive body. This means that you are being groomed to receive the mind of one of the elders of the House, who prefer blood relatives as vessels for their brain patterns. It's only a matter of time before you lose everything you are, but it is your duty to

serve the House until then, maintaining and advancing this important body.

You gain the following benefits:

Attractive: +1 to your Intellect pool.

Lithe: +1 to your Speed pool.

Vigorous: +1 to your Might pool.

Talent: You are trained in one additional skill of your choice.

Familial Destiny: You will eventually be chosen to become the host of an elder mind, at which point you will lose this Descriptor and gain the Immortal one. At that point you will gain a whole new personality, which means if you want you can change your Focus to a different one.

Initial link to the Starting Adventure (choose one):

1. One of the other PCs is in a House you wish you had been born into. You are obsessed with this House and how much more civilized they are compared to yours.
2. You have a strange knowledge of what the adventure involves. You think perhaps the memory and mind transference process has already begun, causing you to know things you shouldn't.
3. You see this group as a means of doing something dangerous. You wish to test your limits before your mind is destroyed.
4. You have resigned yourself as a tool of the family. They told you to join this group, and you obey as always.



~House Ethis~

House Ethis rules the arena of vice in the Ninth World, and rules it with a velvet lined glove. Originating from a humble farming estate, the family eventually began using their land to produce drugs in all their many forms, increasing their wealth many times over. One of the wealthiest families, House Ethis is all about providing the darkest desires a person could want, given the right price. This has put the family in a unique position - one of loathing, fear and desire.

While any vice is up for grabs, the newest and most popular among the family is blindshift, a drug synthesized from a razorfly cocoon. Those who partake in the drug literally mutate, taking on bizarre animal visages. The current fashion is the blend that brings on reptilian features. The family proclaims that the effects of the drug are temporary, and indeed, after a few hours, most people revert. What they don't advertise is that chronic use of the drug can make the effects permanent, and that no one knows how many times it is before permanent change occurs.

With the family's power, wealth, and influence, and the criminals' contacts and personnel, House Ethis has become a sort of parent organization for vice in the steadfast. Playing with such dangerous characters has led the family to adopt a somewhat ruthless attitude, where they rule the streets with an iron rod. The family is also one of the noble houses that heavily relies upon slaves, employing them on their great drug plantations.

"Never let them see you grin. Not until you're ready to strike. Play the sleeping serpent as you carefully plot your move. Timing is everything."

-Isadora Ethis



Rise to Power

The rise of the House can all be traced back to the son of the House's founder, Kellen Ethis. Kellen, tired of the meager wealth his family possessed, began selling blood pine powder to his many noble friends, a drug found from the trees located on the family estate. When Kellen inherited the family lands, he expanded his business by planting fields that produced other intoxicants. This grew into a thriving business, particularly when Kellen started using slave labor to cut costs.

At first the family was purely interested in supply, leaving distribution to other "merchants". Eventually, the turmoil involved in the drug trade led the Ethis to take a stronger hand with the distributors, involving themselves in all aspects of vice economics.

The road to their empire of crime was a long and bloody one, for many who sold intoxicants were displeased by the intrusion of the nobility into this classically low born arena. Unfortunately for these merchants, the Ethis brought with them armies and legitimacy, and were able to swiftly take over running distribution.

Influence and Holdings

Of all of the houses, House Ethis is the most interested in acquiring arable land, which they use to produce their various crops. The Ethis are the largest producer of alcohol on the Steadfast, growing grapes for wine, grains for beer, and honey for mead.

The family is also heavily involved in the flesh trade, needing lots of workers for the great estates at little cost. Though slavery is not a primary business for them, the Ethis have made a brisk trade in breeding and selling slaves, a practice that demeans them in the eyes of their fellow nobility.

Few of the other families have as many contacts among the low born of the cities, an advantage the Ethis use often when politicking against the other

houses. This is particularly helpful when searching for secret information. Many nobles ignore the constant presence of their servants and other employees, a costly mistake.

Ties to Other Houses

The decadent nature of the other houses makes the business the Ethis engage in very popular. The contacts the family makes can lead to some interesting adventures, making Ethis children popular among the other nobility's idle youth. On the other hand, most people come to realize that one house knows all of the unfortunate details about the darker indulgences of the nobility. While this has put some ill at ease, the Ethis are powerful enough to be feared rather than shunned.

The Ethis have always had good relations with House Thanosa, who love the thrill that can come from hanging out with the family.

Major Players

Isadora. The brains behind the family business, her intelligence is matched only by her beauty and cunning. Isadora keeps the various elements of the family business in line, controlling everything from the estates to the city distributors and the pimps.

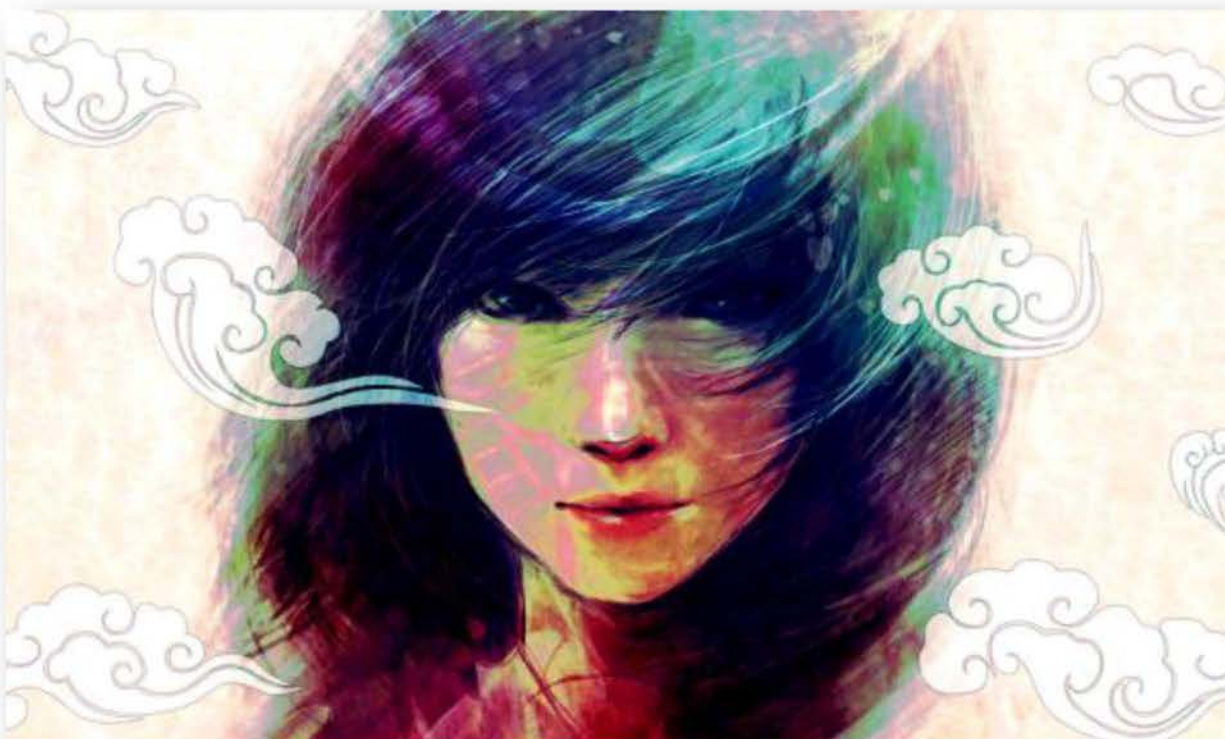
Feigning a polite exterior, she often lures others into thinking her the meek lady only to ruthlessly lay into those who oppose her.

Christophe. Christophe is the consummate play boy, making runs around the various youth of the court. His dalliances are tolerated because of the product he is able to push and the gossip he picks up from the second and third children of the other nobility.

Gilliam. Gilliam is the enforcer of the family, known for his brutality and bestial nature. A heavy user of blindshift, Gilliam's features possess a reptilian nature, adding to his intimidating nature. This suits Gilliam just fine as he often is called on to deal with some very rough characters in the business.

Ethis Descriptors

NOTE: Ryan Chaddock Games does not endorse or intend to glamorize addiction to harmful substances. However, it is our firm belief that drug addiction and other adult themes should be explored, so that we as a culture come to think about these issues, rather than sweeping them under the rug.



Addicted

You have begun taking blindshift, the drug your family mines and distributes to the world. You've become addicted, needing the whisper just to feel "normal," but for you normal now includes paranoia and mild hallucinations. Additionally, you've begun to change physically. Your eyes are yellow and oddly shaped, like those of a reptile.

In time (whenever seems appropriate) you will slowly turn into a giant serpent, replacing this Descriptor with Serpentine.

You gain the following benefits:

Alert: +2 to your Speed pool

You are trained in perception and ignore all vision based penalties due to adverse conditions, such as smoke, dust, or weather.

Euphoric: So long as you have had a dose of blindshift recently, you do not suffer the negative effects of being Impaired on the damage track. To be clear, you are still Impaired, you just don't pay extra for Effort.

Inability: Each day you must get a dose of blindshift. Until you have taken your daily dose, you are irritable and impatient, suffering a one step penalty on all tasks which require patience or interacting positively with other people.

Initial link to the Starting Adventure (choose one): 1. You've heard that the journey will take you to a far off place, where blindshift is not yet smuggled and sold. A business opportunity for your family.

2. You owe a significant sum of money to one of the other PCs.

3. You've perceptively noticed that the group is up to something and weaseled your way into working with them. Who knows, might be fun.

4. You're pretty sure one of your fellow PCs would do well if they too took blindshift...

Serpentine

Your addiction to blindshift has changed you. Your arms and legs have shrunk a bit, your skin is covered in scales, and your face is that of a serpent. Most people find you horrific, but your family considers this condition the height of loyalty to the House.

It should be noted that those not of your House who become Serpentine have grey scales, while you possess scales of a color of your choice upon taking this Descriptor. Your House takes this as validation of their authority over all other addicts of the drug.

On the positive side, you no longer need to take blindshift, as your body produces its own form of the drug.

This Descriptor should not be taken at character creation. It should be eased into from the Addicted Descriptor, through the course of play.

You gain the following benefits:

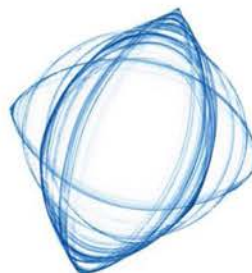
Wiry: +2 to your Might pool

You are trained in unarmed strikes, and deal one extra damage when employing your new claws and massive teeth.

Scales: Your scales provide one point of Armor, which stacks with any armor worn.

Euphoric: You do not suffer the negative effects of being Impaired on the damage track. To be clear, you are still Impaired, you just don't pay extra for Effort.

Inability: You are a strange creature, with an intimidating look about you, causing you to suffer a one step penalty on all positive social tasks.



~House Filodoxis~

Cunning. Ambition. Power. No other house venerates these ideals more than House Filodoxis. Power at the heart of the Pytharon Empire, House Filodoxis has spread like cool wind across the Steadfast.

Consummate courtiers, members of House Filodoxis have perfect manners, perfect taste, are perfect for every occasion. This behavior is drilled into them from the time they can toddle and their training continues for the majority of their development into young adulthood.

The family seems to possess preternatural abilities to influence the emotions of others, whether it's seducing someone or intimidating them. This ability is granted to them by their familiar, a sea creature implanted in them upon reaching puberty. These beings, known to the Filodoxis as the Arpak, are predatory by nature, and as a person calls upon their abilities, some of that nature infects the host, making the oldest and most ambitious members of the family very cold and calculating.

"Few know or even suspect that their strings are pulled so easily. A tug here and there and the ignorant dance and dance.

Look at this one - blurting out his desires as though he weren't surrounded by a nest of monsters. He has no idea..."

-Lily Filodoxis

Using the gifts of one's familiar is not a simple process: a host must gain permission from the Arpak, usually at some cost or task. This communication takes place psychically, and while at first many seek to thwart the will of their familiars, soon the addictive abilities granted to them make resistance a laughable possibility.



As hosts for the Arpak, members of house Filodoxis quickly become deathly thin and pale, given the need to support the parasite. This appearance often confuses other nobles since the Filodoxis have huge appetites, consuming large quantities of food at a single sitting, and snacking constantly.

The Arpak are capable of engaging in communication with each other, so when two members of the house meet, there are often two conversations going on at one time. None of family is sure what plans the Arpak have for the Ninth World, but it seems clear that they are supportive of Pytharon dominance and by extension Filodoxis dominance for now.

Rise to Power

House Filodoxis actually comes from very humble beginnings given their current prominence within the empire. Founded by a small clan of fishermen, the Filodoxis quickly rose to power once the deal between them and the Arpak was struck. No one in the family remembers if the family entered the deal willingly or if some fishing accident unwittingly brought them into contact with the Arpak, but at this point it seems to matter very little.

Soon after the first of the family was implanted, they were able to quickly secure land and status for themselves. This brought the newly founded House to the attention of the then emperor, which drew the Filodoxis into the politics of imperial Pytharon court. After that point the House came to be the power behind the throne, and has directed the actions of the empire ever since.

The presence of House Filodoxis has become ubiquitous among the nobility, with every event of historical note having some involvement from the House. Some have come to resent the presence of the Filodoxis, but more have come to see them as a stabilizing force throughout the Steadfast.



Ties to Other Houses

The House has created an interesting paradox amongst the nobility of the Steadfast. The other houses are naturally distrustful of the Filodoxis because of their clear ambition, and yet have come to rely upon the deal brokering the House engages in. Of course, few of the other Houses realize how they are being manipulated, so they have come to a begrudging acceptance of the House.

Influence and Holdings

While possessing significant land holdings throughout the Steadfast, particularly within the Pytharon Empire, House Filodoxis prefers to cultivate favor and shares in the ventures of the other houses and nobility. Want to start a new trading business? The Filodoxis will loan you the capital. Need help funding an expedition to discover some long-lost numenera? They've got the people and the supplies.

While it is known that this help always comes at a cost, the Filodoxis always seem able to make a deal. This has earned them no few enemies among the other Houses, but these rivalries never seem to get anywhere.

House Filodoxis has come under scrutiny by the Order of Truth, which seems concerned at the level of global influence the House appears to wield. In turn, the family has assigned a whole branch dedicated to indebting the Order to the family, a venture which has proven quite successful. Recently, this has meant that the House has been helping to fund the navarene crusade against the gaians, and focus their efforts within the navarene court.

House Filodoxis has become concerned about House Iiama, for they seem to be able to detect the manipulation of the family familiars. They have also begun a secret war against the Laythra, who seem to possess a little too much information. This war is still very much in the shadows, but has led to an intense campaign of blackmailing, and has already resulted in one assassination.

Major Players

Lily Filodoxis. Currently stationed in the court of Navarene, Lily has been tasked with the subversion of the Order of Truth. No small task, but an important one, which she relishes. Lily has recently come to possess an artifact that allows her to view and hear the goings on of distant locations, particularly those surrounded by large amounts of numenera. This has helped tremendously while dealing with the Order.

Madame Inakov Filodoxis. Headmistress of the family finishing school, the Madame is responsible for training all the new members of the House in the courtly graces required of them. She also happens to be the keeper of the brining pools where the offspring of the Arpak are bred and where the children of the House are implanted. Given the traumatic and painful experience that implantation is, the Madame is universally feared within the House.

Mikkail Filodoxis. High Lord of House Filodoxis, Mikkail governs the House from the capital of the Pytharon Empire. Unique amongst the family, Mikkail has always had a strong connection to his familiar, granting him extra abilities not mastered by the others. Among these powers is the ability to communicate to anyone who is host to an Arpak. This has allowed Mikkail to direct the actions of the family across the stretch of the Steadfast.

Filodoxis Descriptor

Symbiotic

You possess within you one of the family's secret allies: the symbiotic organisms called the Arpak. This creature has been growing inside you and speaking to you in your darkest hours. It will help you from time to time, so long as your agenda matches up with its.

You should work with your GM to roleplay your interactions with the Arpak, who speaks to you telepathically, offering you unsolicited advice and tempting offers of power and guidance.

You gain the following benefits:

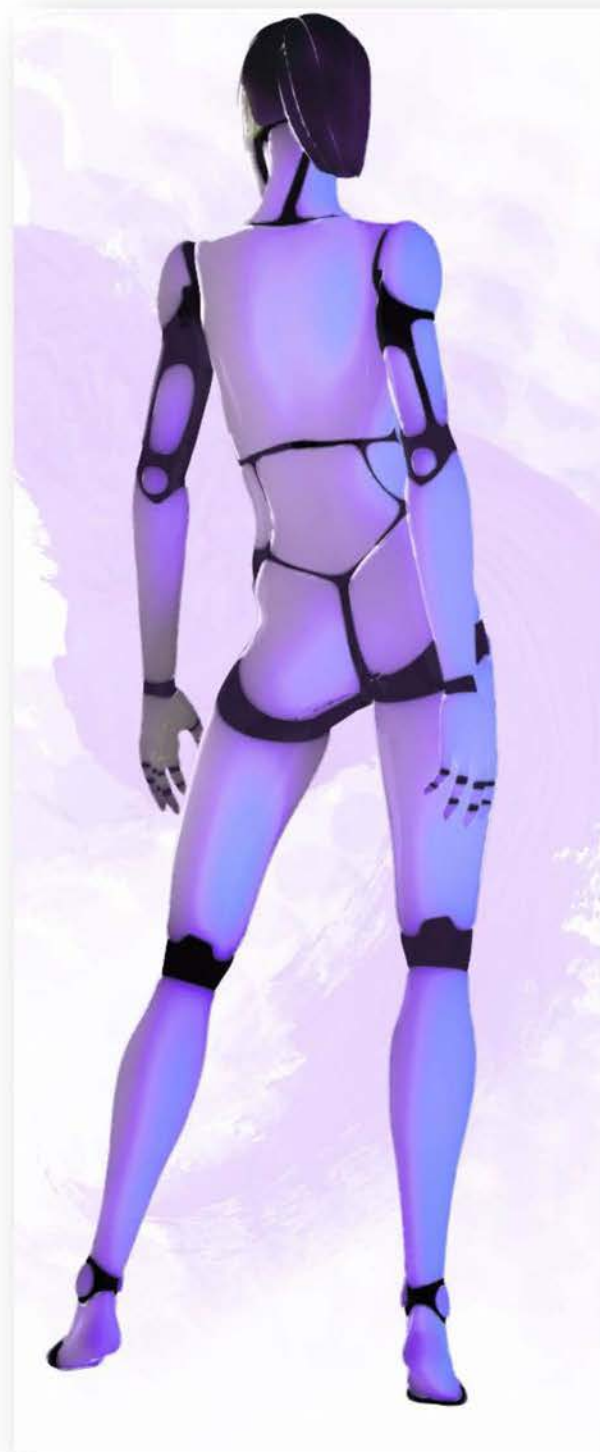
Two Minds: +2 to your Intellect pool.

Pheromone Control: You enjoy an Asset on social interactions with other humans, so long as they can smell you.

A Little Help: Once per day your Arpak can allow you to take one of your recovery rolls without the need for the usual rest period associated with it. Doing so takes a round of negotiation with the Arpak, and a promise to take some particular action. Should you fail to uphold your promise, the Arpak may decide not to work with you again for some time.

Arpaks generally want their hosts to take power over other humans, swiftly and with ruthlessness. They have no concern for morality, simply cutthroat thirst for power.

Inability: You suffer a one step penalty on all actions taken against other Arpak symbiots, such as many other members of your House. Your Arpak acts against you, keeping you from thwarting others of their kind.



~House Iiama~

Neither force of arms nor command of the numenera grant the power necessary to rule the nations of the Steadfast. Commerce and trade are what provide the material resources required to field armies, maintain technologies, fund expeditions. No other house has embraced the power of trade more than House Iiama, merchant princes of the Ninth World.



Distinctive amongst the nobility, members of House Iiama all possess strange metal eyes, each set different from the others. Many believe that these eyes are merely decorative or perhaps the result of some ancient mutation. The truth is that the strange eyes gifted to each member of the family translate the brainwaves of others into readable data.

This real time information flow allows members of the house to evaluate the mental state of those they are in negotiation with, giving them an advantage when engaging in trade. Few are aware of this advantage, believing the house to be simply gifted in the art of trade.

House Iiama has embraced the role of merchants, dismissing the other families as being short sighted. Wealthier than many of their contemporaries, the House likes to flaunt their wealth, building grand houses and wearing the most expensive fashions. They also affect a ruthless demeanor, believing that anything is justifiable if it brings wealth to the House.

Rise to Power

House Iiama was founded by a sailor named Aaron One Eye, who ended up in a cove after his ship sank 185 years ago. Looking to get away from the sun, Aaron stumbled into a cave and discovered a strange room deep inside. Floored with metal, the cave contained shelves full of thousands of transparent jars, each containing floating metal eyes. No one in the family remembers how Aaron figured out how to

install the eyes, but from that day forward the fortunes of the family have only gone up.

Wanting to protect the valuable cove, House Iiama has always focused on maintaining a large naval fleet. Mostly used for mercantile activities, the family has had occasion to use their naval power to bully others into making a deal.

In particular the family is interested in opening new ports for trade, and has little patience for those seeking to limit or control the flow of foreign goods. House Iiama has even been known to fund rebellions in kingdoms where rulers try to prevent them from trading their wares.

"It is easy to intimidate those whose emotions bleed into the air. If one push doesn't draw the right colors, another will. Let the colors of their minds guide your wrath and the world will bend to your baleful gaze."

-Prince Nicholas Iiama

Influence and Holdings

House Iiama boasts some of the finest palaces and homes within or without the Steadfast due to their immense wealth and ostentatious style. While the family might value gaudy properties for show, they mostly seek out holdings which will add to the House's wealth. This includes factories where goods are produced, plantations and estates where raw materials are harvested and ports to easily move the goods around the world.

In those areas where the family can't outright buy control, they instead purchase influence to ensure that their ships and traders receive precedence over other merchants. Few turn away the offer of Iiama wealth, nor are they willing to face their wrath.

House Iiama maintains one of the largest naval fleets in the Steadfast, which they use for commerce as well as military purposes. The family has been known to contract their fleet for use by other kingdoms that lack the resources to maintain much of a navy. Most of the fleet is maintained by shareholders who sign under the House. This provides a somewhat loose hierarchy, but proves to allow for more adaptable captains and traders.

Ties to Other Houses

House Iiama has at one point or another traded with all of the other noble houses. As the family tends to come out on top during negotiations, these trades leave a sour taste in the mouths of most others. On the other hand, many families grudgingly accept the need for a flowing economy, and are secretly pleased that they don't have to engage in such meaningless activities.

Recently House Iiama has made an alliance with House Filodoxis. This alliance is predicated on House Filodoxis helping open up more trade routes over land for the Iiama. In return, House Iiama has used their trade power to put pressure on those who are resistant to the pressure of House Filodoxis.

The family has come into conflict with House Apoksis, who won't allow the Iiama to act as agents for their services. This, coupled with the strange patterns they see surrounding the Apoksis, has caused them to view that House as a threat.

Major Players

Nicholas Iiama. The leader of House Iiama has always adopted the title "prince," and Prince Nicholas is no different. In his late forties, Nicholas made a name for himself early on by forming several lucrative trade routes into the realms beyond the Steadfast. He



now operates mostly as a broker, using his gravitas and charisma to outmaneuver the other family heads.

Brigitte Iiama. Brigitte Iiama is the head captain for the House fleet. Still youthful, Brigitte is often disregarded by the stodgy members of the other noble Houses, something they usually come to regret. Though the family denies it vehemently, Brigitte is a well-known pirate, using her flag ship the Ocean's Fury to raid heavy cargo ships belonging to those she doesn't like. This has caused no few problems for the Prince.

Jakson Iiama. Jakson is a well-known dealer in prior world artifacts, particularly those of numeneric origin. Constantly buying and selling, he is particularly interested in new objects which no one else has ever seen. He often works with the Order of Truth, and is willing to pay top dollar to anyone bringing him something new and interesting.

Iiama Focus

Sees Through Metal Eyes

The Iiama family gains their power through a tradition of cybernetic surgery, performed by the greatest physicians in The Steadfast. Installed at an early age, the metallic eyes of the Iiama are often upgraded as they get older, with enhancements befitting their station within the family.

Suggested Minor Effect: You notice an interesting tidbit of information, such as a clue to the subject's earlier activities.

Suggested Major Effect: You get a good sense of the subject's changing moods, allowing you to predict how they're about to change.

Suggested GM Intrusion: Your eyes overheat, causing temporary blindness for the next hour.

Connection: Choose one other PC. This person knows how to maintain your eyes, should they become damaged.

Tier One

Brain Scan (1 Intellect point). You scan the brain waves of a living target within Short distance, learning their current mood. Action.

Tier Two

Glowing Vision. Your eyes can glow in the dark, allowing you to ignore one step of the penalty for attempting to see in darkness and granting you an Asset on Intimidation tasks. Enabler.

Tier Three

Reticle (1 Intellect point). A heads up display assists your vision, granting you an Asset on visual Perception tasks this round. Enabler.

Lie Detector (3 Intellect points). You study the brain waves of a living target within Immediate distance, determining if the last thing they said (within the last round) was a lie. Action.

Tier Four

Emotion Emulation (4 Intellect points). You immediately feel the emotions of the closest person to you. This grants you an Asset on any social manipulation attempts you make against them for the next ten minutes. Action.

Tier Five

Motion Tracking. Your heads-up display grants you an Asset on ranged attacks, and allows you to ignore attack penalties due to foliage and other soft cover. Enabler.

Tier Six

Emotion Burst (6 Intellect points). You fire twin blasts of energy from your eyes at a target within Long range, dealing 5 damage and, if they are living, causing them to feel whatever emotion you are experiencing. If you are currently using the Emotion Emulation power with the target, this can cause a kind of emotional feedback loop, stunning the target for one round. Action.



~House Laythra~

Amateurs in the game of politics and power will tell you that those with the biggest purse or the largest army determine the fate of the mighty houses. House Laythra will tell you that one secret is better than a thousand knights and that good blackmail can buy you a kingdom. That is, of course, if you could afford their fee.



The Laythra pride themselves on being the most unassuming House in the battle of intrigue that rules the Steadfast. The image of a minor backwater noble family just a touch out of fashion is a façade believed by many of the players in the game. Those with wits realize that the Laythra run the widest spread information network in the Ninth World. The whisper network, as it has come to be known, is present in every seat of power within the Steadfast, and is utilized by everyone who wants to wield influence in the world.

While the family is adept at the traditional methods of spying and information brokering, its real edge comes from an ancient artifact discovered some 150 years ago: a large box filled with small devices. These numenera can be strapped to the body in “rigs,” which alter reality around them when activated. This strange phasing condition renders the wearer invisible.

A potent ability, but one that is not used lightly, for there are strange and dire consequences with prolonged use of these devices. Those who stay shifted

“Watch. Listen. But do not act until the time is right. When possible, provide information to others so that they may act in our stead. Thus they serve as our pawns in the game, while becoming indebted to us for the precious knowledge we provide.”

-Si Varr, The Watcher

too long come to find that the fabric of reality begins to break down, causing bizarre and unpredictable events to occur. The true horror of the rig is that those who chronically use it eventually become insubstantial wraiths, capable of perceiving the world, but not interacting with it. These wraiths rule the house as invisible spies and coordinators, capable of only whispering to their clients and brethren.

Rise to Power

Originally the House was little more than a minor family founded by a chancellor of a grateful monarch, who rewarded the skill of his servant by granting him a noble title and some insignificant lands. Jasper Laythra, the chancellor, was far from satisfied with this minor position, and so used his ability to ferret out the secrets of others to gain greater prominence for his burgeoning House. Jasper’s daughter and heir Sonia was the one who located the devices and figured out how to activate the rigs. Having been well-schooled in the art of intrigue by her father, Sonia quickly realized the potential the rigs held for the House.

The formation of the new wraith leaders allowed the family to expand past simple intrigue and become the true information brokers of the Steadfast. The heads of the House quickly realized that possessing so much secret knowledge was as dangerous as it was useful, and so set about making the family as innocuous and harmless seeming as possible.

Many young members of the House chafe against these restrictions, desiring to use the family power to gain grandeur and prominence within the courts. These youngsters are usually put in a position to see a double agent commit suicide in order to reinforce the need for discretion. Most only need the lesson once.

Influence and Holdings

On the surface, the Laythra possess the holdings of a minor noble family. A keep or manor house here, a market town there, a house in the capital, nothing to allude to them being amongst the most powerful of the

noble Houses. The astute observer might, however, note that all of their various holdings consistently produce income, regular as a water clock. This regularity is due entirely to the vast reserves of shins that the family possesses, tucked away in hidden vaults. Spying is a lucrative business, and the family has done well for itself.

There are rumors that the family keeps a secret vault where all of the information they gather is tucked away, ready and available to those who are able to gain access. Many have sought to infiltrate the various holdings of the Laythra in order to find this secret vault. Other are quick to point out that such a vault would be extremely vulnerable to assault, not to mention a rallying point for the enemies of the House. Regardless of the truth, those who seek to know the secrets of the House rarely live to tell the tale.

Ties to Other Houses

The Laythra hold an unprecedented understanding of the other Houses and their secrets. This knowledge has proven to be a fine line for the House to walk, balancing blackmail and promise in order to protect their very existence. On the other hand, their ability to acquire information is so good that the other Houses have failed to unite against them, fearful that one in their group might turn in trade for a choice bit of blackmail.

Recently the Laythra have come into conflict with House Apoksis, seemingly without provocation. Leaders of the family suspect that the AI who rules the Apoksis is concerned that they will stumble onto its plans.

Major Players

Si Varr. One of the original wraith members of the family, Si Varr acts as the watcher, waiting for any sign that clients are waiting the services of the whisper network. Si Varr is constantly vigilant over the upper nobility, for these signs have allowed Varr to acquire vital information about the nobles' comings and goings, especially who is romantically entangled with whom.

Sasha Laythra. Sasha is the family expert in developing and maintaining human assets, a role she relishes. She uses the disguise of the court harlot, allowing members of the court to believe that she is pumping them for information through romantic or sexual engagements. The reality is that the role allows her to be in the company of many different people without raising too much suspicion.

Uncle Lucas. Lucas Laythra is a kind portly man who often seems a bit bewildered by the goings on at court. Playing the role of the kind-hearted fool, Lucas is pitied for being so ill fit for his family. Acting the part of the country bumpkin puts Lucas in the perfect position to train the promising members of the House in the craft of intrigue and spying... especially the uses of being underestimated.



Laythra Focus

Bends Light and Space

The spymasters of House Laythra have kept the secret of their transdimensional body rigs a secret for decades. The rigs are customized for the user and only issued to members of the House. Once a Laythra learns to use their rig, comprised of a set of harnesses and plates with machinery attached and a small control panel on the wrist, they may employ the use of this Focus, becoming invisible at times. But this power comes at a cost. Reality is warped by the strange effects of the rig, and its user is subjected to the brunt of it, slowly phasing out of our reality and into another.

The Rig: You begin with the suit needed to employ these powers, which counts as light armor, conferring an Armor rating of 1. It can be worn under heavy clothes, but even then may be noticed by those who are perceptive. It's possible to upgrade the rig to medium or heavy armor by a skilled armorer, but it cannot be concealed under clothes if this is done.

Disconnection: As you progress through the Tiers of this Focus you become less and less real. At second Tier you sometimes accidentally pass through objects you lean against. At fourth Tier you might begin to have trouble eating, needing far more food to survive. At sixth Tier you undergo a complete transformation into a being dwelling in another dimension than our own, suffering a 2 step penalty on tasks in which you interact with the material world.

Suggested Minor Effect: You're able to see through all nearby walls for a moment.

Suggested Major Effect: You become insubstantial during the next attack made against you, causing it to have no effect on you.

Suggested GM Intrusion: Your rig has a malfunction, causing it to phase you down into the ground or making your clothes fall to the floor around you.

Connection: Choose one other PC. This person can see you, even when you are invisible to others.

Tier One

Blur (2 Speed points). You activate your rig, granting you two Assets on stealth tasks for the next ten minutes. Action.

Tier Two

Halt (2 Speed points). You slow your movement through space, preventing all damage from falling and allowing you to land on your feet at the end. Enabler.

Tier Three

Escape (3 Speed points). As a desperate move you simply slip through space to wherever your rig and luck will take you. You are essentially teleported to a "random" location within Short distance. Action.

Tier Four

Intangible (4 Speed points). For the next ten minutes you may not affect the world and world may not affect you. You can't be seen, though you can see the world. You cannot move while Intangible, but you can whisper to those who come near you. Action.

Tier Five

Waft (5 Speed points). While under the effects of any other ability from this Focus, you may activate this power to become unconstrained by gravity for the next 1d6 rounds. While affected, you can push off of objects to fly through the air at up to Long distance per round. Enabler.

Tier Six

Incongruence (6 Speed points). For the next ten minutes, anything you touch or pass through takes 6 ambient damage. Action.

~House Moirana~

We rule because we are better. This is the claim House Moirana has made for the last 200 years, and it is a difficult claim to argue with. Bred from superior stock, members of the House are always perfect physical specimens. From an early age, Moirana receive well-rounded educations, from strategy and personal combat to mathematics and history.

The family teaches their children to “learn, and learn well, for you never know when the simple lesson will forge an empire.” The overriding lesson in all of this is how to be the greatest conqueror, for conquest is the right of the blood.

The Moirana have a distinct advantage when it comes to their rule. Their house was built upon a mountain side that contains a spring contaminated with nanites. As a result of consuming the contaminated water, members of the house have the ability to command others with their thoughts alone.

Early in their training, this ability allows for simple commands, but for those who take the time to master their abilities, this can extend to whole armies. This is a tremendous tactical edge, for individual members of the House can pass along skill in warfare and combat to their individual soldiers, creating armies full of elite warriors all perfectly focused and organized.

A special knighthood has formed around the House, comprised of warriors who relish in allowing themselves to be taken by their lords. They have been tasked with protecting the sacred waters of the House, for it is the water that confers the gift of command to the Moirana. These knights receive special training in allowing themselves to more readily accept the control



of their masters, turning them into cold and deadly warriors.

Children of the family are sent to train at the central house, where the springs have been transformed into baths where the members of the House relax amongst those who share their perfection. Those auxiliary members of the House must prove themselves in order to receive the training and access necessary for gaining the gift of command.

Rise to Power

Conquest is the name of the game, and a game the Moirana play well. Between the abilities of the members of the House, and the fierce and loyal dedication of the Valiant Order of the Gifting Water, the family has had great success in taking over territories. Once territories are held, the Moirana prove to be able overseers, often allowing those formerly in power to rule as underlings to the family. Dissent is not tolerated however, and the Moirana are quick to eliminate anyone who complains about their new masters.

“Strength, discipline, study, action. We rule because we must, for no others are so perfect. No others make themselves superior, and thus elevated above the rest.

Who should rule, the worthy or the unworthy?
How can we not overthrow those who are not so perfect as us?”

-Matilda Moirana, The Matriarch

The Moirana were quick to see the benefit that alliance with the Order of Truth could bring, and have often lent troops and noble offspring to the various causes of the Amber Papacy. This tactic has allowed them to get away with their militaristic attitudes, as well as provided the necessary training grounds for un-blooded children.

Influence and Holdings

The implied threat of invasion by the Moirana armies is a powerful negation tactic, and one that is applied frequently by the House. A large army has large requirements, and those needs have dictated the direction the family pursues. Useful land, whether



from agriculture or from mining, is the primary focus the family takes, even to the exclusion of more lucrative options, like trade routes and cities.

Through direct conquest or negotiation, House Moirana has gained control of some of the most productive lands within the Stead Fast. Productive lands are not all that is required to generate wealth, and the Moirana are often at the mercy of the more merchant minded families they often sneeringly look down their noses at.

Ties to Other Houses

House Moirana has been in conflict with almost all of the other houses at one point or another. Their longest standing conflict is with House Terrasis, given both houses pension for militaristic stances. Many older members of the house refuse to acknowledge the accomplishments of a junior member if the young noble hasn't gone into battle against the giants. In

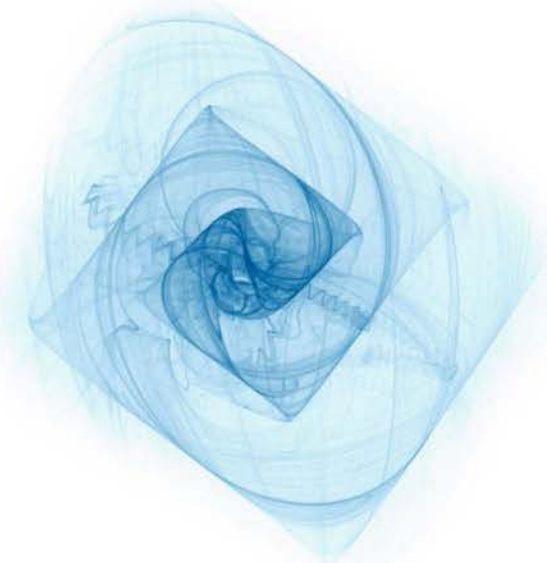
recent years, the leaders of the family have come to see the benefit of forming an alliance with House Apoksis for their technical expertise in designing new weapons for warfare.

Major Players

Matilda Moirana. Matilda is the current head of House Moirana, and is considered to be one of the finest military strategists of the modern era. An expert in logistics and army organization, Matilda rarely appears in the field of battle, preferring to possess her troops from far away keeps. This doesn't mean that she isn't a capable martial artist, something she frequently demonstrates for her underlings.

Jagen Moirana. Jagen Moirana is a specialist in hit and run warfare, preferring the use of small highly mobile units to cause disruption behind enemy lines. Considered caustic and abrasive, Jagen often employs his preferred style of warfare at court, using cutting words to keep others off balance.

Benth Moirana. Benth is the House weapons master, overseeing the combat training for all members of the family. Older than time, with a face of well-worn leather, one can hardly tell that Benth comes from noble blood. Scornful and sarcastic, Benth is always on the lookout for a young member of the family in need of having their egos deflated.



Moirana Focus

Hones Body and Mind

Practiced in the training yards and libraries of your family, you are the pinnacle of what it means to be Moirana. A philosopher-warrior, your training grants you both weapon and shield in matters of philosophy and war.

Suggested Minor Effect: Your mind becomes protected from all Intellect damage for the next ten minutes.

Suggested Major Effect: Your body becomes hardened against attacks (+1 Armor rating) for the next ten minutes.

Suggested GM Intrusion: Your philosophical training gets the better of you, causing you to hesitate while thinking about the implications of your actions or words. You suffer a one step penalty on all actions for 1d6 rounds.

Connection: Choose one other PC. This player character has a great deal of potential as a soldier or philosopher and you've decided to begin training them in such important things.

Tier One

Foundation. You are trained in the Philosophy skill, which you may use in tasks with the abilities of this Focus. Enabler.

Rhetoric (1 Intellect points). You engage a creature who can understand your language in extended conversation. The creature must be within immediate range. During your conversation, neither of you can make attacks of any kind. Action.

Tier Two

Honed Reflexes (2 Speed points). For the next hour you are trained with the weapon you hold in your hands upon activating this ability. Action.



Tier Three

Agility. You are trained in all Athletics tasks, such as running, jumping, swimming, and climbing. Enabler.

Mind Bender. You enjoy an Asset on all Persuasion tasks due to your burgeoning psychic abilities. Enabler.

Tier Four

Psychic Presence (4 Intellect points). You create an aura of power and majesty around yourself for one hour. Unless you are the only possible foe, no living, thinking, enemy will choose to attack you. They always go for your companions. Action.

Tier Five

Powerful Shout (5 Might points). As you scream with psychic force, all enemies within Immediate distance are attacked, for 5 mental damage. Action.

Tier Six

Psyche of War (6 Intellect points). You extend your presence over an army. This ability affects a battle unit of 20 to 200 soldiers, all of whom enjoy two Assets on attacks for so long as you concentrate. Action to initiate.

~House Narrkonis~

In a world full of wondrous devices and air full of magic, those who can command the abilities of the numenera find the task of gaining and keeping power easy indeed. While many believe that the Amber Papacy holds the monopoly on this tactic, House Narrkonis would quickly disagree. For who can argue with those who literally grow numenera from their skin and find interacting with artifacts to be as easy as breathing.

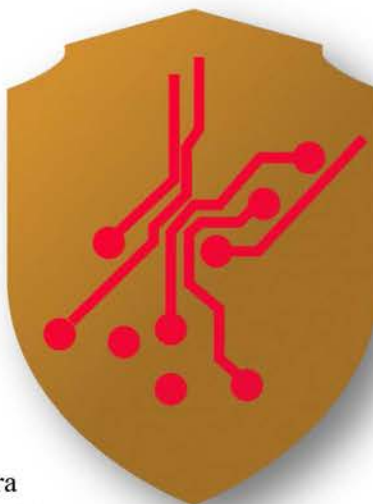
By far the most visually identifiable House, other than perhaps the giants of House Terrasis, all members of the Narrkonis bloodline bear changing computer patterns upon their flesh. Some of these display the status of the person's body and health. Some even allow them to alter their physiology. Others are clearly interface ports to technology and artifacts.

"Look upon me. Look upon my disease. Do you see a wretched plague bearer? Do you see a disfigured beggar? Or do you see a master of the numenera? Underestimate me at your peril."

-Minerva Narrkonis

Regardless of what appears on the body, all members of the family find it very easy to detect and then interface with the technologies of the prior worlds. This has made House Narrkonis extremely popular with the Order of Truth, which actively recruits second and third children of the family in exchange for political and technological assistance.

Given their technological disease, House Narrkonis has adapted by creating a culture that embraces the blending of people and technology. The family seeks to bring the numenera into every aspect of their lives, sometimes with extreme consequences. The glass Citadel, home of the family, operates mostly through the use of numenera, often causing guests to feel



frustrated when they are unable to figure out how to use the most simple of conveniences.

Rise to Power

The origins of the numenera disease are lost to the family, but as far back as anyone can remember, members of House Narrkonis have been born with their strange interfaces. As members of the family learned that their own numenera could be used to usurp and control the numenera of others, the family quickly used this ability to send themselves to the top of the political world. This function particularly ingratiated them to the Order of Truth, which often brought new devices to the family in order to determine their function.

Beyond simple control, the Narrkonis possess an innate ability to understand certain numenera, making them more willing to use the artifacts they discover in the arenas of power. This lack of fear for the numenera has occasionally led the family astray, for a healthy dose of fear is always needed when dealing with the remnants of the prior worlds.

Influence and Holdings

The family's power comes directly from their superior ability in using the fallen technologies and artifice of previous human civilizations. Members of the House are constantly on the lookout for new numenera, often paying for artifacts and oddities sight unseen. One would think that this practice would lead to the family being hoodwinked, and occasionally this does happen. However, many in the populace fear house Narrkonis, whispering that their appearance is due to a link to some powerful visitant or angry god.

Given the House's reliance on the numenera, different locations provide different advantages. Some holdings the family possesses are used for agricultural production because of artifacts discovered that improve seeding or harvesting. Some factions of the family use powerful Cyphers in combat, making their military detachment some of the most feared. Many members of the family haunt the courts, using strange

implants to spy on the other noble factions or control their minds.

Many of the Steadfast kingdoms seek to employ at least one member of the family. This advisory role has led some of the family to become the most trusted confidants of the most powerful, a status the family is fully willing to exploit.

Ties to Other Houses

House Narrkonis has a strange relationship with the other noble Houses. Appearance is everything to the nobility, and the guarantee that any offspring produced by a union with a Narrkonis will have a numenera disease is something that most are not willing to stomach. On the other hand, a child with the interface disease can command the numenera, and given the correct training as a nano, could become a powerful force indeed. This has led many families to the solution of marrying their second and third children to the Narrkonis, keeping the prestigious first offspring strictly off limits.

The only major rivalry that the House faces is that with House Apoksis. While most see the Apoksis as strange but good-natured artisans, the Narrkonis realize that they have a much deeper agenda. Far from the eccentric sculptors everyone else seems to believe, the devices that House Apoksis are spreading are in some way interacting with the numenera, and House Narrkonis means to discover what they are up to.

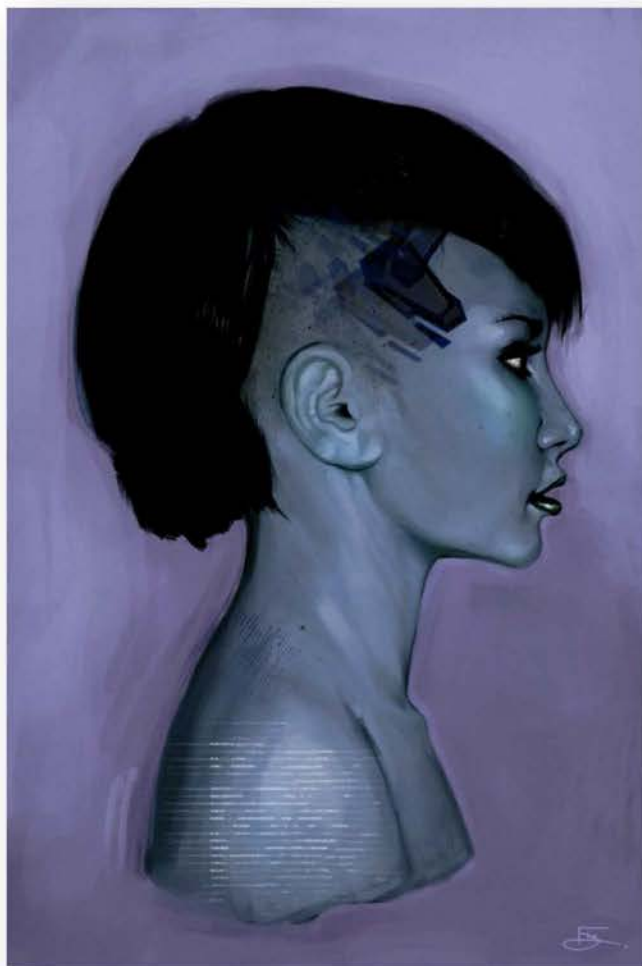
Major Players

Minerva Narrkonis. High Lord of House Narrkonis, Minerva can be found in many of the high courts of the Steadfast. Her most distinct feature is her strange metallic hair, thousands of fine copper fibers wrapped in tight coils. Cunning and ruthless, Minerva takes great pleasure in disrupting the technologies of rival factions.

Edward Narrkonis. One of the barons of the family, Edward is in charge of the family mine which produces crystals that glow like sunlight at night. Edward was put in charge of the lucrative operation when he inadvertently discovered his exo-suit, a

strange artifact twice the height of a human, with a small grey sphere for the pilot to ride in, and 12 spider-like appendages. This suit contained a HUD that indicated the presence of the vein of luminate crystals. Edward can often be seen rushing about the mine in his suit, managing every aspect of the operation.

Lucile Narrkonis. Angry at her status as an unwanted child or freak, Lucile decided early on that she would not be consigned to the fate of her other cousins. After applying herself in her studies as a nano, Lucile set out to discover something that would force the House to accept her back in. She finally did discover an edge that would make her extremely valued: five golden robotic hounds, which Lucile now control. Never tiring, the hounds make a strange, distorted howling sound, sending fear into the hearts of the enemies of the house. Lucile has nothing to prove anymore.



Narrkonis Focus

Employs a Cutaneous Interface

The numenera disease called interphage is the defining feature of House Narrkonis, afflicting them with strange symbols and animated computer menus upon their skin. The ability to harness this disease to command technology is a treasured skill among the family. Starting with a simple ability to connect with devices, those who explore the powers of their disease eventually learn to program themselves as though they were a machine as well.

Suggested Minor Effect: The connection stimulates the pleasure centers in your brain, causing you to regain 2 Intellect Pool points.

Suggested Major Effect: The connection helps realign your nervous system, causing you to regain 4 Speed points.

Suggested GM Intrusion: You accidentally deprogram one of your limbs, losing the ability to use it for one hour. This likely imposes quite a few penalties on actions.

Connection: Choose one other PC. This person has caught a rather minor version of your disease from you, causing them to violently sneeze and itch when around devices you control.

Armor Problems: This Focus requires the ability to access and touch one's own skin. The Difficulties of tasks related to this Focus are increased by the Armor rating of your worn armor and clothing.

Tier One

Connectivity (1 Speed point). You connect with a numenera non-intelligent machine technology within Immediate range, allowing you to access its usual menus or abilities by tapping glowing buttons and symbols on your forearm, though actually using these menus still probably requires a Numenera skill roll of some kind. This connection lasts for ten

minutes or until you are more than Long distance from the device. Action.

Tier Two

Signal Scan (2 Speed points). You scan an area up to Long distance away for any numenera devices you could interface with through the Connectivity power. Action.

Tier Three

Self-Monitoring. You are able to access readouts for your own life signs through the disease. This grants you an Asset on healing tasks you make when working on yourself. The added information also grants you a +1 bonus to the points regained on recovery rolls when you're able to see your skin. This does not apply to your 10 hour rest recovery. Enabler.

Tier Four

Deep Connection (4 Speed points). After having used the Connectivity ability with a device, you may employ this power, granting you access to the most guarded functions of the technology, such as autodestruct, hidden files, or complex operations. This connection lasts for the same duration as your use of Connectivity. Action.

Tier Five

Reboot (5 Speed points). You program your disease to restart your own body functions. You immediately fall unconscious for 1d6 rounds at the end of which time you reawaken, having moved back to the top of the condition track and regained one point in each Pool. Any short term harmful conditions you had been suffering such as poisons or temporary blindness are gone. Action.

Tier Six

Reprogram (6 Speed points). You alter your internal functions for a time, granting you one additional Edge for each Pool. This effect lasts for one hour. Action.

~House Terrasis~

The noble houses of the Steadfast often like to indulge in thinking that they are bastions of civilization. Through the mighty efforts of the Houses, culture, art, and technology all find the necessary patronage in order to flourish. House Terrasis laughs at such nonsense. The nobility take whatever they want because they are powerful, and the powerful may do as they wish.

This philosophy, not to mention their stature as giants, has led to a reputation of barbaric brigands, pillaging and raiding anything the house fancies. Again, House Terrasis laughs, pointing out that really the other families do much the same thing, they just hide under pretty words like intrigue and political maneuvering. The family is also quick to point out that the other Houses are simply bitter that they are unable to prevent House Terrasis from taking from them, being too weak and ineffectual.

House Terrasis is far from the backwater, uncivilized horde that the other Houses like to paint it. The House simply believes that strength is the most important attribute of any House, and they choose holdings that force the members of the family to hone themselves in the face of rugged and dangerous territory. The family does not tolerate softness, and will quickly disabuse their children of the quality.

Rise to Power

As the nine kingdoms of the Steadfast began to form, a small band of mutant giants became notorious for emerging from the wilderness. That band called themselves the Terrasis, and they were feared and reviled throughout the Steadfast. After it became apparent that none of the kingdoms were capable of dealing with them, several leaders conspired together to end the problem. They offered the Terrasis lands and title in the hopes that they'd end their constant attacks. The Terrasis agreed.



To this day, the descendants of these leaders curse their ancestors' names for the vexatious House they have been saddled with. The Terrasis accepted the lands, and then promptly went about expanding their holdings. Initially pleased with this development, with the Terrasis focused on lands usually deemed too wild to hold, the other families congratulated themselves on such a savvy move. They eventually realized that things were not as beneficial as they first seemed, for when House Terrasis needed something they couldn't gain from their land, they simply emerged from their wilderness fortresses and took it from the other Houses.

The other noble Houses of the Steadfast quickly realized that they had little ability to respond to the pillaging of House Terrasis, who would simply retreat back into the wild once sufficient resistance was brought to bear. So the House has to this day been allowed to simply take what it wants, confirming its belief that the powerful do as they wish.

"Size and strength are but the beginning of our power. We are feared because we have proven that we are unpredictable. We use our strength at times unknown and our foes learn to respect us. We take what we want along the way. We are made powerful by this."

-Viktor Terrasis

Influence and Holdings

House Terrasis prefers strongholds in the most rugged parts of the world. Steep mountains, impassable forests, unending desert; these are locations they seek to take. The House employs few servants, relying mostly on captive slaves they take from their raids to perform the mundane tasks they don't want to engage in.



Though the family often rejects the trappings of nobility, they are far from politically naïve. Many courts dread the arrival of representatives from House Terrasis, given the raucous behavior they are willing to engage in. This fear amuses many members of the family, who sometimes like to appear in court simply to put everyone on edge.

The one event that the family puts on is the grand hunt at the beginning of summer. All of the other families are invited, and House Terrasis pretends that they would be greatly insulted if someone did not attend. For serious gamesmen, the hunt can actually be an enjoyable event, with some of the strangest and most dangerous creatures being hunted. Many young nobles like the event for the wild parties that take place at night, something that many elders of the houses frown upon.

Ties to Other Houses

It is a tremendous understatement to say that House Terrasis is the most unpopular House within the Steadfast. At one point or another, House Terrasis has raided all the other families. On the other hand, the House is terribly territorial, and will violently crush anyone threatening what they perceive as theirs. This has proven useful the few times there have been invasions by foreigners into the Steadfast, for House Terrasis is always first to respond.

If there were anything resembling a rivalry with another House, it would be with House Moirana, which sees fighting the giants as a rite of passage. This doesn't bother the House, for House Moirana is the only group approaching a worthy opponent in the nine kingdoms.

Major Players

Viktor Terrasis. High Lord of the House, Viktor maintains a large keep in the Black Riage. Preferring to spend his time hunting, Viktor has accumulated a large collection of strange animal trophies. He is a terrifying warrior and has led numerous successful raids into rival holdings. Viktor wisely rules the family with an iron fist, a necessity given their wild nature.

Olann Terrasis. Olann is one of the few members of the house who prefer the challenge of the court to the challenges of the wilderness. Brash, loud, and somewhat crude, Olann uses the fact others see him a stupid barbarian to constantly out maneuver them in court. Since he does this for sport, Olann's motivations and actions are often very difficult to predict.

Leeta Terrasis. Leeta holds the one other title that the family respects: war leader. Leeta is acknowledged by the entire house as being not only the greatest warrior but also the greatest tactician. Since there is no war officially being waged by the family, Leeta spends her time teasing House Moirana into battle with her.

Terrasis Descriptors

Giant

You are massive in size, muscular and strong like a giant of legend. You are easily 12 feet (4 meters) tall and have learned that getting along in the world of smaller people is easiest with wealth and power. You are a force to be reckoned with, and your fury is like that of an angry god. All lesser beings shudder at the sight of your awesome presence.

You gain the following benefits:

Huge: +4 to your Might pool.

Skill: You are trained in all tasks involved in intimidation of others.

Big Target: You don't need to take an action to Take the Attack (see the Numenera core book page 101), you may do so once per round for an ally within Immediate distance.

Initial link to the Starting Adventure (choose one):

1. Your family is patronizing the group's efforts and



you are their emissary.

2. You've taken a liking to these little ones, especially the one with the little sword. So cute.
3. You accidentally injured a member of the party, and now you're paying off that debt of honor.
4. The group is working against the foes of your House. You naturally volunteered to help them.

Monstrous

Your familial penchant for size has taken root and even become something more. You have the head of an animal and massive claws for hands. Your family sees you as a useful aberration, likely sending you out to battle in the name of the House.

You gain the following benefits:

Huge: +4 to your Might pool.

Skill: You are trained in all tasks involved in intimidation of others.

Claws: Your unarmed attacks are medium weapons, dealing 4 damage on a hit.

Inability: Your monstrous nature makes it hard for you to interact with others, imposing a one step penalty on all positive social interactions.

Initial link to the Starting Adventure (choose one):

1. You follow the group from a safe distance, hoping to join them in their adventures.
2. You're the bodyguard for one of the other PCs.
3. You have explored the region the group is headed to.
4. You once saved the life of one of the other PCs.

~House Thanosa~

No other House in the Ninth World approaches the obscene and decadent behavior of House Thanosa. Descended from Augur who settled within the Steadfast, the Thanosa have inherited many strange and wondrous gifts from their time in the Beyond.

All members of the family are born with beauty, grace and intelligence in significant portions. Of far greater note is that children born to the House have the ability to manipulate and change matter as an act of will. These gifts have led to a culture within the House that celebrates the pleasures of life and refuses to acknowledge the concept of want or need.

The greatest danger faced by any member of the family is that of boredom, an experience that plagues many of the Thanosa. In order to avoid this state, members of the family often succumb to more and more extreme and dangerous tastes in the continuous pursuit of new and interesting pleasures. This isn't always in the form of mere physical pleasure; some in the House have taken to radical experimentation, trying new ways to reorder the material world.

"You must make people happy to see their true selves. They let down their guard when they enjoy themselves.

Give them what they want, and they'll give you what you want... power."

-Ayron Thanosa, The Entertainer

Needless to say, this has caused much fear and loathing amongst their peasant population. Given the self-indulgent behavior of the House, many have come to wonder how it is that the Thanosa haven't imploded or been subsumed by another more ambitious House.

Truthfully, that fate would likely have befallen them if not for the efforts of the custodians. Loyal to a fault,



the custodians are the glue that allows the House to function, acting on behalf of the family in matters of business and politics. Very occasionally, a member of the family takes an interest in the inter-house politicking, much to the chagrin of their custodial caretakers. They nonetheless allow this indulgence, often following up to ensure that the House isn't too endangered.

Rise to Power

The success that the Thanosa have experienced is in large part due to the fact that many of the other Houses refuse to take them seriously, seeing them as spoiled and deluded. This assumption is often correct, but the rare exceptions have allowed the Thanosa to become the wealthiest of all the houses.

The custodians are the major factor that constantly throws off the other houses. Most of the Steadfast nobility tend to discount the abilities of mere servants. Out of the eye of the other Houses, the custodians are able to conduct Thanosa's business without much interference, allowing them to leverage significant power against the other Houses.

Many other Houses are in fact often puzzled at the treatment of the custodians by the Thanosa. Their relationship is one of quiet acceptance and indulgence, with the Thanosa allowing the custodians room to conduct the affairs of the House, and the custodians allowing the family its appetites. Some wonder if perhaps some forms of technological or mystical compulsions are in effect.

The other factor that is rarely taken into account is the members of the family who take an interest in the politics of the realm. Gifted with natural intelligence and beauty, they find navigating the dance of courtly politics easy and thrilling. Add in the other nobles' constant tendency to underestimate them, and you have a potent mixture that makes the Thanosa frightening politicians.

Influence and Holdings

The holdings of House Thanosa are vast and widespread, with the family holding territory all over the Steadfast. In the current time, the House has focused on selling rare and exotic luxury materials, many of which are produced by the experiments of the family.

Selling luxury materials has led the house to recruit many fine craftsmen in order to produce finished products to go along with the raw materials. This enterprise is assisted by the fact that the Thanosa are often at the heart of new trends amongst the nobility of the Steadfast.

Ties to Other Houses

House Thanosa is often sought after to intermarry with the other nobility of the Steadfast. The natural beauty and intelligence which so easily passes onto offspring is a major boon, along with the promise of controlling the material world. The Thanosa are rarely in direct conflict with the other Houses, only occasionally squabbling over shared trade routes or borders of properties.

Recently House Filodoxis has taken a special interest in marriages to the Thanosa, no doubt in order to gain access to their inherited powers. The Thanosa are unconcerned by such events, as the custodians have seen to it that House Filodoxis pays for the privilege.

Of far more interest is what House Ethis has to offer in the way of new and exciting drugs. These two Houses seem to make natural allies, and have begun experimenting with each other's abilities in wild and dangerous parties.

The Order of Truth has noticed the House and its strange gifts, and has started recruiting

members of the Thanosa family into its ranks. They aren't having much success, but a few of the family have joined up, believing that the numenera the Order has access to could prove to be extremely entertaining.

Major Players

Ayron Thanosa. Current leader of the family, Ayron is one of the few Thanosa who bother with the courtly intrigues of the Steadfast. His preferred tactic is to throw lavish parties, where he is able to extract useful information from rival factions while they are in a compromised state.

Rose Thanosa. Rose is a major trendsetter amongst both the family and other nobility. Her current fad is to use the mutating drugs from House Ethis to alter her appearance and then use her own powers to create a strange and exotic costume to match.

Theodora Thanosa. Theodora is the most feared member of the family among the peasantry, due to her dangerous and often fatal obsession with experimentation. After having come up with dazzle silk, Theodora's next big plan is to create living golems from her servants, granting them skins of gold, silver, and bronze. She even believes she will one day be able to grant soldiers steel skin for armor. So far, she has had few successes.



Thanosa Focus

Transmutes Matter

The powers of the Thanosa are said to derive from their descent from the Augurs, a people who look human, but who are far too perfect. Their connection to nanotechnology allows the Thanosa to similarly change their world by altering the structure of matter.

Attunement: During childhood each Thanosa House member becomes attuned to one type of solid material, such as amethyst, gold, azuresteel, or wood. Upon character creation you must choose this material, for it will flavor your transmutations forever.

Minor Effect Suggestion: Your transmutation is covered in a particularly pleasing pattern.

Major Effect Suggestion: You transmute one additional nearby object.

Suggested GM Intrusion: You accidentally transmute something important to you, ruining it.

Connection: Choose one other PC. You knew this person from an early age, often delighting them with your strange powers.

Tier One

Plating (1 Intellect point). You touch an object smaller than yourself and the surface of the item is turned entirely to the material you are attuned to. Generally speaking, plating with hard materials will add one Armor rating to an object that's normally soft, at your GMs discretion. Plating something in gold or other precious metals may have a dramatic effect on the selling price of the item. Action.

Tier Two

Total Change (2 Intellect points). You transmute a nonliving object smaller than you entirely into the material you are attuned to. Action.

Tier Three

Broader Alteration. When transmuting using powers from this Focus you are no longer limited to simply your attuned material. Instead, you are able to choose any known material within the larger category of your attuned matter type. If your attunement was with gold, you could make things any metal. If it was with amethyst you could transmute into any crystal. Wood would grant you access to other formerly living substances. Enabler.

Tier Four

Grasp of Change (4 Intellect points). As an attack you may touch a living creature and transmute part of it to a nonliving substance. This causes 4 ambient damage. If the target is wearing armor, this alters part of it as well, causing it to become useless. Action.

Tier Five

New Ways. You are no longer limited to a broad category of matter for transmutations. Instead, you may choose any solid substance you've ever encountered. Be aware that some substances from the prior worlds bear unknown and dangerous properties. Enabler.

Old Ways. You revisit your old attunement, granting you an Asset on tasks whenever you attempt to transmute into that substance. This includes attack rolls made using Grasp of Change. Enabler.

Tier Six

Alter the World (6 Intellect points). By touching a surface with both hands you are able to transmute an area up to one hundred square meters in size. This transmutation is similar in effect to the Plating power, in that it only alters the surface of the area. Action.

~House Velthos~

House Velthos was founded nearly three hundred years ago by a wandering pair of adventurers who gained fame and infamy throughout the land for their strange and outlandish escapades. The group made a living by escorting travelers thought the world and by delving deep into ancient ruins of the prior worlds. Eventually they amassed enough wealth and artifacts together that they were able to settle down and call themselves noble lords. This was aided by the fact that they were able to secure for themselves an ancient palace from a bygone era, beautiful and awesome, called the Glimmering Fortress for the unknown materials used in its construction.

The combination of a nearly invincible home and the almost limitless amounts of numenera devices has made House Velthos powerful indeed. Considered somewhat strange by their fellow nobility, many children of the family have continued in the footsteps of their ancestors, pursuing expeditions into unknown locations in search of lost technology and knowledge. Others remain in civilized lands, regaling any who listen about the family's exploits, and bartering the services of the family's many artifacts.

"Yeah, I got one a those. Is that all you need? I got a Cypher that can carve up a vault door in five seconds. I think. Something like that. Very destructive..."

-Lionel Velthos

The family has become quite the repository for forgotten knowledge, having accumulated an immense if jumbled library of journals from all their various explorations. Searching the archive can be quite the arduous task given the haphazard way the House has stored the records. An artificial intelligence inhabiting a golden metallic body in the form of an androgynous human is the family butler and librarian. Unfortunately



the automaton's reference system is a strange and unknowable pattern that no one has been able to crack, and the servant seems unable to stay on task, going off on strange tangents whenever questioned.

Rise to Power

For many years the family struggled against the other Houses, seeking legitimacy contrary to their low birth origins. This struggle was aided by the fact that many of the nobility feared House Velthos' power, given all of the Cyphers and Artifacts they possessed. This struggle eventually led the House to make an alliance with the Order of Truth. With their vast experience traveling in dangerous lands and in surviving the strongholds of lost civilizations, the House was an ideal partner for the Order. Soon, with the backing of the Amber Papacy, House Velthos was able to ascend the games of intrigue and join the ranks of the powerful Houses of the Steadfast.

Influence and Holdings

The greatest asset the House possesses is the Glimmering Fortress and vaults within, containing the loot from the family's numerous exploits. The fortress is a great wonder, a strange building jutting out of a mountainside at an impossible angle. Constructed of unknown alloys that glimmer in rainbow hues, the palace is illuminated at night by hundreds tiny colored spheres, emanating from projectors all along the walls.

Some have commented that the fortress looks like a large metal ship that seems to have sailed into the mountainside. The family is dismissive of such speculation, but some wonder at the hallways made of synth and metal and stone at random intervals. Or at the strange room that shows a map of the Steadfast and its weather patterns in both real time and up to 9 days ahead with perfect accuracy.

No one has fully explored the house, and there is no record of what artifacts line its many vaults. So many cyphers and artifacts together in one place have led to



Major Players

Lionel Velthos. Lionel Velthos is the current high lord of the family, and one of the few members actually concerned with politics. He is the sole reason the family's business affairs are kept in order, and he is constantly putting out fires caused by his family's various misadventures. Lionel is very popular within the family for his ability to pull strings to gain access to ruins that are otherwise restricted. In turn, Lionel uses the various discoveries from the family for profit and influence.

a bleeding effect, creating new devices and oddities no one has ever seen.

There are many strange rooms within the Glimmering Fortress whose purpose baffles the mind. There is a room containing glass cylinders full of creatures in various states of evolution. One dome shaped room shows a star-filled sky, but unlike any sky the family has ever seen. Puzzling out the purposes of these rooms can take a lifetime, but can also provide ample rewards.

Ties to Other Houses

House Velthos has always had a tenuous relationship with the other noble Houses because of their founders' low birth. This strain was magnified by the House's alliance with the Order of Truth and the Amber Papacy, with the other families seeing such strong ties to the Order as upsetting the balance of power. In recent years, the House has allied itself through several marriages to House Narrkonis. Children born with the implant disease have an easier time within the glimmering fortress, making them a valuable asset. This marriage has come with a price tag, putting them at odds with House Apoksis, the enemies of House Narrkonis. To further the alliance, several members of the family have set out to discover the secrets of their new enemies, thereby turning the tide in this very cold war.

Annabelle Velthos. One of the younger members of the family, Annabelle from an early age possessed the classic family wanderlust. This desire to see the world has led her to develop a company that specializes in traveling the untamed wilds of the world. She has already been on several expeditions and collected a number of powerful Artifacts to call her own.

Cornelius Velthos. Cornelius is a classic example of the distracted academic, constantly preoccupied with some obscure manuscript or device. Cornelius is an expert on the history of the Steadfast, and possesses quite a bit lore and, better yet, conjecture about the prior worlds.



Velthos Focus

Carries Untold Treasures

Your House descends from a group of great and famous adventurers, who braved the dangers of the Ninth World centuries ago. Your family has kept their plunder and added to it over the years, often cultivating new adventurers such as yourself to brave the world again. But they haven't sent you out without assistance. Their vast storehouses of useful trinkets and numenera make for excellent adventuring gear for those such as you who have been granted access.

As a master packrat, you're adept at stowing things away for a later time. You've always got just what you need when you need it.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You also find 3 shins you didn't know you had.

Major Effect Suggestion: You also find an Oddity or other valuable item in there.

Suggested GM Intrusion: You also grab something sharp or dangerous, taking 5 damage.

Connection: Choose one other PC. This person can grab an item out of your pack for you if they are near it, as per your Focus abilities, so long as you spend the points for the power and spend an action walking them through the process of finding it. Thus your trusted ally could toss you a useful Cypher out of your pack from across the campsite, even as you protect them from oncoming bandits.

Additional Starting Equipment:

A backpack stuffed with old tools and gadgets.

Tier One

At Hand (1 Speed point). You reach into your pack and grab just the right tool for the job. You can procure virtually any tool, weapon, or other mundane

item you could think of, so long as it's of little value. Enabler, may be used as part of a related action.

Tier Two

Antidote (2 Speed points). You grab a salve of some kind from your pack, which happens to cure a negative effect you or an ally is suffering from. Action to grab and use on a target within Immediate range.

Tier Three

Bane (3 Speed points). You produce an Oddity from your bag that acts as a powerful weapon against a particular creature. The weapon is perfectly suited to affecting the creature, working as a light melee weapon (with the usual one step bonus to attack) but dealing 6 ambient damage on a hit. The bane is used up once it hits and you may only ever draw one bane per combat scene. Enabler, may be drawn as part of an attack.

Tier Four

Stow. You can set aside a single Cypher, insulated from the others within your travelling pack. This Cypher does not count against your Cypher limit, but it takes two full actions to pull it from your gear. Enabler.

Tier Five

Found Treasure (7 Speed points). You find a forgotten Cypher among your things. Maybe the stuff in your pack just combined to make it. Whatever the case, you have a totally new Cypher, ready for use. Action, usable once per day.

Tier Six

Inheritance. You acquire an Artifact of your choice from those listed in the Numenera core book. This item functions as normal, but has no depletion chance. Enabler.



Chapter III:

~Duty & Honor~



The Knighthoods of the Ninth World are not like those of medieval Europe. Knights are rarely ennobled by a royal benefactor and given lands to govern. This is not to say that being a knight isn't a path to power. Indeed, the games of politics are played out between both the houses of the nobles and the knighthoods of The Steadfast and The Beyond in a complex interplay, often resulting in war.

Indeed, war could be considered the ultimate expression of politics. The final battlefield of ideology and opportunity. The powerful use their power to seize more and more for themselves at the expense of their current rivals and in assistance to their current allies. Some of the powerful are wealthy nobles. Some are supposedly apolitical lord-knights, hiding behind their oaths to claim independence from the vulgarities of politics.

In truth the knighthoods represent a potent tool for the powerful. They are excellent personal combatants, leaders of armies, and trusted advisors to the powerful. Their oaths add legitimacy to their actions, allowing those who use them to seem to have righteousness on their side.

The Importance of Battle

Physical conflict, such as war or coups, often comes as the culmination of prior political action, as each side escalates their efforts against each other. Two court rivals gather more and more allies against each other with each atrocity and insult, gaining more and more evidence of their foe's inhumanity.

When it comes to violence, then, the nobles often turn to their allies in the knighthoods, who by then have often already been courted by all parties involved. The allegiance of an important knighthood to one faction can even end a battle in its tracks, as adversaries back down for fear of being on the losing end of a knight's sword.

Conflict can also be a potent political tool for a political campaign. A savvy leader or manipulator can use wars to galvanize their allies and the common people, while seizing assets and holdings in the name of the greater good. The spoils of war go to the victor, and some never make it home from the battlefield. What better situation for a politically minded noble or knight to gain in station and power? So long as the conflict doesn't get out of hand of course.

What's to Follow

This chapter includes a number of tools for the GM or player interested in exploring a world of oaths and armor. Seven new knighthoods are presented here as organizations. Player characters may join them as per the usual Numenera rules, by paying 4XP, with the membership counting as a skill for that tier. Characters thereby gain access to the Benefit for the knighthood in question. Alternatively, characters may sacrifice one of their starting skills to buy membership, to gain access to the knighthood's unique Descriptors and Foci. Adventurous GMs might even allow established characters to switch to those options once they join the knighthood through play.

The Enlightened

Order of Iadace

The Enlightened Order began as pilgrims themselves, then guides, then protectors. Now they are sworn knights, living by what some call a strange code. The Wandering Walk is a massive, some say endless pilgrimage around the Ninth World, exploring dangerous and mysterious places.

It has no “official” map or specific route- only local knowledge of landmarks and other markers set its path at any given locale. Its pilgrims seek truth, understanding, and wonder. The Enlightened Order protects them from dangers, but also works to keep the walk full of wonders. If that means leaving a bit of danger in, so be it. Discovery is the essence of the walk.

Member Benefits

Those who protect the pilgrims of the walk and join the Order are expected to spend much of their time along its path. Sworn knights of the Order gain an Asset on all Speed Defense rolls made while along the Wandering Walk’s path, due to their increased knowledge of the terrain and dangers there.

Origins

Founded over a century ago by Amber Pope Victoreana, the Order has its roots in a solemn vow made by a former Wandering Walk pilgrim: “I shall always protect those who seek truth and promote humanity.” That pilgrim, called The Blessed Walker, became the Order’s first Grand Master and served as a personal advisor to Pope Victoreana. Since then, the Enlightened have established a number of castles and keeps as waypoints along the Wandering Walk.

Initiation

Joining the Order means being invited by a knight in good standing, after having survived at least two hundred miles (300 km) of the Wandering Walk. The

potential knight must swear an oath to defend the pilgrims and serve the Order of Truth.

Once initiated, the knight is given a weapon, forged with materials the initiate scavenged from numenera found along the walk.

Training

Enlightened knights train in the arts of survival, tracking, and wilderness rescue. They also hone their combat skills and knowledge of the numenera, so that they can more adeptly come to the aid of pilgrims.

Fealty

While the knighthood remains an independent institution, it still requires its members swear fealty to the Amber Pope, and works alongside the Order of Truth when asked. The knights are rarely called upon to participate in war, but they do offer solace and assistance to individual Amber Priests who ask for help.

Major Players

Giva Daela. Leader of the knights who protect the pilgrims who wander near the Violet Fields region of the Plains of Kataru, Giva’s unit defends them against a group of marauding automatons indigenous to the area.

Her extensive experience with the self-replicating machines makes her invaluable to any traveller in the area, and the strategic location of her keep makes her a known asset to members of the Order of Truth interested in expanding their influence to The Beyond.

Grand Master Maknar Redaff. The head of the Enlightened Order, Redaff was once the heir apparent for a major duchy in The Steadfast. Having gone on a pilgrimage in his youth, Maknar chose to eschew a life of leisure and power, instead taking the oaths of Iadace.

Finding himself now leading the knighthood, Redaff has resigned himself to the mantle of leader. He does so with a heavy heart, for he knows he does not have it in him to play the games of politics expected of him.

He is a simple man, a man in search of answers about the past. Courtly games cannot replace that.

Mapmaker Densil. A knight who never found himself much of a warrior, Densil has instead turned his calling to creating a well-surveyed map of the Wandering Walk. Some say his work is blasphemous, for the mysterious nature of the walk is integral to its beauty and majesty.

But they cannot stop him and so his work continues on as he walks the path himself each day. Travellers who meet him see an aging nano with quick eyes and a fanciful penchant for odd Esoterics.

Iadace Focus

Guides the Lost

You've become experienced in leading and rescuing pilgrims on the Wandering Walk. Your training and instincts are invaluable to those who would explore the Ninth World. You have the heart of an explorer, but the grizzled talents of someone who's seen their fair share of danger befall good people.

Suggested Minor Effect: A stroke of luck provides you with just the handholds you'll need for the rest of the climb, providing an Asset.

Suggested Major Effect: You rescue one additional person from a dangerous situation.

Suggested GM Intrusion: Your instincts are wrong for once, and your advice puts someone in danger.

Connection: Choose one other PC. You've rescued this character before and know how they move around. You enjoy an Asset on rolls when rescuing or guiding them.

Tier One

Survivalist. You are trained in wilderness survival tasks. Enabler.

Lay of the Land. You are trained in area knowledge for three locations, each a particular region such as a desert or mountain range. Your knowledge specifically includes the places where numenera might be found within each area. Enabler.

Tier Two

Danger Sense. You're so used to dealing with dangerous situations, that you have an innate sense about when one is about to happen. You enjoy an Asset on Initiative and Speed Defense tasks which relate to averting a threat or trap. Enabler.

Tier Three

Rescue (3 Speed points). You manage to help an ally within Immediate range, pulling them up from a fall or pushing them down before a trap hits them. Enabler, usable once per round.

Tier Four

Adaptive. Upon entering a new region, you may make a wilderness survival task roll against Difficulty 5. If successful, you gain an area knowledge skill for that location, representing your ability to quickly learn the nuances of the area. Enabler.

Tier Five

Advice (5 Intellect points). Before an expedition you may make an area knowledge roll against a Difficulty which reflects how dangerous the region is. If successful your allies enjoy the benefits of your Danger Sense ability for one day. Action.

Tier Six

Hero. You may use your Rescue ability as many times in a round as you wish. Enabler.

Master of the Trail. You are specialized in wilderness survival tasks, as well as all area knowledge skills you possess at this time. Enabler.

The Knights of the Labyrinth

Overview

The art of war is complex and favors those with an edge. One such advantage is the untapped potential of most sapient species. Through meditation, contemplation, and strict mental exercises, The Knights of the Labyrinth have learned to hone their minds like a blade. Fearsome in battle and cryptic in their motivations, gaining the support of Labyrinthines can turn the tide in war.

Member Benefits

Those who have taken the Oath of the Lost Mind at the end of a two year apprenticeship or other significant mental task are granted wisdom as to the mind's true potential. This secret knowledge grants the Labyrinthine one of the following abilities, chosen at the time of initiation:

- ❖ **Open Mind (2 Intellect points).** You open yourself up to all thoughts, granting you an Asset on puzzle solving or other creative endeavors for the next ten minutes, but causing you to automatically lose on all Intellect Defense rolls during this time. *Those who choose this ability are called The Trusted, and they generally work to create community and peace in the world.* Enabler.
- ❖ **Otherworldly Field (2 Might points).** You channel a force from beyond this dimension, sending ripples of power coursing over your body. For the next ten minutes you enjoy an Armor rating of 2 against energy damage, even if the source would normally be considered ambient damage. *Those who choose this ability are called The Summoners, and generally work to prepare the world for invasion by outside forces in the universe.* Action.
- ❖ **Sightless Strike (2 Speed points).** You trust your instincts when making an attack. During this attack you suffer no penalties due to conditions such as darkness or distraction of any kind. *Those who choose this ability are called The Feared, and generally work to train others in battle.* Enabler.



Origins

Founded by a group of monks operating in the Black Riage, the knighthood's origins are steeped in mystery. What is known is that centuries ago a monk discovered an inner power, through meditation, and began to teach what she had learned to the rest of the brotherhood. In time the monks came to believe that

their power should be used to protect others and so they came down from the mountains, rejoining society.

Initiation

Joining the knighthood is not easy, for the Labyrinthines believe they are protecting a powerful and dangerous weapon - their training. Only those who show true compassion and self-discipline are considered for the trials.

Traditionally, a new recruit is trained by a member for two years, during which time they are put through a series of harrowing experiences, meant to simultaneously loosen and strengthen the mind. A successful initiate learns to expect the unexpected, defend themselves against mental attack, and show the kind of moral rectitude expected of a Labyrinthine knight.

It is possible to forego the full two year apprenticeship, however, if a potential candidate experiences the same sorts of trials in a much shorter period. Such battlefield commendations generally take place when a pupil and master are forced to deal with an otherworldly or otherwise strange threat.

Training

Due to their origins as an ascetic monkhood, The Knights of the Labyrinth train by seeking greater and greater heights of meditative contemplation. Day to day this generally means quiet meditation at the beginning and end of each day, as well as before battle when possible. However, in order to continue to learn the secrets of their knighthood, Labyrinthines must seek places of beauty, peace, and harmony in the world. Contemplation and appreciation of such a site is considered one of the most important elements of keeping an orderly and continually improved mind.

This is not to say that the life of a Labyrinthine is peaceful. The knights often get involved in wars if they see one side as more just or virtuous than another, and in need of their help. The knighthood itself makes no alliances or higher level decisions, leaving each knight to determine what is right for themselves.

Faalty

Very few Labyrinthines swear oaths of loyalty to lords. Their own oath of initiation binds them only to themselves, and this is as they prefer things. The knighthood is not aloof from politics and war. It is simply unwilling to tie itself to any one master.

Major Players

Gerid the Feared. Famed for his blazing swordspear and fearsome warrior's instinct, Gerid is a master of war. Picking and choosing sides that seem destined to fail, Gerid seeks challenge after challenge in the world of battle in order to hone his skills to perfection. Gerid fears the day when he will find no more difficulty in defeating others. What will happen to him then? How will he progress through his inner labyrinth?

Jaenia the Summoner. In the quiet of the Ba-Adenu forest Jaenia was contacted by an ultradimensional being, claiming to represent a race of watchers. The being claimed that it was studying humanity to determine its worth to the rest of the galaxy. Jaenia has taken this knowledge very seriously, working since then to better the plight of the people of The Steadfast through diplomacy and humanitarian efforts. She is seen as a strange zealot in the courts of the nine kingdoms, but her strengths in the labyrinth of her own mind have aided her greatly in her quest.

Pid the Trusted. Once a simple farmer, Pid is a humble varjellen with a natural talent for mindreading. This talent served to gain them induction into the knighthood, but has been a bane to their simple lifestyle ever since. Their powers are so advanced that they are capable of acting as a bridge between two other minds, serving as a conduit for honest diplomatic relations between people and strange creatures alike. Constantly sought for their power, Pid lives a life of travel and danger, much to their annoyance.

Labyrinthine Focus

Characters who begin as Knights of the Labyrinth may take the following Wanders the Inner Labyrinth Focus. Other common Foci among the knighthood include those which represent the martial training of the knights, such as Carries a Quiver, Masters Defense, Masters Weaponry, or Wields Two Weapons at Once. Much more commonly, however, the knights exhibit psychic abilities, such as Commands Mental Powers, Controls Beasts, Crafts Illusions, or Focuses Mind over Matter.

Wanders the Inner Labyrinth

The Knights of the Labyrinth are named after the metaphor they use to visualize their path to enlightenment and mental strength. The labyrinth is not a straight and narrow path, nor is it well lit or safe. The maze of the inner self is one of self-discovery, self-mastery, and the purging of inner demons. This can mean opening oneself up to dangers in order to face them, potentially at great risk to one's sanity. Such is the price of the journey for some.

Suggested Minor Effect: You discover an obscure facet of your own personality, temporarily granting you one additional Intellect Edge this round.

Suggested Major Effect: You discover a major flaw in your own mind, recovering 5 points to your Intellect pool.

Suggested GM Intrusion: Your inner demons get the better of you, forcing you to succumb to a base emotion such as temptation, anger, or sloth for the next hour.

Connection: Choose one other PC. You sense that this character has the potential to become initiated into the knighthood, should they prove themselves worthy.

Tier One

Open Eyes (1 Intellect point). You open yourself up to your own flaws. For the next ten

minutes you regain one Intellect pool point whenever you fail a significant roll, such as an attack, defense, or important skill task. Enabler.

Tier Two

Hand on the Wall (2 Intellect points). You rely on your training and insights to guide you through a tough situation, granting you an Asset on a task in which strength of will matters, such as using an Esotery or resisting a mental attack. Enabler.

Tier Three

Torch Bearer. When you use the Open Eyes ability, you regain one additional point when you fail a roll (for a total of two points), but when this occurs you suffer an Intrusion as though you had rolled a 1 on the die.

Tier Four

Echoing Corridors (4 Intellect points). For the next ten minutes you broadcast your thoughts for all living creatures within Immediate distance to hear in their minds. This may allow for communications that transcend language barriers, but it can be quite embarrassing at times. Action to initiate.

Walls of the Labyrinth. You are trained in Intellect Defense. Enabler.

Tier Five

Climb the Walls (5 Intellect points). You forcibly open the mind of a living, thinking, creature within short range. For the next ten minutes that creature suffers one mental damage whenever it fails at a significant task roll. Additionally, you learn the target's greatest fear. Action.

Tier Six

Center of the Maze. Your self-mastery is such that you are able to redefine yourself as needed. Once per game session you may reassign one skill level to a different skill. Doing so takes ten minutes of quiet contemplation. Enabler.

Knights of the Pelagic Deep

Off the coast of The Steadfast, from the Sea Kingdom of Ghan to the ports of Ancuan, rides a strange order of knights on the backs of massive sea horses. They are the Knights of the Pelagic Deep, a relatively new phenomenon, seemingly organized overnight. Defending merchant and military vessels from raiders and other threats, the knights are invaluable, if misunderstood.

The origins of the knighthood are steeped in the mysteries of the deep, drawing upon long-lost knowledge held by the octopoids resident in the trenches of the Sea of Secrets.

Member Benefits

Those who manage to join the Pelagic Knights are given special genetic treatments by the octopoids, granting them the ability to ride and telepathically communicate with the large seahorse mounts of the order. Each is then sent out into the sea to find their mount, returning only once they have made a connection with a creature. The seahorses are Level 3 creatures with 1 Armor rating which can move Long distance each round while on the water (keeping up with most ships).

Origins

The octopoids of the Sea of Secrets have a complex society, barely understood by the land walkers. What is now known is that a kind of knighthood exists, with an unpronounceable name, granting honor to those who would spend their lives protecting long distance sea travelers. Since recent interactions between the humans and the octopoids, the members of that knighthood have taken to finding land dwellers who share their willingness to fight to defend those who travel the seas. At times chosen forcefully, these human knights of an octopoid order are genetically altered to better suit their new role.

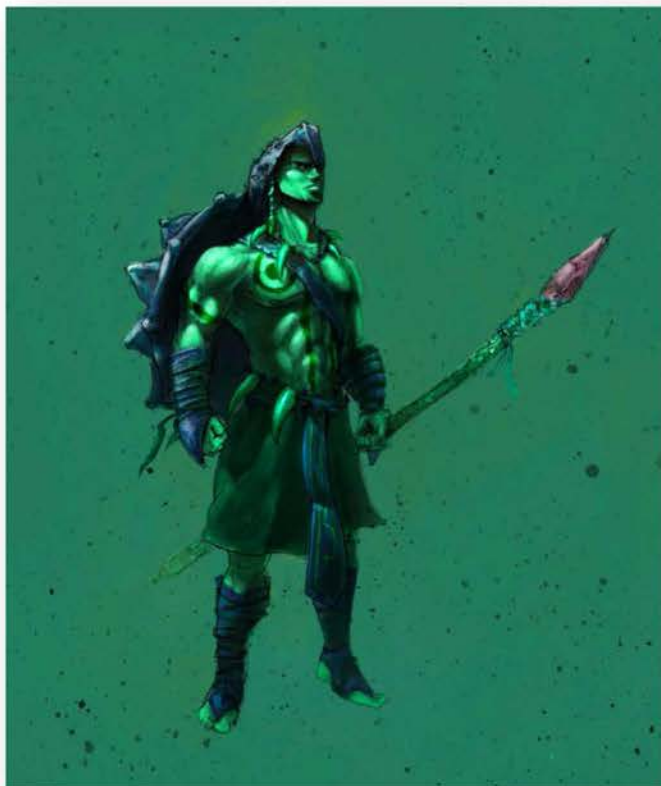
Some say these alterations are more than physical; that the queen of the octopoids is able to order all members of the knighthood in times of struggle. This is of course just a rumor...

Initiation

Sometimes willing, sometimes not, those who are chosen for the order by an existing octopoid knight are usually sailors or other water-dwellers. Covered in mutagenic coral and exposed to strange chemicals, the initiated knight is altered in a number of ways. Gaining an attachment to certain sea life, such as the seahorses they use as mounts, the initiate's skin turns a sickly green and their hair darkens.

Training

Learning to ride the seahorses takes little time once the proper genetic traits are present in the knight. Learning to use the mount effectively against pirates is another matter, and it may take months or years before a new knight is ready to patrol on their own.



Fealty

Though the Pelagic Knights swear no particular oath, they all feel a reverence for the octopoids and especially their queen. Some take this seriously and devote themselves to bridging the two species. Others fear their change and seek to learn just what it is the octopoids are planning. For why would they wish to make humans more like them if not to have sleeper agents ready for some looming conflict?

Major Players

Adelle Nazeem. Once an esteemed captain of the Redfleet, Adelle had a power over water and cold that made her fearsome at sea. After being taken captive by a group of octopoids during an expedition on an island, she was given the chance to earn her freedom through service in the knighthood.

Combining her strange frozen power with her newfound connection to sea creatures, Adelle is perhaps the most powerful and feared of the Pelagic Knights to date, serving as the closest thing to a leader the humans of the order have.

Galaia. A woman without a past found herself on a sandy beach on the coast of Iscobal. Strangely colored and followed by a strange sea creature, she was taken in by a crabber for a time. Since then Galaia has returned to the sea that seemed to have birthed her, becoming a kind of ocean spirit. To her, the calming rhythm of the waves speaks of an order to the universe which must be preserved. Something in her says that the humans venture too deep; that they disturb secrets long hidden beneath waves best left alone.

Jogar Seamar. A fisherman coming from a long line of fishermen, Jogar was literally born on a boat. Encountering the strange octopoids during a dive to rescue his overboard son, Jogar was thrust into the knighthood against his will. He has since come to accept his role as a defender. Working to defend the fishermen he once worked alongside, Jogar takes pride in his strange work and his trusty "sea-steed".

Pelagic Deep Descriptor

Amphibious

The genetic treatments inflicted upon you by the octopoids have continued to transform your body. You have evolved into a sea creature of sorts, capable of existing both on land and at sea.

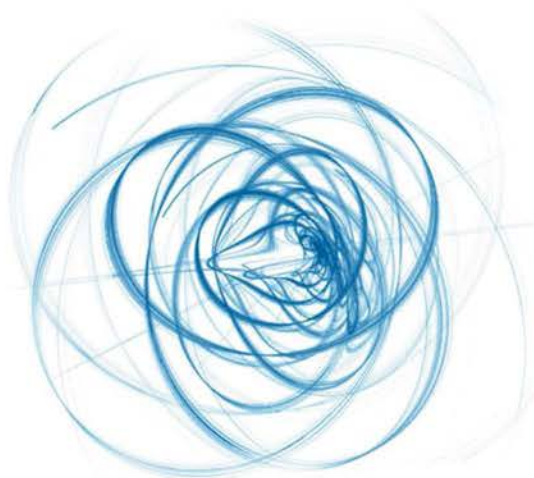
You gain the following benefits:

Lithe: +2 to your Speed pool.

Aquatic Movement: You suffer no penalties to movement and attacks when under water. You are also trained in swimming tasks.

Water Dweller: You can breathe under water for as long as you like.

Inability: You have slimy, rubbery skin that is pale and translucent, slightly bioluminescent (glowing), or brightly colored with strange patterns. In any case, you suffer a one step penalty to positive social interactions whenever your skin is at all visible.



The Mukaut

Taking its name from the Varjellen word for adaptation, The Mukaut is an order of knights comprised entirely of members of that species. Originally dedicated to defending Varjellen interests throughout the Ninth World, The Mukaut have found themselves sought after as mercenaries.

Not willing to pass up an opportunity, The Mukaut have taken to this role in recent decades, even at the expense of their original duties. Some among them claim the order has fallen from grace in succumbing to the temptations of riches. Others make plans to hoard the order's wealth until it can be put to use in founding a Varjellen nation.

Member Benefits

Upon joining the order, members are given an Artifact believed to have been of Varjellen origin. Though Varjellen are not generally sentimental about the past, this is a rare exception. Upon the death of the knight, the item is taken back into the custody of the order.

Origins

The Varjellen do not tell stories of their past and so the origins of The Mukaut are lost to time, though it's clear that it has existed for centuries. Records of kings and queens from more than four hundred years ago show that The Mukaut were employed as warriors and guides to the Beyond from time to time, always willing to aid the highest bidder, so long as other Varjellen were not to come to harm.

Initiation

A Varjellen interested in joining The Mukaut must journey to their monastery in the swamps along the Wyr River in Thaemor. There they are tested three times. Once, in the Pit of Lost Home. Again, in the Great Hunt. And finally, in the Test of the Blood Fire. Each test is designed to challenge the initiate's resolve and adaptability.

Upon completing the tests the applicant is given apprenticeship to a full knight for a period until they

have proven themselves devoted to the order and the Varjellen people in general. The end of this trial period is determined by the knight testing the applicant, after which time the new knight swears The Oath of Mukaut and is given a number of ceremonial tools and weapons.

Training

The Mukaut generally teach the skills of hunting, tracking, and stealth to their apprentices. More than half the knights in the order prefer ranged weapons if given the choice. In many ways they are a knighthood of predatory hunters, not wading into the battlefield in war. Rather, they act with cunning and tactics, striking from advantageous positions and with unexpected ploys. A Mukaut knight who foolishly plunges into the fray is a rare sight.

Fealty

The Mukaut have become mercenaries over the years, working for whatever master pays the most. These days that's usually the Order of Truth, fighting against the Gaians of the north in their holy war. The Mukaut are quite willing to lend a hand in taming those lands so long as it fills their treasuries with shins.

Major Players

Bredath. A massive blue Varjellen known for their calm temper and wise demeanor, Bredath serves as the High Overknight of the order. Bredath's only goal is the long term ascendance of the Varjellens as a society.

This marks Bredath as somewhat odd to many of their compatriots, since Varjellens generally care more for personal connections than civilizations. Bredath reminds them that the Varjellen sense of community can be strong in small enclaves, and so it can also be strong for their people if they wish to adapt to this time of kings and queens.

Heilipp. Currently in a female state due to pregnancy, Heilipp is rumored to be perhaps the greatest duelist in all The Steadfast. Her skill at arms, particularly with a large, weightless, impossibly sharp

sword known as the Necktaker, is so legendary that she is sought from far and wide to serve as champion, instructor, or duel partner. Heilipp's pregnancy has not harmed her ability to fight. If anything it has enhanced her instincts and penchant for violence.

Jalis. Once the personal guardian of the King of Ghan, Jalis has joined the order after a falling out with their old friend. Jalis now leads a small retinue of knights of The Mukaut who specialize in serving as hired bodyguards for nobility and royals.

Unbeknownst to most of the order, Jalis' knights work as spies for the knighthood, relaying information on the major activities of the nine kingdoms back to the monastery. This information is vital in the order's secret work towards building a Varjellen "home land".

Mukaut Focus

Turns the Tables

Following the philosophy of the Mukaut, you have taken the adaptability of your species to its extreme. You've learned to study your surroundings and alter yourself to suit the situation. Your training won't always serve out in court, but out in the world you are a force to be reckoned with.

Tier One

Defensive Maneuver (1 Speed point). You strike at an enemy with an unarmed or melee weapon attack, and then move away from them a short distance. Action.

Tier Two

Preternatural Reflexes. You enjoy two Assets on all Initiative rolls. Enabler.

Tier Three

Adapt (3 Speed points). After suffering damage from a particular energy source, such as fire, electricity, or radiation, you may use this ability to

enjoy an Armor rating of 2 against the substance for the next hour. Enabler.

Tier Four

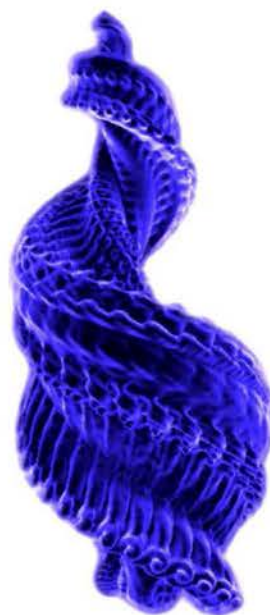
Fight Mode. Once you've taken 10 or more Might damage in a battle you become ferocious for the rest of the fight. While in this mode you gain an Asset on melee and unarmed attack rolls when the attack is made against a foe that has done damage to you in this battle. Enabler.

Tier Five

Distinctive Fighting Style. Whenever you make an attack using an ability granted by your Type (Glaive, Jack, or Nano), you enjoy one higher Edge for the pool associated with that power, effectively reducing the cost of the power by one. Enabler.

Tier Six

Observe Technique (6 Speed points). After suffering damage from a particular fighting maneuver by a sapient foe, you may activate this power, allowing you to employ the same move for the rest of the encounter. Each time you use this maneuver it costs a number of Speed points equal to the Level of the creature you learned it from. Enabler.



The Order of the Redeemed

Beasts of burden for riding are few and far between within the Steadfast, with so few creatures perfectly suitable for domestication. Sure, there are no end of quadrupeds that may be ridden, but so many animals of the Ninth World are dangerous and unpredictable that the options are often quite limited. Humanity has lost much of the dominance it held over the natural world. The Order of the Redeemed are unique in that they have stumbled across a herd of wild horses and bred them, so that now the Redeemed represent some of the best mounted soldiers in the known world.

The Order of the Redeemed have come to see their recovery of these lost creatures as a sign, and the knighthood now dedicates itself to the recovery of all lost knowledge of the previous human civilizations. They nominally serve the interests of the Order of Truth, but remain independent in their pursuits.



The Order of the Redeemed is somewhat unusual in that they maintain no permanent base of operations. The Order prefers to be on the move, taking their sacred herds with them and building tent “fortresses” wherever they stay. They continuously wander the Steadfast and the Beyond, looking for ways to redeem humanity.

It is not uncommon for “lone riders,” the term used by the Order itself for knights, to be found all over the world, independently pursuing the Order’s agenda. Recently, a large company of the Order has joined in the war against the Gaians in honor of the Amber Pope.

Superficially, the goals of the Redeemed seem similar to those of the Angulan Knights, and many claim the Order is an offshoot of that knighthood. However, the Order of the Redeemed bears no ill will towards non-humans and their highly nomadic lifestyle makes them less of a constant in any kingdom, and more of a fleeting military force.

Member Benefits

Those who formally join the Order have access to the organization’s famous steeds, the so-called “horses”. Horses are Level 3 creatures (4 when charging) with 9 Health that can go up to Long distance on a turn.

Origins

Long ago, a lone soldier, cut off from his army, wandered the wilderness, convinced he would soon die. On a cold day, maddened by festering wounds, he stumbled upon the herd. He was astounded, for he had been taught legends of four legged creatures perfect for mounted combat. The soldier’s name was Zoran, and his story is the central myth the Redeemed tell of their origins.

Shortly after the Order became an exclusively mounted knightly order, the leaders revealed to them that they had a greater mission than simply serving some petty prince or king. They were to redeem the Ninth World from darkness and lift it back into glory. No one alive knows where this revelation came from, and many outside the knighthood believe that visitants are involved.

Initiation

Those seeking to take the mantle of the Redeemed must ride with the sacred herd for a year and a day. In this time, supplicants do not train in combat, nor enjoy any privileges of the knighthood. They are required to meet the needs of the other knights, and must do so with humility and respect. Many who join the Order quickly chafe at these restrictions and leave. Those who stay come to learn how to live in the saddle, the true requirement of becoming a Redeemed knight.

After their year long ride, recruits are allowed to swear themselves for life to the cause of redemption, and to live in service to the Order's values and leadership. By this point recruits are used to the strict hierarchy of the order and are considered able to give informed consent.

Training

After a recruit has finished their ride, they have the basic abilities necessary for life on horseback. The knighthood prefers light mounted combat, and emphasizes the use of short bows and light curved swords. Recruits are placed in small units consisting of ten knights, and will remain with those ten for the duration of their training, which generally takes three years.

Once the three year training is complete, knights decide whether they will stay with their unit or become lone riders, wandering the world in search of chances to redeem.

Fealty

Knights of the Order of the Redeemed all swear loyalty and fealty to the Amber Pope and the Order of Truth. This, however, is subordinate to their oath to the Order and to fulfill the promise of the founder. While the knighthood might pay lip service to the Amber Papacy, they expect undying loyalty from their knights to the mission of the Order as envisioned by the leadership. Members swear their oaths for life, even marrying within the order and raising their children among the herd.

Some claim their true allegiance is to their mounts themselves. That the horses are no mere beasts, but intelligent, even telepathic beings. These few claim that the strong connection between each knight and their mount is a supernatural one, and that it is the horses who wish to see humanity rise again.

Major Players

Lord Redeemer Brin. Leader of the Order, Brin is responsible for maintaining the mission of redemption. Stern and fanatical, Brin often will take actions others find extreme, like invading a land where an Artifact can be found.

Master Herdsman Folor. Keeper of the sacred herd, Folor is responsible for the breeding program of the Order's horses. Considered to be second only to the Lord Redeemer, Folor must maintain the genetic integrity of the herd.

Alyeese of Qi. Alyeese joined the Order after her family perished in a fire in the city of Qi. After her training was complete, Alyeese chose to wander the Steadfast, assisting those who explore ancient ruins from previous ages. She claims that anything found there belongs to those who discover it, but would secretly take possession of anything she deemed necessary for the cause of redemption.

Redeemed Focus

Rides a Noble Steed

You are a proven member of the Order of the Redeemed, trained in mounted combat on these strange creatures called "horses." You are sworn to uplift humanity from its current dark age, ushering in a new era.

But there is something strange about your mount. It speaks to you in your mind...

Suggested Minor Effect: Your horse steps on the foot of a foe, dealing 2 damage.

Suggested Major Effect: Your horse takes an attack of its own.

Suggested GM Intrusion: You are knocked or thrown from your mount, taking 2 damage and falling to the ground.

Connection: Choose one other PC. Your horse can also speak to this character's mind when needed, perhaps proving to you that you're not necessarily crazy.

Mount: You begin play with a horse. This animal is a Level 3 creature (4 when charging) with 9 Health. Should your horse be killed or lost, the Order will eventually replace it for you. Your horse should be given a name, for it is an intelligent creature, capable of speaking to you through some form of telepathy.

Tier One

Mounted Knight. You are trained at riding tasks, as well as healing as it applies to horses and other large animals. Enabler.

Tier Two

Shielded. You count as trained in Speed Defense when carrying a shield. Enabler.

Tier Three

Joust (3 Might). You attack using a weapon with the reaching property while mounted, dealing the weapon's damage + 3. Your mount takes you up to a long distance before the attack, in the direction of your target. This attack cannot be used if your mount can't move you at least short distance. Action.

Tier Four

Fearless Mount. Your horse is not easily spooked. Combat, small spaces, and other terrifying situations have no effect on your mount's behavior. Enabler.

Expert Rider. You are specialized in riding and healing large animals. Enabler.

Tier Five

War Horse. Your horse mount now counts as a level 4 creature (5 when charging), with 12 Health. Its telepathic abilities are more advanced than before, allowing it to communicate with you from any distance. Enabler.

Tier Six

Mounted Weapon Master. You are capable of using bows and other ranged weapons while mounted without any penalty. You enjoy an Asset when using your Joust Tier 3 ability. Enabler.



The Treasure Legion

Warfare is a dangerous enterprise most days, and when Cyphers are added into the mix, it can become truly devastating. Few governments are willing or able to keep detachments of Cypher-equipped soldiers, which is where the Treasure Legion comes in. A mercenary order, the legion equips all of their knights with combat numenera, which they employ with deadly skill and needed bravery.

Given the order's heavy use of Cyphers, members of the legion have mutated as a result of such the continuous exposure, often earning them the title "mutant army." This suits the legion just fine, for enemies who are afraid of you are more likely to surrender.

The Treasure Legion doesn't have a traditional headquarters like many of the other knightly orders. The Treasure legion training and organization takes place in a giant low-hovering barge the size of a keep. The barge can land wherever the pilot deems, so the legion is provided with a mobile command and training facility. Simply called the Vault, the floating headquarters of the legion also stores the many Cypher weapons that the legion utilizes in its warfare.

Member Benefits

Members of the Legion gain access to the organization's treasuries, allowing them to purchase Cyphers at a cost of 30 shins in any major city or outpost of the order.

Origins

The Treasure Legion was founded by a prince who had his crown usurped and who sought vengeance against his usurpers. The name of the prince and his kingdom are lost, but the legion remains, though now with a different motivation. None of the knights in the legion are sure when they became mercenary, but they have been that way for as long as anyone can remember.

Initiation

Anyone can join with the Treasure Legion so long as they are willing to commit to the eight month training regime. Few realize how intensive this training can be, instead dreaming of the money they'll make as a soldier of fortune. Many come to regret their commitment. The legion commanders lack any compassion for these fools.

The Treasure Legion avoids lengthy or involved ceremonies of any kind, preferring practicality over ritual. The ceremony of initiation mostly involves the signing of the recruit's first two year contract with the legion and the gifting of their first Cypher.

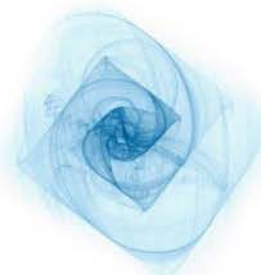
Training

Before becoming a knight of the Legion, a trainee must spend eight months learning the art of warfare. This training covers everything from personal combat to tactics and logistics. While the Legion maintains a strict hierarchy, they encourage knights to speak their mind and to contribute to the strategy. The Legion commanders have no desire for mindless soldiers.

The most extensive training any would-be legionnaire receives is in the storage and use of combat Cyphers. Many of the knights of the Legion end up with knowledge rivaling Aeon Priests when it comes to Cyphers.

Fealty

The Treasure Legion holds no loyalty to any single group or organization. Many distrust the Legion, claiming that knights without a higher authority are dangerous, particularly knights who have such devastating weapons.





The Legion dismisses such arguments, claiming that their commitment to clean, ethical warfare makes them far better than many “loyal” knightly orders. The Legion is obsessed with honoring their bond, and will never betray a client once a contract is signed, so long as the client pays their dues. The Legion also has strict rules about how enemy lands are to be treated, and strictly regulate the pillaging that their soldiers engage in. Knights who violate these rules are flogged, imprisoned, and then expelled from the legion.

Major Players

Commander Garth Longeye. Garth has commanded the Treasure Legion for the last 15 years, making him the longest lasting commander in the history of the Legion. Quiet, almost bookish, Garth loves playing games of strategy, and will often challenge client commanders to a variety of different games. Garth gained the name Longeye when he gained a mutation that gave him raptor-like vision, something he has used on a number of campaigns.

Peter the Tinkerer. Peter joined the Legion when he was chased out of Qi for his experimenting on

cyphers. Finding the perfect home for himself within the legion, Peter is constantly on the lookout for new applications of Cypher warfare. Peter is often abroad from the vault searching for new Cyphers, but occasionally will send other knights on the hunt when he is engrossed in a particular project.

Sara Flame. Sara gained her name when a particularly violent Cypher changed her hair to startling neon white. Sara commands one of the Legion’s most dangerous units, and is always ready for the most risky of missions.

Legion Focus

Wields Dangerous Cyphers

Trained in the intense and deadly regimens of the Treasure Legion, you are a master of making the most of numenera in battle. Bravery, cunning, and lightning reflexes are what make you the soldier that you are: an elite shock trooper in an infamous mercenary force.

Minor Effect Suggestion:

A Cypher you find is exceptionally small and easy to use, providing an Asset on use rolls.

Major Effect Suggestion:

The Cypher you use has a larger area of effect than normal or lasts for twice as long.

Suggested GM Intrusion:

Your customization of the Cypher causes it to go off in your hands.

Connection: Choose one other PC. You once saved their life on the Wandering Walk.

Tier One

Aim True (1 Speed point).

You toss a Cypher with a grenade-like effect to any location or against any target within Long distance. Action.

Tier Two

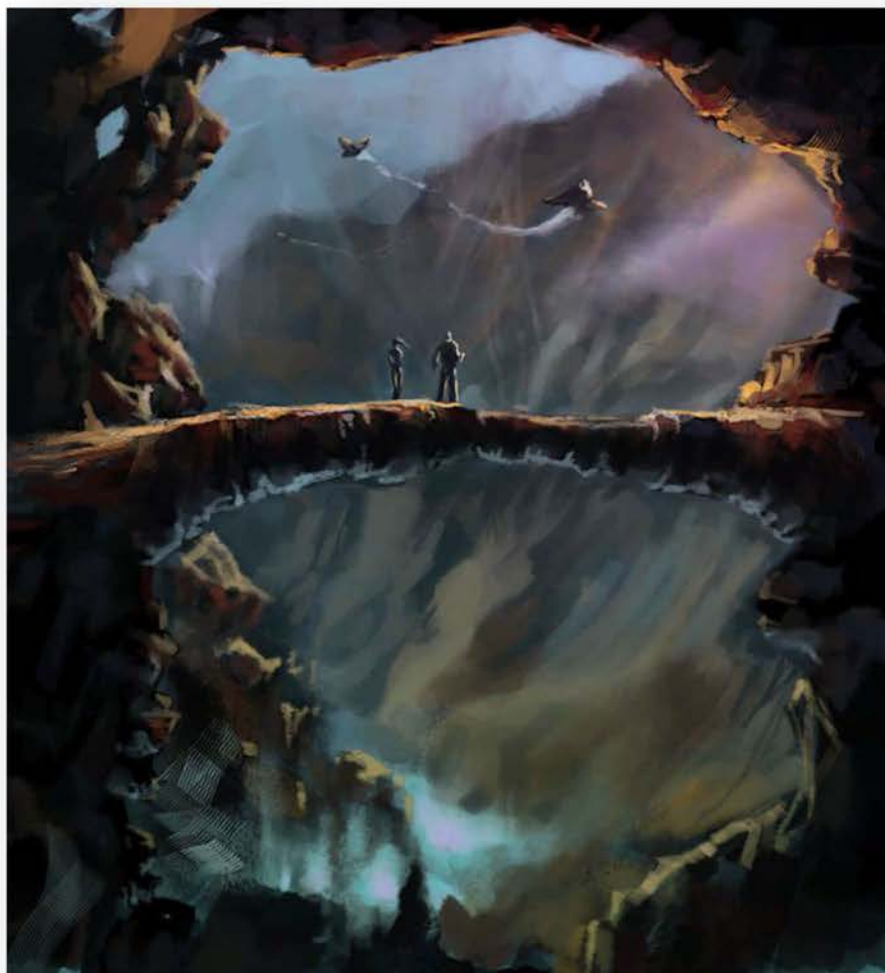
Careful Treatment. You handle Cyphers with care, allowing you to hold one additional Cypher slot. Enabler.

Tier Three

Fully Powered. Your Cyphers behave as though they were one Level higher when you activate them. This does not affect the Difficulty of rolls made to use Occultic Cyphers. Enabler.

Tier Four

Salvager. Whenever you gain a random Cypher, rolled on a table or drawn from a Cypher deck, you may draw or roll twice and choose which one you want. Enabler.



Tier Five

Customization. Whenever you gain a Cypher that has a random effect, rolled on a table, you may choose the effect rather than rolling. Enabler.

Keen Eye. You are trained in locating and salvaging new Cyphers. Enabler.

Tier Six

Targeted Blast. When you use an area effect Cypher, you may determine which targets get hit within the blast. For instance, you could choose to make an explosive Cypher only hit your enemies. Enabler.

Valiant Order of the Gifting Water

The Valiant Order of the Gifting Water is the knighthood sworn to the service of House Moirana. Individuals who join the knighthood become the elite officers of the House's armies. Unyielding fanatics, the knighthood has dedicated itself to the expansion of the House, willing to commit any act in the name of victory for their lords.

Beyond the loyalty, the knights of the Order are eager recipients of their lords' possession, eager to gain the advantage when entering into combat. Unlike other soldiers who are unaware of when their lords will take them, the knights of the Gifting Water can actually call upon their lords in a time of need, further cementing the relationship.

Member Benefits

Members of the Order are given access to the Gifting Water itself, imbuing them with milk psychic abilities. Members may spend 3 Intellect points to speak telepathically with a close friend within immediate range for ten minutes.

Origins

The Valiant Order of the Gifting Water was originally formed as escorts for the water produced in the ancestral home of House Moirana. In the early days of the House, it was necessary for the water that grants the Moirana their abilities to be transported to distant areas where long-term campaigns were being waged. The knights of the Order were originally tasked with the water's protection, ensuring that it would never fall into the hands of the House's enemies.

Initiation

Initiation into the Order requires that the potential knight demonstrate their complete willingness to surrender themselves to the will of their Moirana Lords. This is proven through a number of tasks each recruit undergoes at the end of their training. Most

tasks involve submitting themselves to the powers of their lords, and demonstrating their willingness to not resist.

Training

New recruits of the Order are all trained at Still Water Keep, four miles north of House Moirana's ancestral fortress. Recruits are expected to train with most traditional forms of weaponry, and particularly emphasize archery and the use of polearms. Individuals are encouraged to choose a weapon they feel most comfortable with, for while the knighthood trains to act as a unit, knights are required to operate as individual warriors much of the time.

The most intensive part of any knight's training within the Order is learning to embrace the possession of their lords, and eventually how to call upon it. For many this is a difficult feat to master, and it can take years. Some recruits are never able to learn to embrace the takeover, and wash out of the knighthood.

Fealty

The oaths required of a Knight of the Valiant Order of the Gifting Water are some of the steepest within the Steadfast. Knights who join swear fealty to the Order for life, knowing that only death can release them from their vow. They sublimate their lives, their action, their very will to the wisdom of their philosopher-lords.

Major Players

Grand Master Gregory Hillman. Supreme commander of the Order, Gregory has been a member of the knighthood since he was 14 years old. Orphaned as a child, Gregory attached himself to a knight of the Order who was passing through the town. Gregory was begging in on his way to Still Water Keep. Seeing something in the lad, the knight offered to allow Gregory to squire for him, and eventually sponsored his full entrance into the Order. Having spent most of his life as a knight, Gregory is disciplined and military to the core, and is unflinching in his service to the House and to the Order.

Maven Goldleaf. Maven is the head combat trainer for the Order at Still Water Keep. Quiet and unassuming, many recruits mistakenly believe that Maven is a pushover. Little do they realize that she is one of the most deadly martial artists in the Steadfast, something she introduces them to quickly should they mouth off.

Recruiter Evan Rust. Evan is responsible for locating individuals who have the potential to become knights within the Order. Charismatic, charming, and quite intelligent, Evan has a knack for locating those whose personality fit with fanatical nature of the Order. Often potential recruits are tested for their ability to take orders and follow them to the letter.

Valiant Focus

Channels the Wisdom of the Philosophers

You have learned to control your own thoughts and actions, so that others may advise and even act through you. You have a patron within House Moirana who watches over you using numenera and psychic powers.

Minor Effect Suggestion: Your patron assists you on your next skill roll, granting you an Asset.

Major Effect Suggestion: Your patron takes over your body for a moment, granting you one extra action this round.

Suggested GM Intrusion: You zone out for a round, trying to establish a connection to your patron, or just lacking the will to act.

Connection: Choose one other PC. This character knows your patron and can interact with them amicably when they take over your body.

Tier One

Follow Orders. Rather than the usual benefits from receiving assistance on a task, you enjoy a full

Asset from them if they are not trained in the activity, and two Assets if they are. Enabler.

Patronage. You begin with a connection to a lord of House Moirana who watches over you and attempts to make sure you do well within the Order and out in the world.

Tier Two

Helping Hand (2 Speed points). You subliminate your reflexes, trusting to the instincts of your patron back home. For the next ten minutes you deal +1 damage when using any weapon with which you are practiced. At the end of this time, you deal one less damage on all attacks for one hour. Action.

Tier Three

Psychic Shield (3 Speed points). You call upon your patron to shield you from psychic attacks, granting you training in Intellect Defense for the next hour. Action.

Tier Four

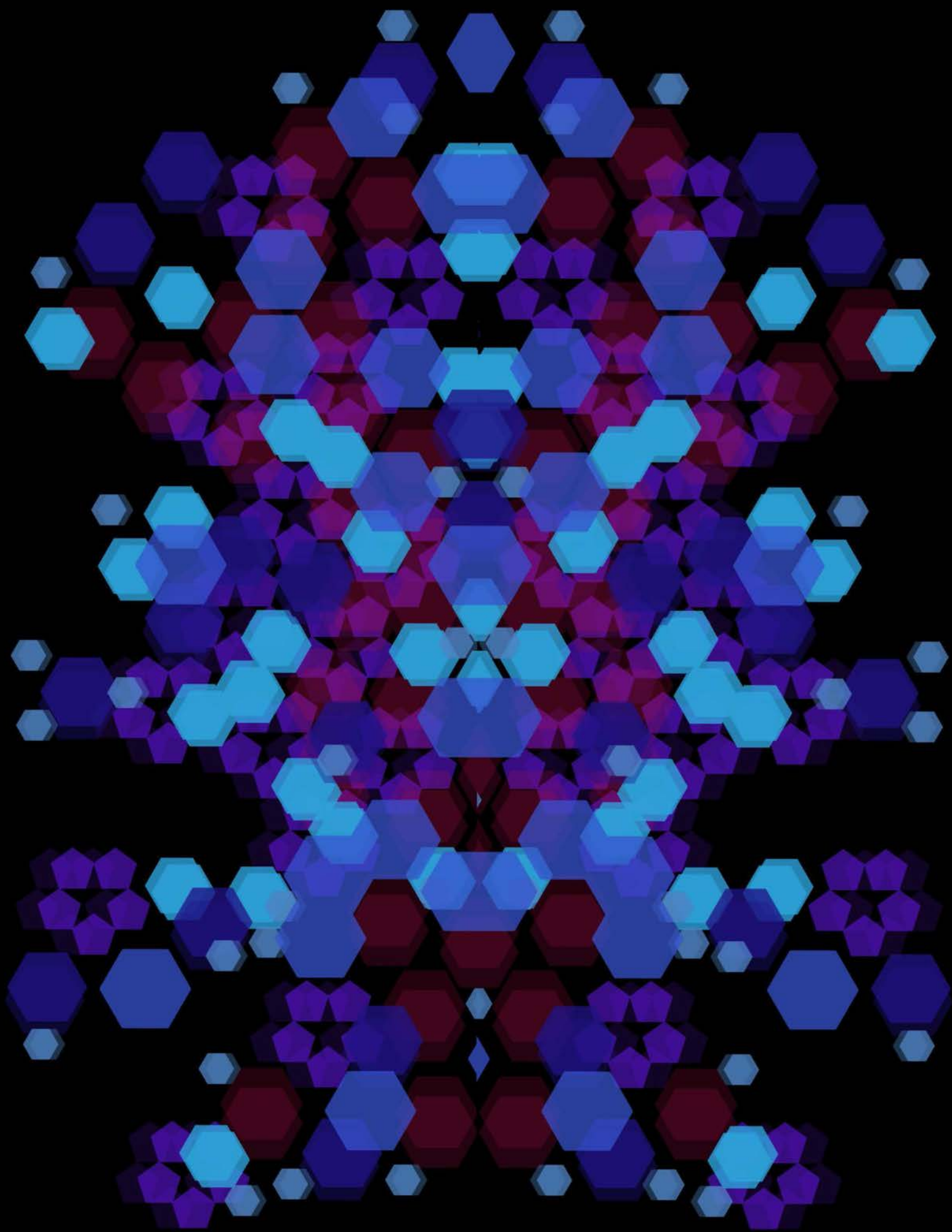
Extended Sublimation (4 Speed points). The GM takes over your character for three rounds, during which time your patron acts as they will through your body. Generally, your patron cannot attack through you, but can speak and are skilled in all social interaction tasks. Action.

Tier Five

Meditative Mind. You are trained in meditation. If you succeed in entering a meditative state during a recovery period, you recover two additional points to your pools. Enabler.

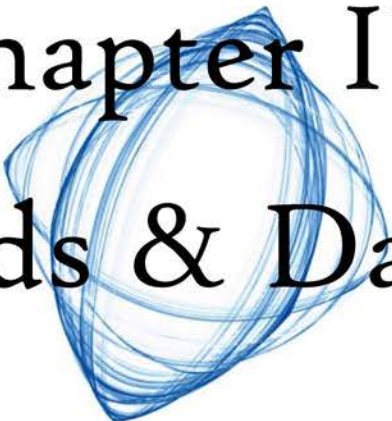
Tier Six

One Mind (6 Speed points). You completely merge minds with your patron. While in this strange mental state all of your Edge ratings are one higher. Lasts for one hour. Action.



Chapter IV:

~Swords & Daggers~



The wealthy and powerful often get their hands on Oddities and Cyphers scavenged from the various dritty, hidden places in the Ninth World. The kind that filter up to the nobility are often those with utility at court for spying, or those with flashy effects. Any necklace which makes the wearer more elegant is of great value among the power players of The Steadfast.

To start things off, here is a list of Oddities available to nobles and knights alike, useful as tokens of favor,

enhancers of majesty, and currency for favors. Some are even mounted on the weapons and armor of knights, adding to their powerful presence.

While this list is useful for treasure and starting equipment for adventurers, it can also be a useful resource for GMs when constructing NPCs at court. An Oddity here and there can be just the weird touch the game needs to keep it rooted in the Ninth World.

Roll percentile or pick from the following list:

- 1 Elegant black glove studded with jewels, which forces the wearer's hand into a fist when in danger.
- 2 Mask which allows the wearer to see through certain kinds of stone.
- 3 Crystal goblet which heats certain liquids placed in it, warming alcohol and destroying most poisons.
- 4 Three silver rings which make the wearer's fist ignite with illusionary blue fire when all three are worn.
- 5 Shin that appears to have two sides per usual, but somehow has three faces when flipped or turned.
- 6 Elegant golden crown depicting the head of a great cat, which makes the wearer unable to stand while worn.
- 7 Two square meters of cloth that appear to be made of extremely fine link metal. Hums in a low tone when placed on a living creature.
- 8 Monocle which causes the wearer to experience the point of view of whomever they watch, but only in that one eye.
- 9 Synth bracelets which force the wearer to smile and walk elegantly.
- 10 Brass colored flute that makes small animals dance when played.
- 11 Bead which can stick to a person's forehead and causes them to continuously view strange patterns and lights.
- 12 Three floating orbs, orbiting each other, which follow the presence of whoever speaks the quietest in the room.
- 13 Silver belt which plays music when the wearer dances.
- 14 One meter chain that points in the direction of the nearest exit when held aloft.
- 15 Gem encrusted necklace that makes the wearer difficult to remember. The person recalling the interaction can only picture the necklace.
- 16 Circlet which projects a holographic image of an animal's head around the wearer. The animal in question can be selected from a catalogue of thousands. [Several dozen of this Oddity can be found in the courts of The Steadfast, with wearers usually programming it to display the creature associated with their House coat of arms.]
- 17 Scepter-like rod which shines with golden light when the bearer speaks with authority.

- 18 Suit of heavy armor which assembles itself on whoever speaks the correct command word.
- 19 Black cloak which takes on the glistening rainbow sheen of oil when the hood is drawn up.
- 20 Green gem earrings which allow the wearer to hear perfectly around corners.
- 21 Synth circlet which floats around the wearer's head, spinning at a rate relative to the number of people near her.
- 22 Armored glove which allows the wearer to gesture to command the motions of tiny objects, such as individual shins.
- 23 Small box which obscures the faces of everyone around it with hazy projected color patterns.
- 24 Nearly invisible goblet which changes the flavor of liquids placed in it, usually to something sweet.
- 25 Spectacles that protect against headaches while worn but cause them once taken off.
- 26 Skintight jumpsuit made for a rather slender body type. Causes the wearer to feel a mixture of pleasure and pain.
- 27 Amulet which makes the wearer's actions look blurry, with motion trails lasting for several seconds.
- 28 Gem which glows blue for ten minutes at a time several seemingly random times during the day.
- 29 Leather collar which gives the wearer a low, sultry voice.
- 30 Knife that can only cut the skin of sentient non-humans, such as mutants and varjellen. All other flesh is unharmed.
- 31 Small spray canister containing two doses of a gas which causes those who inhale it to become sexually aroused.
- 32 Earthen sphere that if held in the palm all day, will sharpen the wearer's teeth. If done for a month, teeth become pointed as the bearer's smile becomes like that of a shark.
- 33 Sparkling synth key that will open locked doors that the bearer has passed through before. Must be bathed in the user's blood to work.
- 34 Small metal automaton of a tentacle-covered bear which plays haunting music during the lulls in conversation.
- 35 Ring that temporarily alters the color of metal armor worn by the bearer. The shade can be instantly changed by a twist of the ring.
- 36 Metal sphere which projects light around the room in time with any music played.
- 37 Synth plate that constantly produces an almost intoxicatingly alluring perfume.
- 38 Stringed musical instrument, the sound of which causes plants to instantly straighten their branches and vines.
- 39 Dagger that becomes invisible to humans when drawn from its scabbard.
- 40 Plain looking scarf that inexplicably catches the eye.
- 41 Extremely long cape that never seems to get in the way or trip the wearer up.
- 42 Glass pyramid that laughs when intentional exaggerations are made in its presence.
- 43 Rune covered rod that when tapped to the forehead removes the memory of the last sexual encounter the user had.
- 44 Long rod of blue crystal, veined with black patterns like those of a circuit board. Glows and pulses in the presence of numenera related to mind control.
- 45 Metal helmet depicting a snake's head. Causes the wearer's armor to grow moss if worn for more than a day.
- 46 Red synth spider which repairs rips in clothing.
- 47 Handheld device that can shoot shins as projectiles (light ranged weapon).
- 48 Small potted tree which bears a black fruit. The fruit causes the consumer to be able to hear ultrasonic noises for one hour.
- 49 Shard of pottery that can be used to scratch messages into any hard surface, no matter the material.
- 50 Eye mask which causes the wearer to temporarily forget who they are, but not care why they can't remember.
- 51 Three soft balls which when juggled cause all small objects in the room to move slowly towards the juggler.
- 52 Head wrap which causes the wearer's voice to only be heard by the person they look at.
- 53 Canister of waxy substance which when applied to metal objects causes them to flash and crackle with light when swung.
- 54 Goggles which allow the wearer to see smells.
- 55 Shard of greenish metal (about the size of a sword blade) that has mass and inertia, but doesn't appear to be affected by gravity. It just floats wherever you place it.

- 56 Copper colored crown that makes you feel smarter than you actually are.
- 57 Intricate golden bauble which can be flattened and then compressed, all the way down to the size of a grain of sand. Snaps back to its original volume if yelled at.
- 58 Staff of transparent metal that when held allows felines to understand your commands (though they don't necessarily follow them).
- 59 Intricate device that causes the hair of everyone near it to float about, defying gravity.
- 60 Ornate belt with dozens of hidden pockets and boxes.
- 61 Invisible belt buckle that shows what's on the other side of the wearer.
- 62 Amulet that encircles the bearer in a spinning spiral of glowing lights. The lights grow brighter and redder in the presence of children.
- 63 Device which fires a narrow beam of blue light straight at the moon at all times.
- 64 Length of scaly cloth that instantly absorbs all sweat.
- 65 Bit of golden metal, suitable as a shin guard on armor, which makes the bearer slightly luckier in matters of love and romance.
- 66 Silver container of a balm that can heal nearly any wound, so long as it was inflicted by your most recent lover.
- 67 Set of five hovering metal balls that will use magnetic rays to assist in donning armor if commanded to do so.
- 68 Small metal knife you feel like you've seen before. You get the distinct impression this knife will be used to kill you.
- 69 Slender glove that will adhere to any synth or plastic surface while the fingers are bent.
- 70 Tooth of a large animal which leaves indelible black marks on flesh.
- 71 Short, soft tube which makes you calm if you squeeze it, and angry when you put it down.
- 72 Beaded necklace which gives the wearer frequent visions of their own past.
- 73 Hunk of a potently flavorful gelatinous substance, easily grated onto food. Causes mild hallucinations.
- 74 Prehensile tail, the base of which adheres to the skin when underwater. Once connected, it is under the control of the wearer.
- 75 Cylinder covered in buttons, each of which makes a different musical chime and causes a brief flash of emotion in those around it.
- 76 Slab of rectangular glass that changes color depending on the health of the person holding it.
- 77 Transparent face mask that causes the wearer to age slightly slower than usual if worn most of the time.
- 78 Black helmet which protects the wearer from allergies and attacks from pollen.
- 79 Stretchy bodysuit that makes the wearer look extremely muscular.
- 80 Crown made of plant vines that never die or wilt. Provides berries in the spring.
- 81 Ring that throbs for 28 hours after a friend of the wearer has died.
- 82 Six-fingered synth glove and arm guard that shines with a neon glow when struck.
- 83 Handle (for a weapon or tool) that grips the holder's hand back, making it difficult to drop unintentionally.
- 84 Paintbrush that leaves silvery inscriptions on anything it's swiped across.
- 85 Smoking pipe that's always loaded with a pungent herb.
- 86 Scabbard that mends nicks and breaks in a properly sized sword placed within it.
- 87 Smooth stone, covered in writing, which helps the bearer in envisioning the nearby countryside.
- 88 Set of four extremely tall fluted drinking glasses. Any group who drinks from the glasses at the same time finds that they are becoming close friends.
- 89 Small black pin which causes the wearer to leave deeper and clearer footprints, making them easier to track.
- 90 Transparent sphere with a set of moving gyroscopes inside. The ball and any relatively small object it's attached to never falls to the ground when let go. Could be placed on a tool or weapon.
- 91 Ceramic bracelet which makes the wearer attractive to reptiles.
- 92 Strip of cloth which glows in the presence of metal gears.
- 93 Set of blue crystals, strung together with golden wire, which together keep the bearer cool on a hot day.

- 94 Set of earplugs which cause the wearer to think about strange political structures.
- 95 Color-changing egg which hovers over your fingers. Makes strange noises from time to time, as though something were trying to get out.
- 96 Pearlescent blob that drinks water and emits soothing smells.
- 97 Seemingly intelligent sword that cannot be used to parry (it moves out of the way).
- 98 Metal pole that can be used as a quarterstaff, but that also emits a beautiful song when spun.
- 99 Glass needle that can penetrate hard materials, allowing one to somewhat mend objects so long as strong enough thread is used.
- 100 Headband that projects visual images of the wearer's thoughts onto nearby walls.

Cyphers

Useful numenera such as Cyphers come from all sorts of places, and fall into the hands of the powerful through the actions of both adventurers and black marketeers alike. There are no few merchants interested in profiting off of the eternal power struggles between the nobility. For this reason, many of the Cyphers that find their way into noble and knightly hands are those that would be useful in intrigue and at court in general.

Roll 1d6 twice or pick from the following list:

1

- 1 Animal Cunning
- 2 Artistic Flourish
- 3 Chemical Cloud
- 4 Crowd Pleaser
- 5 Dance of Death
- 6 Divisor of the Mind

2

- 1 Documenter
- 2 Duplicate Army
- 3 Ear of the Queen
- 4 Escape Artist
- 5 Farscanner
- 6 Halo of Innocence

3

- 1 Instant Acrobat
- 2 Interrogation Probe
- 3 Kingly Mein
- 4 Landscaper
- 5 Lie Detector
- 6 Liquid Courage

4

- 1 Luck Attractor
- 2 Meditative Preparation
- 3 Mental Command
- 4 Mind Breaker
- 5 Musical Accompaniment
- 6 Object of Desire

5

- 1 Orgiastic Weapon
- 2 Power Broker
- 3 Reverse Seduction
- 4 Rooftop Sprint
- 5 Secret Keeper
- 6 Single-minder

6

- 1 Spy Creature
- 2 Symbiotic Decupler
- 3 Wall Scale
- 4 War Horn
- 5 Weaponized Anger
- 6 Weaken Personality

Animal Cunning [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6

Form: Pill, injector, or adhesive pad

Effect: You take on the mental attitude and accompanying viciousness of a predatory animal. For a number of hours equal to the cypher's Level you receive the benefit of an Asset on any roll relating to gaining power, dominance, or food made of animal flesh.

Artistic Flourish [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6

Form: Pill, injector, or adhesive pad

Effect: Everything you do takes on an artistic flair. For a number of hours equal to this cypher's Level you gain an Asset on creative tasks and an Intellect Edge that works for any task so long as you get to put your artistic mark on your efforts.

Chemical Cloud [Occultic]

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Hemispherical device

Effect: All living creatures within Short distance begin experiencing hallucinations which last for three hours, causing both Speed and Intellect impairment (+1 to the cost of expenditures from those Pools). These effects also increase the difficulty of all perception related tasks by one step.

Crowd Pleaser [Occultic]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Launched orb

Effect: All enemy living creatures within view of the device have their attention drawn to it, as the orb creates dazzling displays of throbbing light. The orb floats in the air for two full minutes, during which time those affected by its charms may take no action besides defense.

Dance of Death [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Pill, injector, or adhesive pad

Effect: For the next ten rounds you become a dancing dervish of destruction. You may take no action but attack or movement, dancing beautifully all the while. The dance affects your fighting movements, causing all of your melee and unarmed attacks to gain a +2 on their damage, and granting you an Asset on their attacks.

Divisor of the Mind [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Pill, injector, or adhesive pad

Effect: Your mind splits in two for ten minutes. Each round you get two actions, one directed by a different personality. This will now allow you to take two movements in a round.

Documenter [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6

Form: Small handheld device

Effect: Once activated this Cypher transcribes all talking made within Immediate distance, printing it in that language's written form onto sheets of thin plastic. Thus a conversation spoken in the Truth would be written down in that language. The cypher lasts for 4 hours or until shut off.

Duplicate Army [Occultic]

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Large device

Effect: After a massive blast of energy, all living creatures of similar origins and equipment (one military unit) within Long distance become duplicated. An exact replica of the army is duplicated. This duplicate force follows orders by its normal commanders for 1d6 hours, after which time the force dissolves into red goo.

Ear of the Queen [Occultic]

Level: 1d10

Form: Small handheld device

Effect: This Cypher grants the power to put a single complicated command into the mind of a target sapient creature within Long range. The device works best against the arrogant and powerful, granting you an Asset on your activation roll if the target is either of these things (or both). Once commanded, the victim immediately obeys.

Escape Artist [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Bracelet or necklace

Effect: You become impervious to most forms of binding and capture, easily escaping whatever tries to hold you down through cunning and flexibility. For the next 1d6 hours you needn't even roll on these kinds of tasks, you automatically succeed in your attempts at escape.

Farscanner [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Handheld device

Effect: You scan a large area (roughly two kilometers square), learning the relative locations and general descriptions of every creature within it. The location can be anywhere up to 50 km away.

Halo of Innocence [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Pill, injector, or adhesive pad

Effect: You begin to glow with an unearthly light, radiating an aura of pure "goodness" to those who view you. This effect grants you two Assets on tasks related to establishing your innocence or attempting to gain the trust and confidence of others. The effect lasts for a 1d6 hours.

Instant Acrobat [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Pill, injector, or adhesive pad

Effect: You become a master acrobat for 1d6 hours. You count as specialized in acrobatic and movement-related tasks during this time.

Interrogation Probe [Occultic]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Hovering orb

Effect: The Cypher uses a variety of mind altering effects to probe the mind of a nearby subject. At the time of activation you must give the device a directive for what information you wish to learn.

Kingly Mein [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Circlet, crown, or rod

Effect: You project an aura of power and majesty through a combination of psychic waves and pheromones, affecting all living, thinking creatures within Long range of you. This effect grants you two Assets on all command and leadership tasks for the next 1d6 hours.

Landscaper [Occultic]

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: Large complicated device

Effect: You reshape the land within a one kilometer radius to your will. Enemy creatures are knocked to the ground in the process and must succeed in Speed Defense tasks in order to keep from being crushed (6 damage and trapped).

Lie Detector [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Small handheld device

Effect: For the next hour you are able to know whether you are being lied to by those who speak to you. You needn't even roll for this task- you simply know.

Liquid Courage [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Flask or tube of liquid

Effect: For the next 1d6 hours you are impervious to fear. You suffer no inabilities related to fear and cannot be scared away. You are immune to fear-based effects. This courage grants you a +1 bonus on all weapon damage.

Luck Attractor [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Amulet or ring

Effect: For the next 1d6 hours you attract and harness the good fortune around you. Whenever a person within Immediate distance of you scores a Major Effect or other major stroke of luck, so do you.

Meditative Preparation [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Headband or string of beads

Effect: Once used, this device allows you to enter a meditative state for one minute, after which you feel fully refreshed. Your Speed and Intellect pools are completely replenished after this meditation, and you regain 1d6 points of Might.

Mental Command [Occultic]

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Long pointed rod, or metal helmet

Effect: You take charge of the actions of a living, thinking target within Long range for 1d6 rounds, during which time you may spend your action taking theirs. Visually this effect is quite obvious, as colorful energies flow from the Cypher into the target's head.

Mind Breaker [Occultic]

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Small handheld device

Effect: A target living, thinking creature loses all mental defenses and becomes easily suggestible for the next 1d6 hours. All efforts to affect the target through either psychic attacks or through simple persuasion enjoy two Assets on the task.

Musical Accompaniment [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Wearable device

Effect: Music follows you around for the next hour, making it nearly impossible for you to sneak around. The music infects your every action, inspiring you in the process and unlocking your potential. You gain an Asset on any and all physical actions you take during this time, so long as you can hear the music.

Object of Desire [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Spray canister

Effect: After using this device upon an object within Immediate range, that object becomes desired by all thinking creatures (friend and foe) who can see it. They will fight each other for it, sacrificing everything to get it for the next ten minutes. You are immune to this effect, but your allies are not.

Orgiastic Weapon [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Spray canister, adhesive pad

Effect: Once used upon a weapon, this Cypher allows it to cause orgasms in those it harms. The weapon has this ability for the next four hours, during which time those hurt by it enjoy an unexpected pleasure for 1d6 rounds. While consumed by this effect, the foe counts as distracted, suffering a one step penalty on all actions.

Power Broker [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Sphere covered in buttons

Effect: Once a goal is whispered into the activated Cypher, it immediately places an image in your mind of the nearest person who could accomplish the task. It might be a ruler, a bureaucrat, or an assassin depending on what task you whispered to the device.

Reverse Seduction [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Necklace or bracelet

Effect: For the next 8 hours you cannot be seduced or otherwise manipulated through sexual desire. Any attempts to do so instead put you in a position to manipulate your seducer. Thus if you were successfully seduced into revealing a secret, you instead cause your seducer to reveal important information.

Rooftop Sprint [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Boots, shin pads, or a belt

Effect: You are able to walk and run across sloped terrain with ease, jumping small chasms without a thought. If your action for the turn is to move a Short or Long distance you may do so across this kind of landscape without need for a roll. This effect lasts for 1d6 hours.

Secret Keeper [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Handheld device

Effect: You whisper a secret into the device while activating it, causing you to forget the information you placed within it. You may at a later time push a button on the expended Cypher to again remember what you'd forgotten.

Single-minder [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Small adhesive device

Effect: You become obsessed with whatever task you next take, such as an attack or use of a particular skill. For the next hour you count as Specialized in that task, but suffer a one step penalty on all other tasks.

Spy Creature [Occultic]

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A fist-sized metal creature that eats rocks to survive, remote controlled through a green monocle.

Effect: You let the creature loose, directing its actions and watching its movements through the monocular control. You may spy through its senses (vision, hearing) for 1d6 hours once activated.

Symbiotic Decupler [Occultic]

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Handheld weapon

Effect: Target creature within Long distance has any existing major symbiotic attachments greatly disrupted. Filodoxis lose connection with their Arpak symbiot if they have one, killing it in the process. In most cases an affected Latimore will die, unless the right rebinding conditions can be found within 28 hours.

Wall Scale [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Gloves or shoes

Effect: You become a master climber for the next 8 hours, able to simply move up walls at your usual movement speed.

War Horn [Occultic]

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Complex device

Effect: Once the horn is blown a military unit you lead becomes one Level higher. This effect lasts for 8 hours.

Weaponized Anger [Anoetic]

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Handheld weapon

Effect: Your anger becomes a psychic weapon, dealing the Cypher's Level in ambient damage up to long distance. Your anger causes mental anguish which distracts your target, imposing a one step penalty on actions for the next 2 rounds. You may fire this mental weapon for up to one hour after activation.

Weaken Personality [Occultic]

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: Handheld device

Effect: The target of this Cypher loses the will to defend themselves against persuasion and psychic attacks for one hour, during which time they are at a two step penalty on related tasks.

Artifacts

For those with the wealth or adventurous spirit, Artifacts represent the finest way to show off among the elite. Adorned in powerful or mysterious armors and weapons, the knights and nobles of the nine kingdoms of the Steadfast enjoy Artifacts perhaps even more than adventurers do.

Diplomat's Armor

Level: 1d6

Form: Extremely thin body suit, wearable under normal clothes

Armor Type: Light (1 Armor rating)

Effect: In addition to the normal usefulness of light armor, the Diplomat's armor removes excess perspiration and gives the wearer a pleasant odor, granting an Asset on positive social interaction tasks.

Depletion: -

Leaping Armor

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Form fitting synth and ceramic armor, with hydraulic tubes along the legs

Armor Type: Medium (2 Armor rating)

Effect: Provides an Asset on jumping related tasks, as well as those made to survive falls. Also grants two additional Armor rating against falling damage (for a total of 4 Armor).

Depletion: -

Thrash Armor

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Beaten up armor, covered in spikes and serrated blades

Armor Type: Heavy (3 Armor rating)

Effect: While functional (see Depletion) this Artifact protects against ambient damage, which normally bypasses armor.

Depletion: 1 in 10 (rolled once per day worn), but once depleted the armor may be made operational again with a Difficulty 3 repair task.

Travelling Sword

Level: 10

Form: Brilliant longsword with an ornate handle and hilt, the blade of which flashes with white light when swung

Weapon Type: Medium (doing 6 damage)

Effect: In addition to the added damage (6 rather than 4), this weapon has the strange effect of putting its user into danger. Whenever the sword is used, roll for depletion. If depletion occurs, the item isn't destroyed, but rather an Intrusion occurs in which you are separated from the blade, most likely due to a very dangerous situation.

Depletion: 1 in 20

Glide Shield

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: Broad but surprisingly light shield

Effect: In addition to working as a normal shield (+1 Asset on Speed Defense tasks) the shield allows the wearer to glide through the air. This does not allow actual flight, such as ascending, but the gliding will greatly slow a fall, and allow for roughly Short distance horizontal travel per round of gliding downward.

Depletion: 1 in 20 when used to glide

Automaton Mount

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: Robotic quadruped, capable of being ridden

Speed: Long distance per turn

Effect: In addition to the exceptional speed of the robotic animal, this artifact has simple hand controls and a comfortable built-in saddle. Together these features provide two Assets on ride tasks.

Depletion: 1 in 100 at the end of each day of use



Chapter V:

~Iscobal on the Brink~

The capitol city of Mulen is currently the battleground of an intense conflict between powerful political factions in the kingdom of Iscobal. Battling for the throne and the support of the people, various conspiracies vie for control over the beautiful and powerful nation. An overview of the nation and its intense political situation can be found on pages 158-161 of the Numenera core book.

This chapter is intended as an example campaign setting for games involving political intrigue as the center of play. It presents factions, locations, characters, and plots. It's important to note the differences between plot in a game about intrigue and one about exploration and discovery. To begin with, plot can be a mixture of both story-driven plots and so-called sandbox style gaming. This is to say, that the players may be embroiled in one or more intrigues, but their time is their own in most respects.

In a game of intrigue characters move from scene to scene gathering information and allies, making enemies and hatching schemes. Certain scenes may be instigated by the GM, as the PCs should not be the only actors in the political drama. Indeed, characters may be approached for their assistance and support by many opposing forces, each with an unknown agenda. Picking sides, carefully taking clandestine meetings, and culminating each session in important schemes or events. This is the ideal session in an intrigue game, and it's not at all what we would normally call linear.

GMs need to stay flexible. Often the best role is that of reactor to Player actions. The PCs decide to talk to the queen and see if she knows anything about the plot they've uncovered. You react by having the queen provide a bit of the information they seek, and incidentally make them an offer or drop a hint as to

something they could do "to gain the favor of the king." Now the PCs are embroiled in two plots which may or may not be connected. As this progresses the characters are more and more connected to their world, engaging in more and more adventurous plots and making enemies and allies along the way. All you need as GM is a good idea of what each NPC is up to and how they'd react to player action.

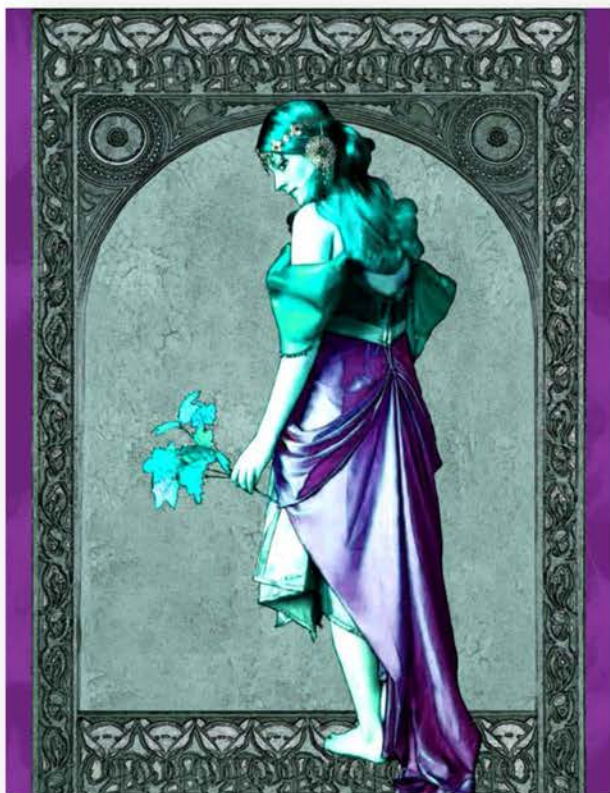
It doesn't work the same as a simple quest, but it allows for a deeper, at times more mature version of gaming. This style of play can still be dangerous and dramatic. Indeed, the stakes will seem much higher when the fate of nations is on the line.

The Basics

As described in the Numenera core book, Iscobal is on the brink of civil war between those who support the current king, and those who side with the sons of the former queen, who was usurped by the current king's father. But things are not so black and white. Those who side with the two obvious sides are willing to alter course if the political winds change, and there are still many major players standing at the sidelines looking for the right opportunity to get involved.

The Five Factions

The following major factions of political actors are at work in Iscobal. Identifying just who is allied with who is a monumental task. Understanding their motivations and plans is quite likely impossible. But the interplay between them is what sets the stage for political adventure in Mulen, with repercussions throughout Iscobal and The Steadfast.



The Royal Faction

King Noren tiKalloban and his wife Thera form the heart of the faction of greatest power. Noren, as king, commands a great deal of respect among the nobles, specifically with the families who helped his father in overthrowing the mad Queen Whenith Sarromere forty years ago. Most notably he is supported by the cyborgs of House Iiama (see Chapter I for details). It is they who have assisted in his reconstruction, since his recent survival of an assassination attempt.

Major Characters: King Noren, the ruler. Queen Thera, the ruthless autocrat. Vidsel Iiama, a brilliant politician aided by his family's brain-scanning robotic eyes.

Motivation: Eliminate the Sarromere faction through any means necessary.

Assets: Thera has taken direct control over the Masked Legion, Iscobal's secretive police force. Noren has gained the support of several houses through land grants recently, but it is only a matter of

time before the debt of gratitude is forgotten. House Iiama has an invaluable storehouse of Numenera devices to put to use against the Sarromeres.

Allies: The Order of Truth would be willing to side with them if the kingdom were willing to support refunding the old queen's research into dream technologies. However, should he turn away from them, they'll quickly turn into enemies.

Plots: The Masked Legion remains vigilant against the Sarromere faction. With only a little more evidence the Royals will be able to have the Sarromeres arrested for treason. Additionally, the king is desperately trying to find excuses to remove land and titles from the allies of the Sarromere. Should anyone at court prove to be the least bit competent, they'll likely have titles and castles thrust upon them by a seemingly generous king. Finally, Vidsel's eyes see much and it's only a matter of time before he learns of the Sarromere's current plots.

"Rulership is a long and tedious process. We are given titles by our fathers and superiors, but we must live up to them. The work of shaping a kingdom takes days and hours of tedious work. We are the farmers of words and plans."

-King Noren tiKalloban

The Sarromere Faction

The sons of the late queen Whenith Sarromere, Bren and Kor lead a small resistance against the ruling House tiKalloban. With allies throughout Mulen, the brothers are a formidable force. Two great houses support their claim: the giants of the Terrassis family and the immortal Athana. In the case of the latter, their ties to the Sarromere are closer than most imagine, due to interbreeding between their lines. The Athana see the Sarromere as their means of controlling Iscobal.

Major Characters: Bren Sarromere, a brave and bold warrior with connections in The Cold Grasp. Kor Sarromere, the older, wiser brother. Gwen Athana, the faction's public face at court. Jelena Terrassis, the noble with the most to lose in terms of lands and titles, and who therefore wants to take physical action against the king again.

"I am the true and rightful ruler of Iscobal. I carry the blood of the Sarro with dignity and purpose. It is not up to the ruled to determine who should rule and I shall prove this to the usurper in due time."

-Kor Sarromere

Assets: The Athana holdings throughout The Steadfast supply a constant sum of shins and Cyphers, as payment to those who would join the faction and act against the Royals. The local Terrassis have a decent contingent of house guards at the ready.

Allies: Bren Sarromere's connections to the assassins of The Cold Grasp run deep. Some say their leader Hedra is his lover. Others say he is the only connection she has to a drug she needs in order to live. In any case, The Cold Grasp seems willing to accept targets for very little money on behalf of the Sarromeres.

Plots: Having tried and failed to assassinate the king, the Sarromeres are attempting a more political approach this time around. They now court the assistance of nearly every House in the realm in their efforts to discredit the royals. Those who claim allegiance are given a test or two to prove their worth and gumption. Several minor nobles have taken them up on this, putting their necks on the line for the chance to come out on top at the end of a political revolution to come.

The Middle House Faction

Several noble houses of middling size and importance have secretly allied in recent days, formalizing a

perspective that has existed for quite some time - that whatever may pass, the kingdom should not be brought to war. The middle houses represent those who enjoy the peaceful, beautiful existence that once defined life in Iscobal. They include houses that are not coincidentally led by those old enough to remember a time before the current ruling house, when things were simpler they claim.

Major Characters: Kila Geadstro is easily the oldest noble at court. Searin Enelis manages a treasury of mutual shins between the various middle houses, used for the faction's pet projects. Ibiej the Smiler runs the Grand Theater of Mulen and uses it to spy upon the intense political intrigue that occurs there.

Assets: The middle houses hold a bit, but not much. They have control over the center of court in the city - The Grand Theater. Their greatest asset is truly their invisibility. Few would suspect that these slow acting milquetoast nobles could organize and plot against the more ambitious and even violent members of the court. They are considered mere scenery in the larger machinations of the current political war and this is as they like it. The less scrutiny they receive the more room they have to operate.

"None suspect, none suspect. We are seen as simple and petty. We are seen as old and useless. We are here to make court look full. I tell you now that we are the real power in Iscobal. We are the ones to fear."

-Ibiej the Smiler

Allies: The middle houses make up an integral part of the day to day operations within the court. They serve on nearly every committee, attend every event, and have the unsuspecting ear of the King. They can call upon minor houses that work with them without those houses even suspecting an ulterior motive beyond temporary social status games.



Plots: Currently the middle houses are working to determine the next move for the Sarromeres and the Royals. They do so through careful spying and even casual conversation. Should any hint of assassination or war be heard the middle houses are ready to step in with force if necessary.

The Order of Truth Faction

Members, supporters, and advocates for the Order of Truth are not the most powerful political unit in Iscobal, but they do have an agenda. Largely active in the eastern city of Dynafel, the former researchers for Queen Whenith are still obsessed with the dream research she had them begin during her reign. Without national funding, however, their work has dwindled. Led by the Aeon Priest Narla Deshu, they now turn to King Noren for resources. Should he refuse, they are willing to put their technologies to use in assisting whoever wants to take his place, so long as they support dream research.

Major Characters: Narla Deshu is the senior member of the Order and the most experienced at working with dream-based technologies. Her interest in those numenera borders on obsessive. Idiala Ibrigan is the Order's representative in Mulen itself. She is still awaiting a formal hearing from the King on the dream research matter. Braken Narrkonis is an Aeon Priest with connections in his and other noble families throughout The Steadfast. He is an untapped political resource within the faction, looking to make himself useful.

"I am certain once the King hears our dema-err... requests, he will acquiesce. If not... well, let's not think about what sort of ally we might make to his enemies."

-Idiala Ibrigan

Assets: Several dozen powerful dream-related Artifacts, as well as a plethora of other dream technologies. If they wanted to, the faction could haunt the dreams of half the population of Iscobel.

Allies: The Cold Grasp are looking for new ways to commit assassinations without leaving evidence. They have learned of the dream technologies of the former queen and decided that this might be a potential vector for death dealing: killing people in their dreams. They have reached out to the Order of Truth, making an offer of shins and assassination contracts in return for such technologies.

Plots: Without consultation with the other Aeon Priests, Narla has begun influencing the dreams of the royals in the hopes of stirring their interest. While not totally successful, she has managed to peek into the King's mind during these activities, noting a few of his current plans. She now believes that she could put similar processes to work on other members of court, getting exactly what she wants not only in terms of the funding she needs. She could very well run the whole kingdom.

The Knighthoods Faction

Three of the more influential knighthoods in the city have allied and begun talks to decide who shall rule in Iscobal. They are: The Knights of the Labyrinth, The Knights of the Pelagic Deep, and The Mukaut. The Labyrinthines wish to wait and see what happens, the Pelagics side more with the Sarromeres, and The Mukaut are considering asking the royal family directly for a massive bribe. One knight, Lady Viscara of the Pelagic Deep, has proposed that the faction seize the throne for themselves, with her as their leader. Some claim her ambitions are the madness of the deep talking, but others are beginning to consider the potential upsides of a knighthood-run nation.

Major Characters: Lady Viscara, who wishes to seize the throne herself. Sir Faidith, a mutant Labyrinthine with a strange psychic connection to Queen Thera, who begs caution. Granhilm of the Mukaut considers their Knighthood's interest in wealth absurd, and instead seeks to use this upheaval to further their Knighthood's political agenda - making a state within Iscobal to be the homeland of the Varjellen people.

Assets: The most powerful of the three Knighthoods is the Pelagic Deep, which has extensive connections to local shipping and fishing communities. If any group were to take over the royal navy, it would be this one.

Allies: The most powerful connection the Knights have is the psychic link between Sir Faidith and Queen Thera. There are times when their thoughts are so aligned that they cannot even tell which one of them is

"The time is right to make our move. The throne is ours for the taking! Hear my words, should we wait any longer, our time will pass and we shall regret our inaction. Never has a place been so ripe for a change for the better."

-Lady Viscara



speaking. The Queen trusts Faidith implicitly, due to this decades-long connection with roots in the story of Faidith's mutation. These two factions could easily ally due to this trust.

Plots: Lady Viscara's plot to take the throne is in full swing, with her making tentative talks with the other non-Royal factions. Her supporters are becoming more and more agitated as the current crisis unfolds and it is only a matter of time before she rallies the knighthoods to her cause, or at least does something foolish.



~About the Authors~



Jordan Marshall is a fantasy writer and gamer who lives in the Southern Oregon region. He studied political science and economics at university, which served to deepen his already considerable love of political intrigue. Through college, Jordan discovered a calling for social justice, which seemed to be opposed to his desire to become evil overlord of the universe and all the realms beyond. He deals with this paradox by playing out his fantasy for world domination in the local Vampire LARP. Jordan seeks in his writing to demonstrate the deep and complex ways politics affect our lives and how power can be a place of both oppression and liberation. In role playing scenarios, Jordan has always embraced the role of the caster, realizing that the wizard is the greatest and best class a person could ever choose. In collaborating on this work, Jordan creates a rich and dynamic interplay between sorcery and science fiction.



Joseph was born, raised, and currently lives in Manhattan, New York. In his short life he has spent much time introspectively, some creatively, and less productively. His recent collaboration with Ryan is an attempt to improve upon all three. He holds a degree in organizational psychology from CUNY Baruch, but be prepared to listen for hours if you ask him what that means. His greatest hope is that whatever he finds his way into will keep him interested for years to come. That, and world peace, of course. You can reach him via Twitter at @IHeartFargo.



Ryan Chaddock is a writer living in the Rogue Valley of Oregon with his wife Katherine who is awesome. He holds a degree in economics from Southern Oregon University and enjoys spirited political debate. He's an advocate for nerd pride and wants to help foster a growing, positive nerd culture on the planet. Ryan hopes to continue writing and developing roleplaying games for the rest of his life. Tweet him @chaddockr.