Broken Immersion

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CONTENTS

Introduction

"I had a strange experience today. I was hanging a sword upon our family coat of arms on the wall in my new study when the weapon slipped from my hands and onto the floor with a clamor. Bending down to retrieve the heirloom, one passed down from my father and his father and more, I noticed an inscription upon the pommel. 'Take this to the master upon Sepulcher Hill,' it said. I felt strangely compelled to obey. I went to that hill, despite knowledge that this sword is at least one hundred years old.

"There, standing amidst the graves, was a man in black robes. I held out the weapon to him and he took it. I knelt before him and he began to speak arcane words before handing back the sword. I looked at the pommel and the inscription that had let me there had been replaced. It has new orders for me now… Some kind of quest."

-From the diary of Hedegral of House Velid
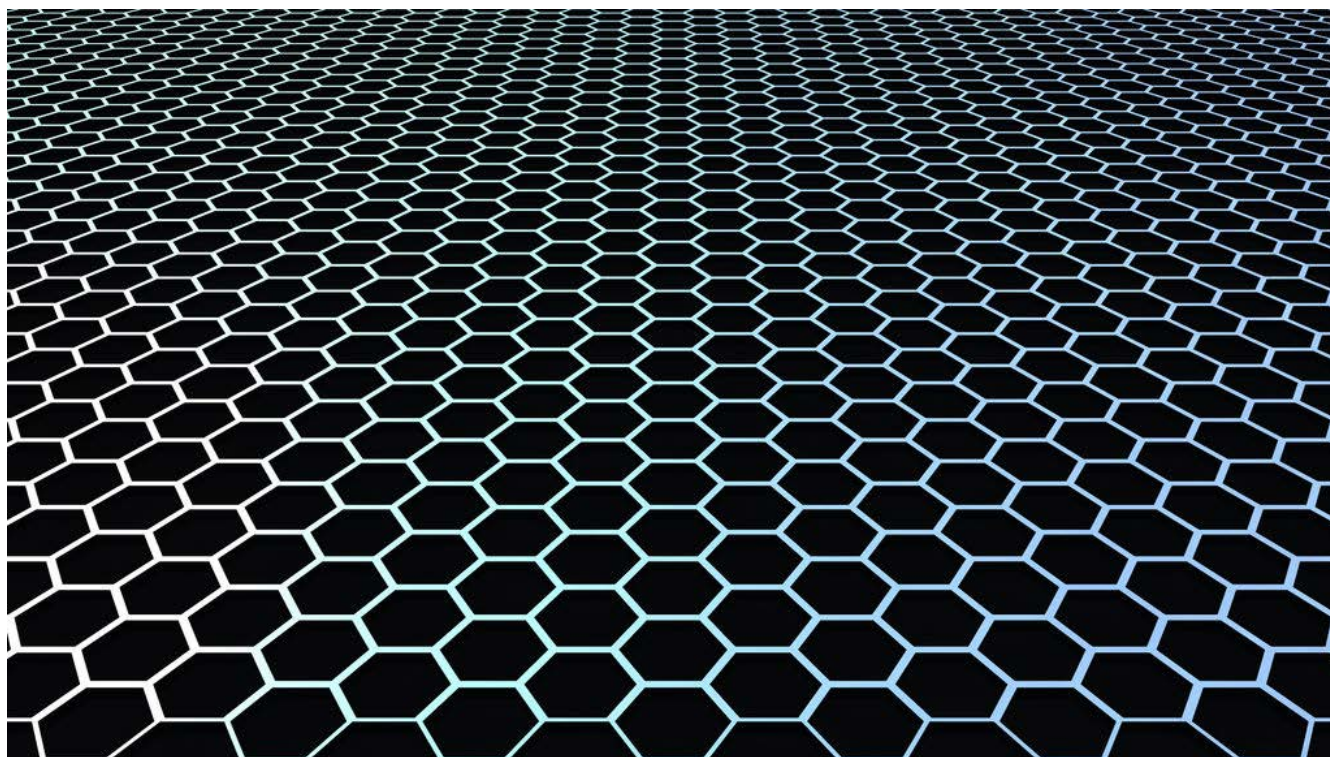
SECRETS IN CODE

The recursion of Ardeyn is special, not just because it is one of the larger recursions surrounding Earth. Its creation and origin are both legendary and unusual. Created as a desperate act of heroism in an attempt to save the world from planetovores alerted to the Earth's presence, it was seeded with the only set of rules on hand- the code of a massive multiplayer online roleplaying game (MMORPG) called *Ardeyn: Land of the Curse*. Though the recursion of Ardeyn spent several years isolated from the rest of the Strange, during which time hundreds of years passed within its mini-world, and though the recursion appears to have a history thousands of years old, the truth is that everything there is derived from video game code.

This means creatures, buildings, items, cultures, and more are the handiwork of artists and programmers from our world. Indeed, it is said that The Betrayer himself was a programmer on the project named Jason Cole, and it seems likely that is a major source of his power in Ardeyn. Knowledge of the underlying code of the world would seem to be useful.

Recursions are defined by the laws that govern them. It's only through internal consistency that fictional bleed is able to form into recursions in the Strange. Though it is often assumed that the laws that govern Ardeyn are the more religious dictates (such as the Seven Rules), the truth is that it was the program code of the Ardeyn game that formed the basis for the recursion.

WHAT IS IN THIS BOOK?

Broken Immersion is a look at the implications of a coded fantasy world, derived from a MMORPG. It takes a good hard look at the kinds of choices available to players, backdoor commands on hand for designers and staff, and adventure locations designed as dangers throughout the game world. You'll find the following:

Chapter I: Character Selection. A look at the additional races, classes, and customization features that players had access to in the game, as well as styles of play derived from those options.

Chapter II: Back Doors. An exploration of those functions available to game world builders and customer service staff, still available to a lucky few.

Chapter III: Instanced Dungeons. Three mini-recursions attached to Ardeyn, derived from the game's programmed adventure locations.

Chapter: IV: Loot Tables. A number of Artifacts found throughout Ardeyn, as well as a new kind of Cypher derived from the commands and codes of the game itself.

On the surface Ardeyn is a fantasy world, but dig a little deeper and a broken, unfinished mess of a recursion can be found. Adding danger and mystery to the familiar tropes of fantasy and the predictable quests of adventure games, Ardeyn is an enticing blend of fantastic and technological; ancient and pop cultural; dignified and cliché.

Weaving Digital with Fantasy

Creating stories with this book's themes in mind can be complicated. It can mean scenes and characters interwoven with elements of fantasy, computer games, and the Strange itself. For player characters from Earth this can be even more complex. Yet there's a familiarity to seeing fantasy through the somewhat more limited perspective of video games. Every plot element is there for a reason. Every detail chosen by a human artist.

Though Ardeyn is recursively derived from a game, rather than a game itself, it holds all of these elements and any GM familiar with such worlds can evoke their consistencies to great effect. Players can be lured into plotlines simply by making them fit the quest giver format. They can be scared a bit by a battle simply by invoking the way dungeon bosses tend to become more powerful when not defeated soon enough.

Many themes from the world of gaming are woven throughout this book to assist you with the task of bridging these worlds. You'll find glitches, unfinished code, command line powers, fantasy races torn from mythology, instanced sub-recursion dungeons, loot drawn from a powergamer's dreams, and more.

More than anything the process of placing programmed content into the fantasy realm of Ardeyn should be an excersize in creativity and wonder. What are the implications of falling through the world in a recursion? What happens when an intelligent foe respawns? Such strange questions are there to be anwered in your games, and there's no one way to go about that process. Above all have fun with it.
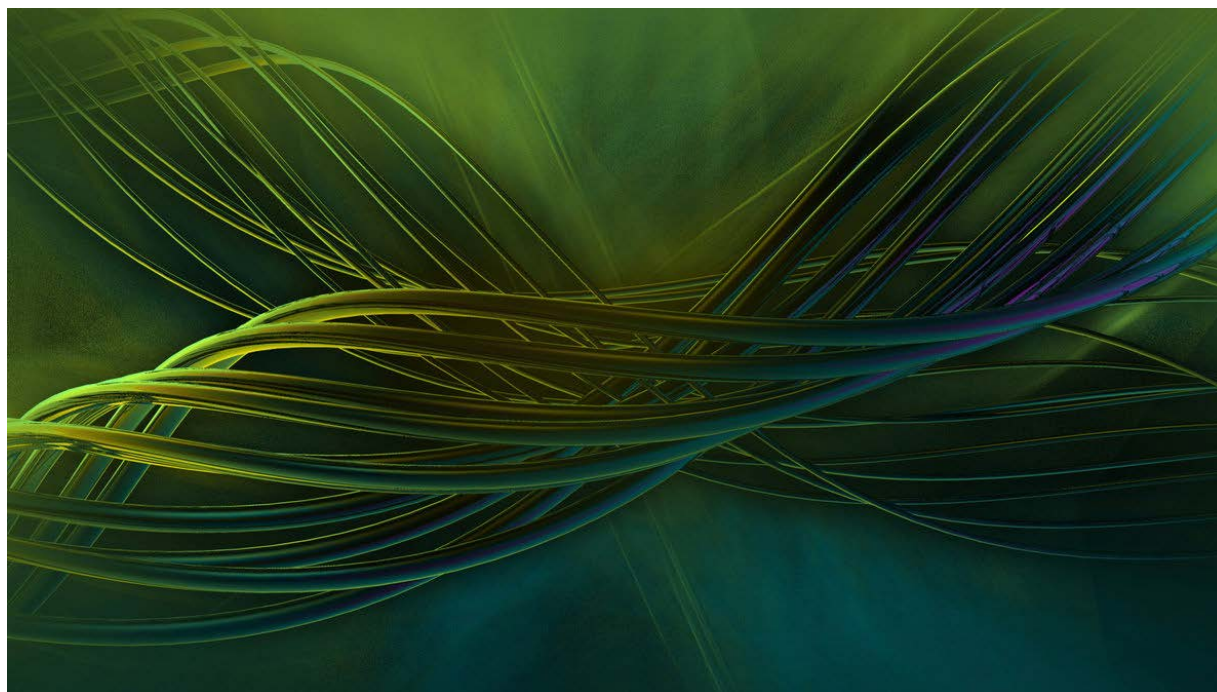
Chapter 1: Character Selection

Upon initiation of a translation into Ardeyn the computer code that made up the rules of the recursion attempts to figure out who you are. It has a few options to choose from: player, program, customer service, programmer, or tester. Often if it can't figure out what you are it defaults to thinking of you as an existing player of sorts and grants you access to some of the powers that characters within the game usually get access to. These are the foci as presented in The Strange corebook.

But it's possible during first translation to Ardeyn that something goes wrong (or maybe right) and you'll find yourself in front of a character creation screen, floating in the chaos of the Strange on the periphery of the recursion.

By touching the interface and selecting a gender, race, and class you're able to more directly influence your translation, selecting from the options presented in this chapter.

Gender

Though travellers through the Strange routinely translate into their native gender (when available), Ardeyn presents an opportunity to change. Rather than simply keeping your old gender without thinking about it, the character creation screen explicitly asks what gender you'd like to be and customizes your physique to match.

Men translated through the interface will often be massive and muscular juggernauts, while women represent the status quo of women characters in video games (slender, with large breasts and backside). These defaults can be altered, but represent the standard hero of the video game world, a default setting even in modern independent games such as the one Ardeyn came from.

The fact is that many male players in MMOs play female characters (and vice versa). Fearful of accusations of effeminacy, some men joke that "If I'm going to be staring at someone's butt for hours on end it might as well be a girl's butt! LOL!" Whatever the reasons for their explorations outside their gender, the fact that this occurs flavors the way Ardeyn's character selection interface works. The character creation process defaults to female, which might not seem important, but when recursors are in a hurry or not paying close attention to all the details (such as "character customization") they can easily end up taking a female character by accident. As a result translation into Ardeyn through the interface has a much higher chance of creating a "character" that's a woman.

Race

Games for some reason use the word "race" to mean genetically or physically distinct intelligent species, rather than ethnicity, though the non-human species they present are often stereotypical caricatures of real world cultures. Several races were to be made available to players in Ardeyn: Land of the Curse. The obvious humans are there, as well as the qefilim that help define the setting, but others were created to allow players a number of options. The basmu (snake-people), kusarikku (bull-centaurs), rabisu (vampires), girtablilu (scorpion-people), and ugallu (lion-people) were all created, though not all were fully integrated into the setting at the time that the game was uploaded to the Strange. Their names represent the Mesopotamian inspiration for such creatures, rather than the final names they'd have been given had the game been launched commercially.

Basmu

Scaled humanoids with fangs, horned heads, and short wings, the basmu look more like monsters than heroes.
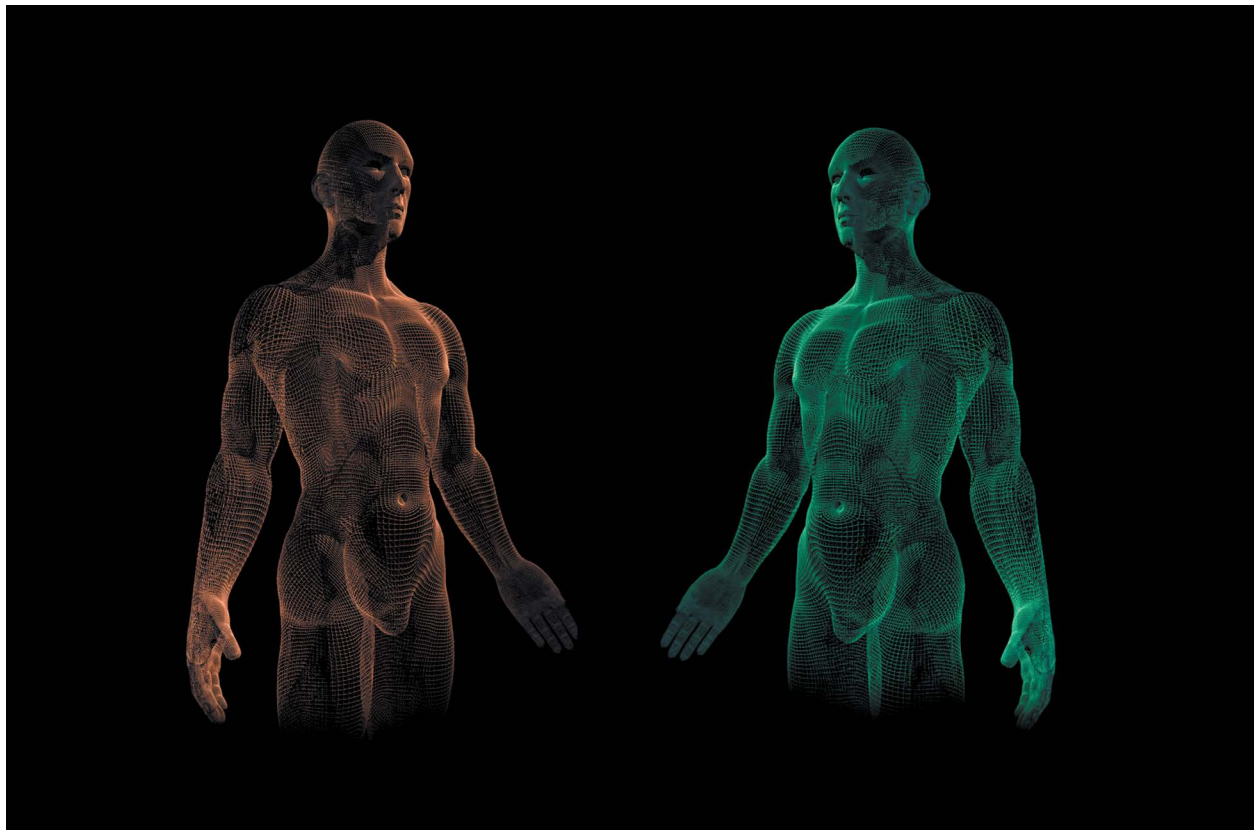
Basmu have a warrior culture with settlements along the beaches of Oceanus where they fish and practice swordplay. Though they rarely invade other towns, the basmu are tough and their expansion is seen as dangerous. Player basmu are likely to be Vectors, but some are sorcerers that would fit the mold of a Paradox.

PC's who play Basmu may buy the following ability for 4xp:

Hardened Skin. You benefit from one additional point of Armor due to your scaly hide. You also enjoy an asset when attempting to resist grapples. Enabler.

Kusarikku

With the upper body of a human and the hind quarters of a bull or cow, the kusarikku were an odd choice for players. They were apparently intended as a race of guardians against the various evil spirits of Ardeyn. Kusarikku have a culture of protectiveness, claiming that they were created by the Incarnation of Justice as protectors of the Seven Laws of Ardeyn. Since those ancient times the race has fallen into a less glorious existence, living in small rural communities remarkable mainly for their strong stone walls.

PC's who play Kusarikku may buy the following ability for 4xp:

Muscular Body. You gain 4 Might points. Additionally, you enjoy an asset on lifting and carrying tasks. Enabler.

Rabisu

The vampire character option looks much like a human, but pale of skin with glowing green eyes. Unlike the modern conception of vampires, the rabisu can exist in the sun just fine, but they do prefer the night, where they are excellent hunters. Their vampiric nature is expressed in their need for living energy. Rabisu who are alone in the world get this by draining the life energy of humanoids and large animals, but rabisu who spend a great deal of time among those with "the spark", such as PCs, can get by off the ambient life energies of their companions.

PCs who play Rabisu may buy the following ability for 4xp:

Leach Life (1 Intellect point). You make a psychic attack against a creature within long distance, draining it of one Health and replenishing one Might point of your own. Action.

Girtablilu

With such a hard to pronounce name it would be clear that the girtablilu were unfinished, even if one were not to see them. One look and this becomes evident, for their forms are incomplete and strange. Girtablilu were intended to look like giant scorpions with the upper bodies of humans, but either due to the imperfect nature of the transfer of code between Earth and the Strange, or the fact that the race was not fully finished being constructed, they are freakishly weird in their physique.

Eyes in odd places, limbs ending in jagged, sometimes pitch black stumps, each Girtablilu is a peak under the hood of Ardeyn's programming. Walking proof that Ardeyn is more than just a setting, they manifest 3D rendering and motion synchronization problems with every move they make, implying the computer-based nature of the recursion for all to see.

PCs who play Girtablilu may buy the following ability for 4xp:

Scorpion Sting (1 Speed point). You lash out with your stinger, dealing 2 damage and an additional 1 poison damage each round for 1d6 rounds after the attack. Action.

Ugallu

Lion-headed humanoids with powers over storms and the dead, the ugallu are powerful sorcerers and reverent mystics. Spread throughout Ardeyn, they toil among other mystically inclined races and cults, learning necromantic powers of old and passing them down through their matriarchal ruling priest caste. The lesser castes of warriors and hunters sometimes ascend to temple guardians for the powerful lionesses of the ugallu, benefiting from potent wards and magical weapons.

PCs who play Ugallu may buy the following ability for 4xp:

Lightning Flash (1 Might point). Your hands ignite with electricity, allowing you to deal one additional damage with unarmed attacks for the next ten minutes. Action.

Class and Party Role

Ardeyn: Land of the Curse was an innovative game, but its basic mechanics were not altogether different from others in the MMO genre. Each character created would have a "class" determining basic abilities and emphasizing certain roles within a party of player characters. For example, the Soldier class was designed to emphasis either playing to grab the attention of foes and surviving those attacks (defender) or dealing as much damage to single opponents as possible (damager). The Priest class was designed to either summon spirits of the dead to fight enemies (damager) or use soul energy to replenish allies (healer). The following is a list of the classes available through the character creation interface and the Foci that most suit those play styles and class themes.

Archer. A ranged damaging class designed to combine archery with the kinds of acrobatics enjoyed in modern video games. Foci: Rains Death from Above, as well as Carries a Quiver from The Strange Corebook.

Assassin. Exclusively a damager class, either focused on mundane melee fighting and magic powers relating to shadows and demons. Foci: Strikes From Behind, as well as Wields Two Weapons at Once from The Strange Corebook.

Golem. Strangely designed as a class rather than a race, the stone statues come alive are specifically designed as a defender class. Foci: Grabs Their Attention, as well as Abides in Stone from The Strange Corebook.

Priest. Generally played as a healer class, but potentially proficient in various types of harmful soul sorcery. Priest heroes who do not learn healing are often mocked as wasting their talents. Foci: Keeps Them Alive and Blasts Monsters, as well as Works Miracles from The Strange Corebook.

Character Customization

The character creation interface found by certain translators into Ardeyn provides a full array of customization options to the Stranger's new form. From hairstyle to facial construction to butt size, the possibilities are seemingly endless.

Many on their way through these strange menus merely skip over this tedious step, finding themselves with a look quite similar to everyone else who did the same, due to the default settings for each race and gender combination. But if time is taken to explore the possibilities, a recursor translating into Ardeyn can end up quite beautiful, exotic, or monstrous, depending on what's desired.

Soldier. All-purpose warriors with broad skill with weapons and military tactics. Foci: Grabs their Attention, as well as Wields Two Weapons at Once and Leads from The Strange Corebook.

Sorcerer. Wielding arcane powers native to the fantasy realm of Ardeyn, these elemental dabblers focus on taking down groups of foes with explosions of energy. Foci: Blasts Monsters, as well as Channels Sinfire from The Strange Corebook.

THE DEFENDER ROLE

Tasked with drawing the ire of potential foes so that attacks come to them rather than their weaker, squishier allies, those who grab attention to defend are called "tanks" in the video game world back on Earth. This is not the most perfect of terms, as real tanks generally deal quite a bit of damage. Defenders in MMO's like Ardeyn's code source are far more concerned with surviving the attacks they work for than dishing out lasting wounds.

A defender can serve as a leader, directing others in the intricate dance required for tough boss fights and maneuvering around dungeons with practiced ease. They can also serve more as a quiet and stable source of confidence and strength for the group. Less talk and more action, silently performing their job without complaint. In either case the successful defender knows how to keep an enemy occupied, grab up the anger of new foes, and keep themselves relatively unharmed.

This final requirement, survivability, only goes so far. A good group has more than just a defender and a couple damagers. A healer is often a crucial part of the defender's fighting style, designed as such by the game developers. Thus the defender and the healer must come to trust one another, each saving the other's life perhaps several times in a single fight. The defender in particular must trust that a healer will bring them back from the brink, despite all the attack's they've garnered.

The translation of this role into the more visceral and real world of the recursion of Ardeyn is at times odd. The more silent tanks find it difficult to hold the attention of their enemies the way they might have using the anger inducing powers of the game's classes. They must instead rely upon martial skill and even force of personality.

Ultimately, as with all roles, the ability to perform defense properly depends on teamwork and practice. Moreso than any other role, the tank knows this. The tank internalizes the need to be a part of the group or she perishes. She helps the assassin flank a foe, watches for incoming enemies sneaking up on the sorcerer, and has an intense bond with the soul healer. The tank is the meaty stuff that holds the party together.

Grabs Their Attention

This Focus is an implementation of the defender playstyle, most often practiced by Vectors. It represents a focus on getting foes to attack and surviving those attacks. The defender is a master of martial tactics, moving between foes and allies in an effort to command the room. Blocking attacks and generally getting in the way, the defender is larger than life on the battlefield and as formidable as an actual tank.

Connection: If this is your starting focus, choose one of the following connections.

1. Pick one other PC. When in doubt, this is whom you choose to defend.

2. Pick one other PC. This person's great in a fight, but bores you to death.

3. Pick one other PC. You respect this person's mastery of magic, to an almost reverent degree.

4. Pick one other PC. This person is clearly destined to do great things and you intend to make sure they survive to do so.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You push your enemy near a dangerous obstacle, allowing an ally to finish the foe off with but a push.

Major Effect Suggestion: You find excellent footing on this terrain, providing you with an asset on Speed Defense tasks while in the immediate area.

Suggested GM Intrusion: Your weapon gets stuck in the body of an enemy you kill, requiring an action to get it out.

Equipment: Ardeyn clothing, heavy armor, a weapon of your choice, an explorer's pack, a shield, and 300 crowns.

Tier 1: Defense Training. You are practiced with heavy armor. Enabler.

Guardian. Whenever you take the Guard action you may designate one enemy within short range who cannot attack anyone other than you for one round. Enabler.

Tier 2: Tank (2 Might points). You take no damage from an attack (besides the cost of this power). Enabler, usable once per round.

Tier 3: Taunts and Gibes (3 Intellect points). A person drawn to attack you by your Guardian ability now takes one extra damage from each attack made against them for one round. This power only works on sapient creatures capable of anger. Enabler.

Shield Bearer. You are capable of carrying a shield that's twice the size of a normal one, providing two assets on Speed Defense instead of one. You may need to have this item custom made, as most cannot carry such a bulwark. Enabler.

Tier 4: Flank. The NPC drawn to attack you by your Guardian ability counts as flanked by you, providing an asset for your allies when attacking the foe from the other side, even when you're up to a short distance away. Enabler.

Tier 5: War Cry (5 Intellect points). Every enemy within short distance is affected by your Guardian ability, compelled to attack only you. Enabler.

Tier 6: Beast Breaker. Your Taunts and Gibes ability now works on all creatures regardless of their intelligence or ability to become angry. Additionally, your Guardian-related abilities now operate at up to long distance, rather than short. Enabler.

The Damager Role

Practiced by both melee and ranged combatants, both mundane and magical in their tactics, the damager role is a broad one, encompassing nearly any hero not specifically working to defend or heal. This is not to say that there aren't a set of skills associated with this role, just that those talents lie more in general philosophy than specific techniques.

The damager must for instance learn to deal out as many and as deep of wounds as possible without drawing too much attention to themselves. The ability to judge just when putting a lot of Effort into a strike will make the difference is also an important sense that a damager must develop over time. Together these considerations make those who mete out painful wounds into masters of opportunism, constantly diving into trouble for but a moment and jumping back out as the heat gets too much to bear. Damagers wait for the right moment, when the enemy is most distracted, and strike with deadly force.

Pushing both their own limitations and the general boundaries of common sense is the great pastime of these danger seekers. A powerful poison, deadly if spilled. A demonic servant, willing to turn on its master at a moments notice. These are the tools of the trade for the damager, who must always be finding new ways to fell a foe before it's too late. Speed and power are the hallmarks of a damager's attack, and sometimes this means playing it fast and loose with what's acceptable.

A damager's work can be thankless, as they rarely save lives directly, but they often get to exalt in the glory of taking down a great beast or important villain. Their share of the spoils is often the item that gets them out of trouble or makes them all the more dangerous, and such treasures are greatly appreciated by these assassins, archers, and sorcerers.

Often there is great variety between the various damager types. Those who strike with melee weapons must of course close to those distances, requiring them to be among the more courageous in the face of a powerful enemy. Others using magic or ranged weapons to attack from a distance can often be more cool and calculating, able to pick their battles more easily and escape to safety when the need arises. The irony is not lost on those who rely on backstabbing and other up-close meneuvers that they are generally considered to be cowards for their efforts. The employment of such tactics requires a thick skin and the willingness to bend the common boundaries of morality.

Blasts Monsters

The preferred fighting style of the sorcerer class and other practitioners of magic, those who deal primarily in raw magical blasts are a fearsome force on any battlefield and in any dungeon. A dangerous magic, capable of harming any and all who find themselves within fields of raw elemental force, sorcerous characters are given a wide berth.

Connection: If this is your starting focus, choose one of the following connections.

1. Pick one other PC. This person first taught you the rudiments of magic.
2. Pick one other PC. This person reminds you of one of your parents or siblings.
3. Pick one other PC. This person has a great deal of magical potential.
4. Pick one other PC. This person is immune to most of your magical attacks, but is affected by Intrusions against you that relate to magic.

Minor Effect Suggestion: The attack also stuns the enemy for one round.

Major Effect Suggestion: The attack also strikes one additional enemy within immediate range.

Suggested GM Intrusion: You lose control of the magic and your attack strikes you instead.

Equipment: Ardeyn clothing, light armor, a weapon of your choice, an explorer's pack, 5 blank scrolls, a quill and ink, and 300 crowns.

Elementalism: Each of your focus powers must have a specific elemental damage type or flavor, which you choose the first time you cast it. The element associated with the ability is permanent and should be recorded on your character sheet. The element could be fire, shadow, cold, plants, lightning, etc., so long as it fits your particular style of fantasy magic.

Tier 1: Quick Blast (1 Intellect point). You strike a target within immediate range with a blast that deals 3 damage. Action.

Tier 2: Sorcery. You may move points to your Intellect pool from your Might pool at any time. Enabler.

Tier 3: Sweep of the Arcane (3 Intellect points). You strike all creatures (including allies) within immediate range with a magical attack dealing 2 damage. Action.

Tier 4: Mobile Magic. Whenever you take a movement action, you may also make a Quick Blast against a target you pass. Enabler.

Tier 5: Energy Prison (5 Intellect points). You wrap up a foe in magic, causing them to become trapped for ten minutes, unable to flee or make attacks. While in this prison they gain 5 armor against all attacks. Action.

Tier 6: Column of Magic (6 Intellect points). You blast an immediate area with magic (10 foot / 3 meter diameter), located within long distance of you. All creatures in that area take 4 damage, including your allies. Action.
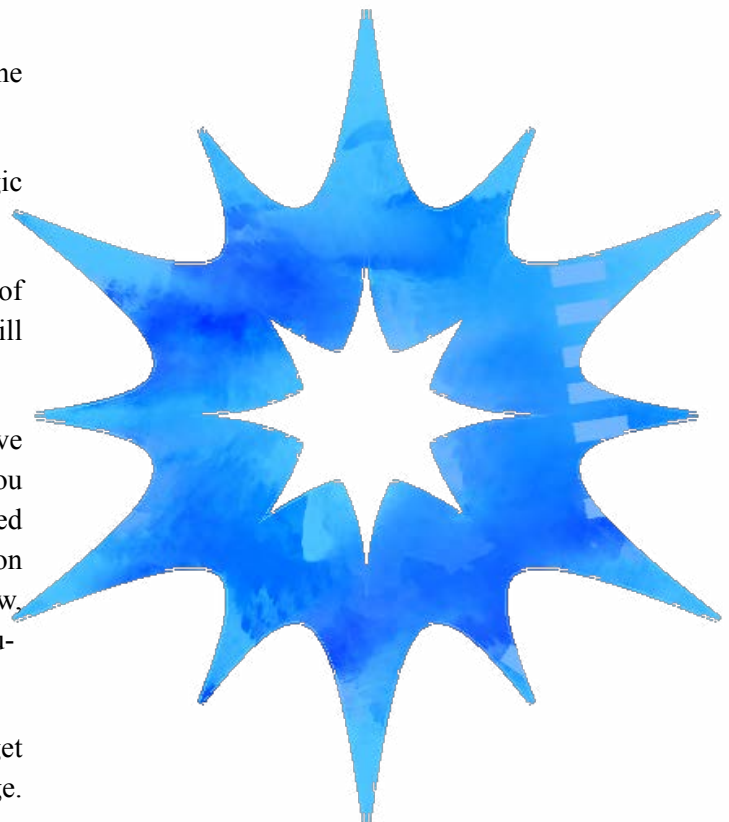
Strikes from Behind

A play style particularly derived from the assassin class, it is the melee damager's favored way to take down foes: through dishonorable moves that take the target by surprise. The assassin was a player class designed to play a complimentary role with defender types, waiting for the tank to open up opportunities and taking advantage. Assassins develop tactics designed to distract and subdue foes, as well as employing shadow magics to better strike from unexpected angles. Their reliance on melee attacks usually makes them Vectors and Spinners.

Connection: If this is your starting focus, choose one of the following connections.

1. Pick one other PC. You grew up on the streets with this character.
2. Pick one other PC. This person has hired you for a number of assassinations in the past.
3. Pick one other PC. This person knows just how dangerous you are and treats you with utmost respect.
4. Pick one other PC. This is the one person you could never kill, no matter the pay.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You also throw a small weapon at your foe, dealing 2 damage.

Major Effect Suggestion: Your enemy is overwhelmed, unable to attack for one round.

Suggested GM Intrusion: The lighting effects in Ardeyn glitch, causing the room to hold no shadows.

Equipment: Ardeyn clothing, light or medium armor, a light or medium melee weapon of your choice, an explorer's pack, and 400 crowns.

Tier 1: Close Combatant. You are trained in a light or medium melee weapon of your choice. You deal one additional damage with that weapon. This damage bonus does not apply to thrown attacks. Enabler.

Tier 2: Impair (2 Speed points). You take a normal melee attack, dealing -2 damage but causing your foe to become unable to move for the next three rounds. Enabler.

Tier 3: Shadow Skulk (3 Speed points). You enjoy 2 assets on all stealth rolls for the next ten minutes so long as you stick to shadowy areas. Enabler.

Tier 4: Backstab. You may double your weapon's base damage when attacking foes from behind. Enabler.

Tier 5: Damage Over Time (5 Speed points). You deal a melee attack with your weapon that does its normal damage on the first round, and then 2 additional damage each round for the next 5 rounds as your foe bleeds out. Enabler.

Tier 6: Shadow Walk (6 Speed points). You step through your own shadow and emerge from someone else's within long distance. Enabler, used as your move.

RAINS DEATH FROM ABOVE

Major Effect Suggestion: You may choose to hit a specific location on the target, perhaps taking out an eye or a hand.

Suggested GM Intrusion: Your attack misses and hits the defender in your group.

Equipment: Ardeyn clothing, light armor, a light or medium bow, two dozen arrows, another weapon of your choice, an explorer's pack, and 215 crowns.

Tier 1: Mobile Archery. You are trained in attacks with either medium or light bows (your choice). Enabler.

Tier 2: Acrobatic Tumble. You may fall up to 30 feet (9 meters) and take no damage from the descent. Enabler.

Tier 3: Scramble (3 Speed points). During a movement action this round your traversal may include an immediate distance of utterly vertical surfaces. If you are trained in climbing, the amount of vertical movement may be up to a short distance. If you are specialized, it's long distance. Enabler.

Tier 4: Positioning. You enjoy two assets when making archery attacks from higher ground than your target. Enabler.

Roof Hop (4 Speed points). As part of a movement action this round, you leap horizontally up to 20 feet (6 meters) without need for a roll. Enabler.

Tier 5: Vantage. Your ranged attacks from higher ground ignore cover and concealment of any mundane sort. Enabler.

Ammo Exploit. Due to a glitch in the code of Ardeyn, you always have one more arrow in your quiver. Arrows generated in this way disappear within a few seconds, so they cannot be sold or collected. Enabler.

Tier 6: Rain of Arrows (6 Speed points). You fire a dozen arrows into the air, hitting up to 5 targets within an immediate area of your choice within long distance of you, dealing your normal bow damage. Action.

Combining powerful ranged attacks with expertise as finding just the right vantage from which to rain down shots, the archer class was an extremely mobile option for damagers. More than just a bow-wielding powerhouse, the archer practices a parkour-inspired form of locomotion, climbing and leaping into position.

Connection: If this is your starting focus, choose one of the following connections.

1. Pick one other PC. This person trained with you in your youth.
2. Pick one other PC. This person's presence creeps you out, making you want to climb up away from them.
3. Pick one other PC. This person has worked out a set of hand signals with you, helping you know when to make a surprise attack or hold off.
4. Pick one other PC. This person is like a mentor to you.

Minor Effect Suggestion: Your attack disarms your foe but deals no damage.

The healer's problem is their utility. With flashy and useful magics they are easily spotted by foes and targeted for extermination. Defenders and even damagers must often make it their priority to keep the healer from getting too much attention from enemies. One hard hit and the one person keeping the group functional can go down, unable to rescue everyone else with a quick spell or prayer.

The irony then is that the one person who is least likely to be dealing significant damage to the enemy is the one most likely to come under fire. In the sometimes brutal world of Ardeyn this can mean that any given healer has been close to death on many occasions, probably sporting a number of scars for their efforts (when they've chosen not to heal them away). Devoted to their role and their chosen deities, the healers are known for their self-sacrifice.

The stress of holding the lives of their companions in their hands can take its toll on some healers. While most successful healers are the calm eye of the storm, many would-be masters of life and death become paranoid with concern for their fellow adventurers.

THE HEALER ROLE

Healers, including those who practice the Works Miracles focus as well as those learning the more game mechanical magics of Keeps People Alive, make up an often vital component of a party. While many groups of strangers do not include healers, they can be a critical element of a functional group, especially when braving the instanced dungeons leftover from the old code of Ardeyn's past.

Healers work to keep their allies up and walking, providing the necessary capacity to keep going and keep fighting. A good healer can be the difference between having the reserves need to slay a foe, and needing to face them for several more rounds. Thus the healer is the ultimate enabler.

This can be particularly true for those who have failed to save a life in the past. Forever haunted by their mistake, even if hardly their fault, the broken healer is made a parody of the heroic saver of lives. Nervousness and overactive imaginations are not the hallmarks of compitent medical or magical healers.

In the long run though, most healers become solid of will and even of temperment. Those who face down death itself as a foe often come to see themselves as minor gods, meting out life giving magic as they see fit. Though they would never admit to endangering the party, many can get reckless with their need to wait until just the perfect moment to pull off an important heal.

Keeps People Alive

This focus represents an application of the healer role, particularly as provided by the priest class in the original game code. It's more closely related to the style of play needed to keep a party of players alive and functioning than keeping them at full health all the time, allowing the magic to accomplish less but for more characters. Spread thin, the healer is still able to save those who are near death and keep them from going over the brink.

Connection: If this is your starting focus, choose one of the following connections.

1. Pick one other PC. You saved this person with your first healing spell, long ago.

2. Pick one other PC. This person constantly tests your ability to keep everyone up and about.

3. Pick one other PC. This is the person you trust to pull you out of danger.

4. Pick one other PC. A healing spell you cast went wrong for this person, causing a permanent scar they've never stopped complaining about.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You also cure one person nearby of a disease or other physical malady.

Major Effect Suggestion: You also heal one person nearby for 1d6 points to a Pool of their choice.

Suggested GM Intrusion: Your healing does damage instead, due to a strange mystical property of the area.

Equipment: Ardeyn clothing, light armor, a light weapon of your choice, an explorer's pack, a holy symbol, a month's supply of incense, and 150 crowns.
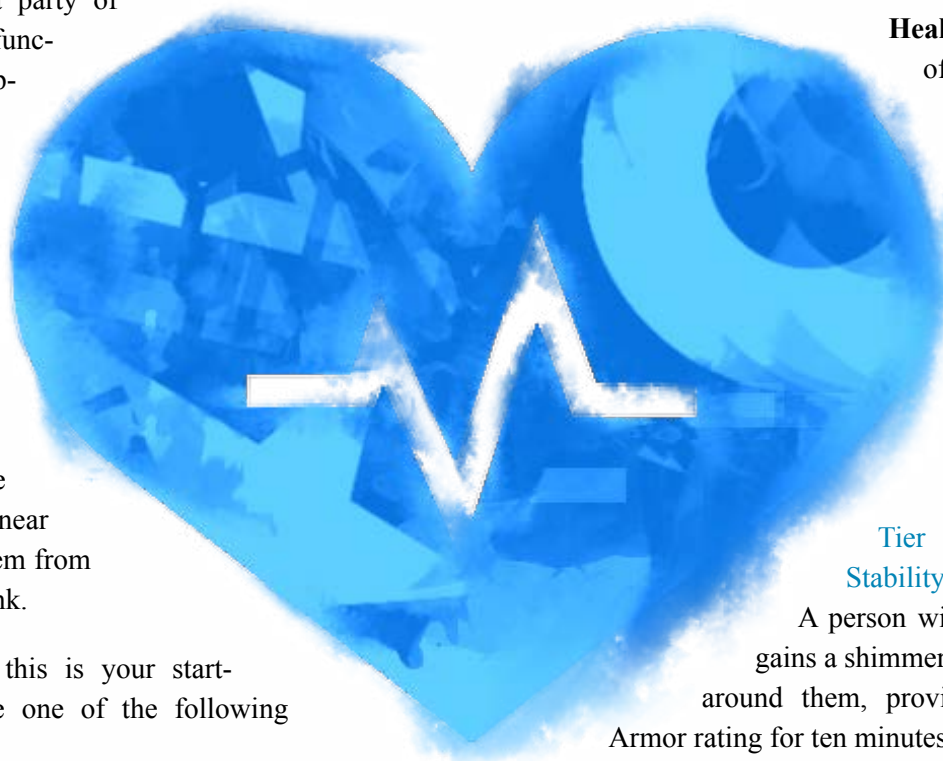
Healing Powers: All of the powers in this focus require a task to activate with a base Difficulty of 2, increasing by one Level each time you've used the power this encounter.

Tier 1: Spiritual Stability (1 Intellect point). A person within long distance gains a shimmering bubble of light around them, providing +1 to their Armor rating for ten minutes. Action.

Tier 2: Soul Explosion (2 Intellect points). All PC allies within short distance of you (including yourself) regain 1 point to their Might pools, so long as they are at half their Might pool maximum or less. Action.

Tier 3: Redirection (3 Intellect points). You cause an attack against a PC you can see within long distance to affect a different PC also within long distance. This power must be used before the defense roll is made. Enabler, usable once per round.

Tier 4: Cling to Life. Your Soul Explosion now also replenishes 1 point to Speed and/or Intellect pools when the pool in question is at zero current points. Enabler.

Tier 5: Misdirection. Your Redirection power now works on NPCs, allowing you to protect or hit them with attacks meant for others. Enabler.

Tier 6: Save. Your Spiritual Stability power now heals the target one step up the Damage Track when applied and provides +3 Armor rather than the usual +1. Enabler.

Chapter II: Back Doors

Within the code of Ardeyn resides procedures to allow programmers, support staff, and artists to do their jobs. This code no longer functions completely and it sometimes misidentifies those with the Spark, including incoming recursors, as users who could fill those roles. Granted power over the world but without guidance on how to use it, the process of taking advantage of such status can be both frustratingly confusing and frighteningly alien.

Accessing the Code

For some the code is visible to the naked eye, or at least viewable using practiced techniques. For others the underlying programming of the world is a less tangible force, felt more than observed. The code when viewed can be seen as binary ones and zeroes, as C++ programming lines, or as fractal patterns spiraling out of the shadows. When sensed it can be a creepy sensation of being watched. A chill up the spine that tells you that it's your time to shine, or a breathless moment indicating a supernatural force.

Verbal commands are the most common, as they tend to simulate the command line that was accessible to both players and coders in the game. For those who Alter the Landscape, commands are more physical, requiring mimed manipulations of invisible forces and objects. This makes them comparatively more stealthy in their power, despite the silliness of their movements. Though verbal commands don't need to be loud unless they are meant to direct a target, they must be somewhat audible to be picked up by the code.

Strange Inheritance

Those who are native to Ardeyn who develop these powers are probably feared by their friends and family. The abilities conferred by status as a game modifying "user" in the recursion appear demonic and unusual to Ardeyn natives. Given that the character has no understanding of their power initially, their first experiments with their newfound status can be disastrous. Each character with one of these foci should have a good story about their initial steps. Lives were likely changed or even lost in
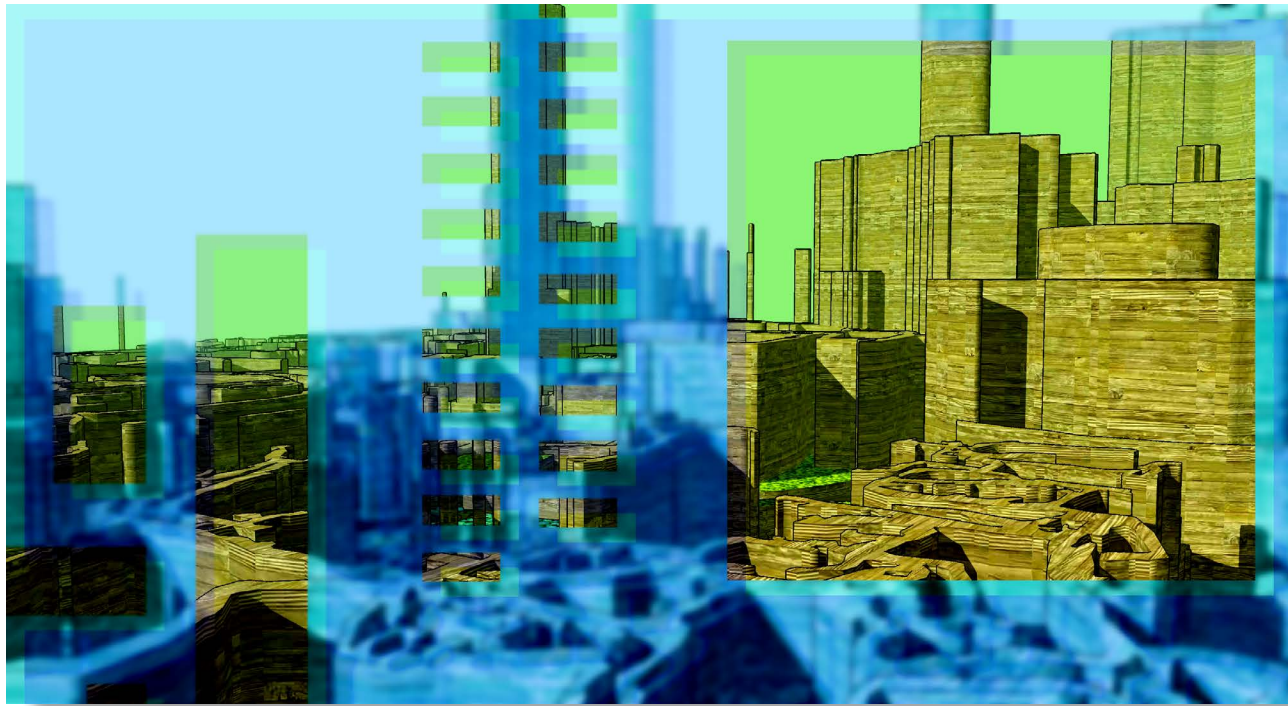
the process. Fumbling in the dark, characters might even access much higher Tier powers when they first manifest them.

Those who are most lucky were born to families who historically come into a particular style of power. In some places there are even small cults, led by those with similar abilities, passed down through the generations. While the cult or family may not understand the source of their "magic," they often discover ways to pass down knowledge of these practices. Being inducted into such an organization can be a great relief, being told that their strangeness has been experienced before and can be somewhat controlled.

The Cult of the Broken Wall for instance operates out of a number of ancient and ruined temples, cultivating disciples in the ways of Altering Landscape. The Broken Wall cultists are fanatical about understanding the true nature of Ardeyn, peering behind the veil of the game world as well as they can. Masters of the cult almost always learn to translate at some point in their path to enlightenment, never to be seen again.

This assistance is of course a double edged sword. Though help and a community can be comforting, there's little guarantee that a cult or family tradition will not lead an aspirant astray through unnecessary mysticism. Some have even turned these practices into full blown magical spells, requiring hours of preparation and performance. Some believe their powers can only be activated after striking a prospective target with a weapon, or after a seduction.

Translated Programmers

Those who translate into Ardeyn and find themselves developing one of the foci in this chapter could conceivably come from a computer-related background. This makes sense, considering foci often relate to the background or personality of the recursor. Those who possess a skill in computer science or programming tasks will have an advantage in certain situations. If trained in such a skill, the character can use that skill on focus tasks. If specialized, the character can use the skill for abilities, and also gets to choose the Pool used to fuel powers of the focus, rather than using the one described in the focus description.

For example a Paradox character specialized in computer science might decide upon translation into Ardeyn that their newfound powers to Recode Behavior will be based on Speed rather than Intellect, dazzling their targets with flashy movements rather than the power of their voice, allowing the character to save their Intellect for their Paradox powers.

Alters the Landscape

The old code of Ardeyn believes you to be a level designer for the game and begins granting you access to 3D modeling tools for altering the landscape and items within the world. This interface is highly technical, most likely coming to you as strange lines and numbers superimposed over your vision. Maneuvering the menus and grasping at unseen objects, stumble onto useful gestures for altering the nature of the world itself.

Connection: If this is your starting focus, choose one of the following connections.

1. Pick one other PC. You've seen inside their gear (and body) and know they've got something to hide.

2. Pick one other PC. This person wants to exploit your command of the landscape for glory or profit.

3. Pick one other PC. This person's form can't be penetrated by your powers.

4. Pick one other PC. You grew up with this person and discovered your powers while trying to help them.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You notice a flaw in the design of an object or creature, granting you +2 damage on attacks against it this encounter.

Major Effect Suggestion: You move your target someplace within long distance of you, so long as it's not up in the air or intersecting other objects or creatures.

Suggested GM Intrusion: You accidentally walk through the world into the Strange.

Equipment: Ardeyn clothing, light or medium armor, an explorer's pack, a weapon of your choice, a strange piece of art, and 200 crowns.

Tier 1: Wireframe (1 Speed point). You begin viewing objects as the fundamental shapes that make them up. This grants you two assets on visual perception related rolls for the next ten minutes, during which time you also suffer a one step penalty on Speed Defense tasks due to your altered vision. Action.

Tier 2: Instantiation (2 Speed points). You conjure a mundane inanimate object that could be held in one hand. This object appears in one of your empty hands and lasts for one minute. Action.

Tier 3: Move Asset (3 Speed points). While Wireframe is active you change the location of an inanimate object within long distance, up to the size of an Earth car. It may be moved to anywhere else within long range, but it may not change elevation or intersect an existing object. Action.

Tier 4: Geometrical Mind. You no longer suffer the penalty to Speed Defense when Wireframe is active. Enabler.

Tier 5: Ignore Collision (5 Speed points). You cause a single handheld inanimate object you touch to begin ignoring the existence of all other inanimate objects, but not the ground or creatures. If used on a melee weapon or arrow, it will ignore Armor. This effect lasts for one minute. Action.

Tier 6: Level Design (6 Speed points). You alter the location and shape of a wall, floor, ceiling, or other surface within long distance. You could make the terrain slope strangely or jut with spikes. These alterations last for one hour. Action.
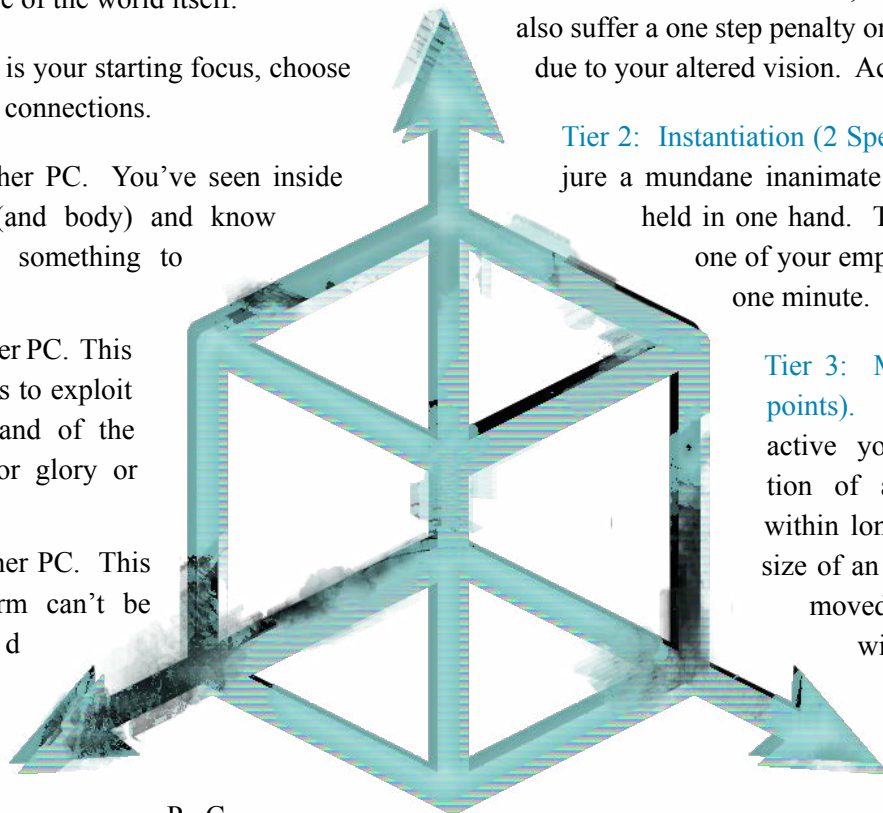
Manipulates the Command Line

You are somehow able to access the text-based command line of the game, which appears as a blinking horizontal line in the top left corner of your vision. While others are only dimly aware that Code Cyphers execute commands through this text interface, it's something you understand intuitively. Your ability to access these functions is greatly enhanced compared to most heroes, as you can see and even manipulate some of what's going on behind the scenes of the "game."

Connection: If this is your starting focus, choose one of the following connections.

1. Pick one other PC. This person can somehow see the command line prompt in your vision.

2. Pick one other PC. Your nearby presence provides this person with an asset on Code Cypher related tasks.

3. Pick one other PC. This person fears your strange insights into "reality."

4. Pick one other PC. You can see this person's thoughts, as text floating around their head.

Minor Effect Suggestion: You discover a Code Cypher, but must use it immediately (within a round) or it will disappear.

Major Effect Suggestion: You discover a Code Cypher.

Suggested GM Intrusion: You make an accidental command, unleashing the harmful effects of a Code Cypher on yourself.

Equipment: Ardeyn clothing, light or medium armor, a weapon of your choice, one of your starting Cyphers is a Code Cypher chosen by you, an explorer's pack, and 200 crowns.

Command Cyphers: This focus deals specifically with Code Cyphers (see Chapter 4) and should only be available in games utilizing them.

Tier 1: Code Breaker. You are trained in all tasks related to searching for and identifying Code Cyphers. Enabler.
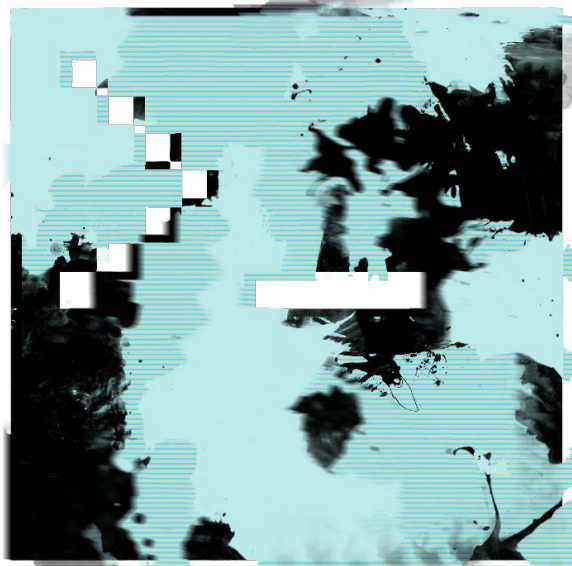
Command Line Access. You enjoy an asset on all uses of Code Cyphers. Enabler.

Tier 2: Database. You may hold one additional Cypher than usual, so long as all of those you carry are Code Cyphers. Enabler.

Tier 3: Hotkey (3 Intellect points). You activate a Code Cypher you're carrying without taking an action or retrieving it from your equipment. Enabler, usable once per round.

Tier 4: Code Taker. You are specialized in searching for and identifying Code Cyphers. Enabler.

View Code (4 Intellect points). You see the code behind the world, granting you training in a skill of your choice for two rounds. Enabler.

Tier 5: Macro (5 Intellect points). When activating a Code Cypher this ability causes it to instead use the Effect of the last Code Cypher you activated. Thus a /WHO could instead have the Effect of a /EMOTE if that were the last Code Cypher you used. Enabler.

Tier 6: Recode (6 Intellect points). You reprogram a Code Cypher, allowing you to reroll or redraw for a new one in its place. Action, usable once per day.

Provides Customer Support

Ardeyn seems to think you're a customer service representative or other staff member, capable of assisting characters who needs help with the game. You can potentially access the power to alter social situations and fix equipment problems or other financial issues, ultimately gaining power over life and death itself.

Connection: If this is your starting focus, choose one of the following connections.

1. Pick one other PC. This person seemed to need your help and you were drawn to them.
2. Pick one other PC. This person's problems seem impossible to fix.
3. Pick one other PC. This person relies on you and you've come to accept that.
4. Pick one other PC. This person can sense your connection to the code of Ardeyn. Your Tell power takes no action to perform when used on them.

Minor Effect Suggestion: A NPC within long range gains the Spark.

Major Effect Suggestion: A party member within long range regains the last Cypher they used.

Suggested GM Intrusion: A NPC with the Spark within long range of you becomes enraged for no apparent reason, attacking you while spewing insults.

Equipment: Ardeyn clothing, light or medium armor, an explorer's pack, a weapon of your choice, and 300 crowns.

Tier 1: Customer Service. You enjoy an asset on all social interaction rolls when dealing with characters with the Spark. Enabler.

Tell (1 Intellect point). You speak one sentence into the mind of a person within long distance you can see, who can send a one sentence telepathic message back. Action.

Tier 2: Recover (2 Intellect points). You replace a mundane broken handheld item within immediate range with an identical fixed one. For one additional Intellect point this ability will restore a lost item instead. Action.

Tier 3: Mute (3 Intellect points). You cause a person within long range to become unable to speak. This condition lasts for ten minutes. Action.

Tier 4: Reimburse (4 Intellect points). You grant a character within long range the Wealthy long-term benefit for the rest of the day. Action, usable once per day.

Tier 5: Ban (5 Intellect points). A person within long range disappears for 1 round, after which time they reappear, having not experienced the intervening time. If the target has the Spark, they instead disappear for 1d6 rounds. Action.

Tier 6: Restore (8 Intellect points). You bring a dead character back to life, putting the character back to the Hale condition of the Damage Track, with 1 point restored to each Pool. NPCs affected by this power return to a Health of 1. The character's corpse must be within long range. Action, usable once per day.

Recodes Behavior

The characters that populate Ardeyn are descended from people who were once programmed creations. The code that dictated their ancestors are still hidden within them. You have learned to see, trigger, and even alter this programming through the power of your voice.

Connection: If this is your starting focus, choose one of the following connections.

1. Pick one other PC. This person's motivations are a mystery to you.

2. Pick one other PC. This person responds to you the way those without the Spark do- strangely obedient.

3. Pick one other PC. This person seems to have a problem with your command over the minds of others.

4. Pick one other PC. You wish you could reprogram them.

Minor Effect Suggestion: The character becomes interested in helping you.

Major Effect Suggestion: The character will follow your spoken commands for the rest of the encounter.

Suggested GM Intrusion: A character you command to do something instead becomes stationary for the next hour.

Equipment: Ardeyn clothing, armor of your choice, an explorer's pack, a weapon of your choice, and 250 crowns.

The Spark: None of your powers will work against those with the Spark. Also, they will work only on people until you reach Tier 3, at which point creatures begin to fall under your command.

Tier 1: View Programming (1 Intellect point). You learn the primary motivation of a NPC within immediate range. Action.

Thought Coder. You are trained in social tasks when interacting with NPCs without the Spark. Enabler.

Tier 2: Sentinel (2 Intellect points). You cause a NPC within long range to begin patrolling back and forth along a linear path for the next ten minutes. Action.

Tier 3: Quest Giver (3 Intellect points). You cause a NPC within long range to generally trust you and your party for the next hour. Action.

Creature Coder. Your abilities now work on NPC creatures, not just people. Enabler.

Tier 4: Expert (4 Intellect points). You grant a NPC within long range a two shift bonus on tasks related to a skill of your choice. This bonus lasts for one hour. Action.

Thought Master. You are specialized in social tasks when interacting with NPCs without the Spark. Enabler.

Tier 5: Unseen (5 Intellect points). NPCs cannot see you for the next ten minutes. Action.

Tier 6: Complete Reprogramming (6 Intellect points). You permanently alter the primary motivation of an NPC. A cobbler might become an aspiring warrior. An assassin might become your loyal protector. Action.
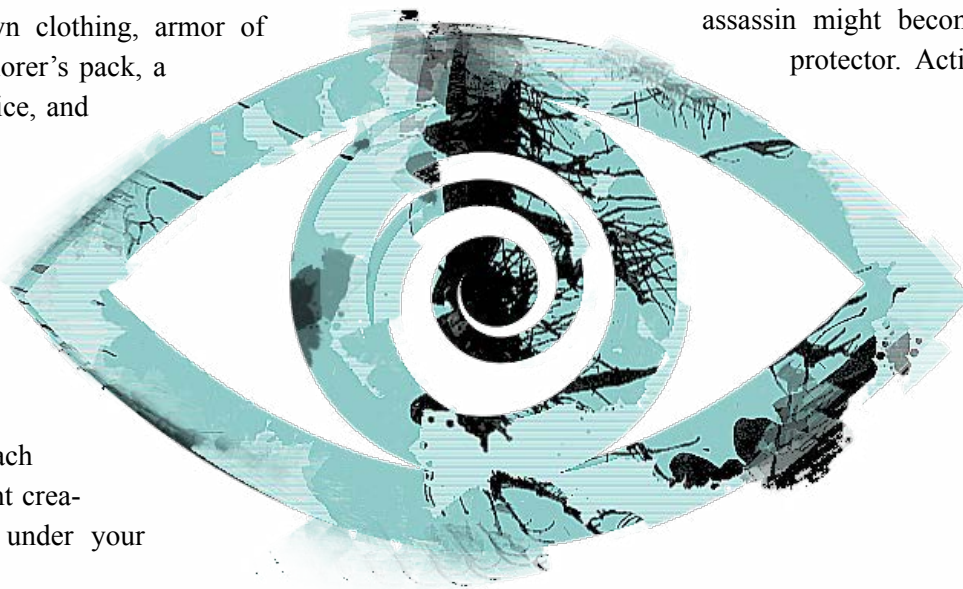
CHAPTER III:
INSTANCED
DUNGEONS

Multiplayer roleplaying games usually include dungeon-like locations for exploration and adventure. Populated with fearsome creatures, stuffed with treasure, and bristling with traps and puzzles, they are the heart of any game designed to pull players together as a team. Called "instanced dungeons" or "instances", they are created in such a way that each group of players can enter them without interacting with other parties. They are essentially mini-universes, spawned for each player group as needed.

When *Ardeyn: Land of the Curse* was transformed into a real place, the "instanced" dungeons became mini-recursions. They came to exist partially out of time and space

with Ardeyn itself, though still geographically connected. The denizens of these recursions are often cut off from the outside world and their existences are closer to those of the originally programmed NPC's of the game itself. The dungeon or other danger they inhabit comes to keep them there, so that future adventurers will have someone to slay.

These recursions are generally much like Ardeyn, but some of the laws of reality can be closer to that of a video game. In some cases the tiny instanced world might even have its own Foci, just like any other recursion. They have also been known to be unfinished and full of technical bugs in their programming, not having been finished

before the game was uploaded to the Strange. The fights don't always work right and sometimes creatures are respawned immediately after their deaths. Some locations are jagged and impossible to cross, or lead out into the chaos of the wild Strange.

Instanced recursions can be found throughout Ardeyn, usually at the heart of some dangerous locale. Sometimes the entrances are quite easy to find- a skull shaped mountain here or a rune etched iron door there. Sometimes they are at the bottom of volcanoes or the ocean. One never knows when one might be stumbling into another world, translated seamlessly into a unique location created for their own benefit.

The code of Ardeyn still tries to treat explorers in these places as it once did- like player characters in a video game. Sometimes this can be quite useful, as groups can respawn at the door after they all die, or they can communicate with each other no matter how much they split up. The remnants of the original game can be different

with each new place, as the code malfunctions differently within each instance.

What's universal is the danger. Something about the code places an emphasis on challenge and reward, even when no enemies reside within. Sometimes this can mean dangerous puzzles. Sometimes it's precise timing and footwork in order to get through a passage or fight. At times the recursion seems intelligent, testing the would-be adventurers with wave after wave of foes who seem to come from nowhere.

In the end many adventurers see these troubles as worth it, as the code deigns to bend fortune in favor of those who are successful in these places, granting various relics to those who brave the trap infested dungeons of the world.

Three Tiny Recursions

The following three mapped adventures represent examples of these mini-recursions prevalent in Ardeyn and derived from the instances of the original game. GMs should feel free to use these as they please, setting them within an area currently being explored by your player group, or perhaps mentioned in the lore and stories passed along in alehouses and common rooms.

Alternatively, one of these recursions could act as a gateway into Ardeyn from the outside. This might be a useful way for new recursors from Earth to find the world of Ardeyn, perhaps through some advanced virtual reality device tunneling into the instance-recursion.

By the same token, due to the external but geographically aligned relationship between these tiny worlds and their greater parent, they can serve as a vector for potential invasion by planetovores and their minions, making them especially useful in Ardeyn-related plotlines. What better way to invade than through a small recursion in which creatures respawn when killed?

Due to their nature as separate recursions a GM should feel free to assign different foci to these places. This might be a fun way to allow each of the players to try out the foci in this book for instance, by limiting the adventure to only those. This follows the more game-like aspects of the instanced dungeons. They are not quite so "real" as the rest of Ardeyn, for better or for worse.

Each of these adventures is presented with several numbered locations. For the purposes of granting XP for discovery, you might want to hand them out every 3 or so locations on the map that the player characters venture into.

Above all, use these instances as an opportunity to have fun with the MMO nature of Ardeyn. It's a game within a game and these mini-recursions represent a chance to really play up the tropes of gaming. Maybe play it fast and loose with XP and treasure, or reduce the Health of NPCs by half. Why not? It's only a game.

Tomb of the Inheritor

The explorers come upon a large formation of stones jutting forth from the ground. Perhaps they thought to seek shelter there from the intense heat of the Glass Desert or were simply exploring the only feature for miles around. Near the base of the protrusion, a dark hole gradually slopes down into what appears to be a cave. The entrance to the cave is quite dark and entering causes disorientation and nausea not unlike the effect of translation, though quite fleeting.

1 **The Antechamber.** The tunnel leads to a small chamber, indicating that a structure of some kind was buried here long ago. The architecture looks vaguely inspired by qephilim design, but is more embellished. The antechamber walls appear to once have been decorated by murals, but the images are so faded that it is impossible to tell what they once held.

2 **The Temple.** After traveling a long hallway, the explorers emerge into an expansive room. The most prominent features of the room are the vivid and intact murals covering all of the walls. The murals depict a story of a lone hero who appears to conquer a number of fearsome creatures and monsters. Some the explorers might recognize from their travels, others are unknown. The centerpiece is a painting of the hero sitting atop a golden throne with what appear to be the same foes bowing before him in chains.

Bronze ensconced torches provide illumination. On the ground six deformed creatures crawl and writhe, moaning in agony. Closer inspection will reveal that they appear to be humans with some animal parts, and drawing close to them causes them to attack. Should the explorers ignore these retched beings, they do nothing.

> ## Wretched Crossbeast (Level 3)
>
> Armor 1; Health 12; Deals 5 damage on attacks with clawed hands.

In the corner opposite from the next hallway a picture of a garden gate stands out. Should the explorers inspect the painting, they might discover three gems adorning the wall (a Difficulty 3 perception task). Touching each gem causes a different bell like tone to sound. If the tones are played from lowest to highest the gate will dissolve and a hallway will appear.

3 **Prison of the Hybrids.** The next chamber is well lit and contains a total of 21 cages along the walls. In each cage a human or quephilum resides, also transformed with parts from other creatures (eagle beaks, lion paws, etc.). Through the middle part of the chamber runs a long wooden table covered in poorly crafted surgical tools. The table also contains extensive notes and diagrams on the anatomy of humans, qephilim and a variety of animals. The beings in the cages are more

cognizant than the previous batch, and beg the explorers to release them. Eight of the cages appear to have no door mechanism and resist all attempts to open them (Difficulty 3 to break open). Four contain simple latches, but should the explorers open them, the inhabitants attack in a frenzy, and their attacks seemed to be poisoned.

Poisonous Hybridian (Level 3)

Armor 1; Health 12; Deals only 3 damage on attacks, but each successful attack also pushes the PC on step down the damage track due to poison; each inexplicably carries 3 crowns if searched.

4 **The Secret Hallway.** Should the explorers pass through the door hidden by the garden gate they will find a long hallway that is poorly illuminated by some unknown light source. The other remarkable feature of the secret passage is a complete lack of dust or other signs of age. The hallway leads directly to the ritual chamber (Location 9) after passing through Location 8 partway along the path.

5 **The Library.** The hall opens into a sorcerers work room, with shelves of scrolls and a table cluttered with alchemical apparatuses, notes, and tools similar to the ones found in the prison. A man works in the room. Pale and and tall, he wears purple robes covered in copper colored arcane glyphs. He has no hair, and what can be seen of his is covered in swirling tattoos. He smiles at the explorers and expounds about how thrilled he is that he won't have to leave to find more test subjects.

The Experimentalist (Level 5)

Armor 3 (magical); Health 20; Deals 7 damage on attacks shooting searing light from his fingers at up to long range; Special Move: Throws small clay pot releasing yellow smoke that traps the individual (Difficulty 5 to escape).

If the explorers loot his body, they find two of his clay pots (Level 5 Anoetic Cyphers that trap targets) and a golden medallion with a ruby in the center, worth 50 crowns. If the explorers search the sorcerers library, they might discover that one of the shelves swings open quite easily. Behind it is stone door with an impression eerily similar to the medallion. If they place the medallion in the groove, the door will slide down revealing a small chamber (see area 6 below).

6 **Prison of the Djinn.** Inside the small chamber is a silver circle containing a powerful demon. The demon shifts forms between the most beautiful humans possible, both male and female, and a large two headed serpent with wings. The demon's name is Prax, and it explains that it was trapped there by the Experimentalist's master, Granna, who is summoning elemental spirits to bind into mortal hosts. It offers to help the PC's in killing Granna, in exchange for its release, which requires simply touching the medallion to the silver circle. Prax allies with the explorers until Granna is slain, when it predictably turns on them.

Prax (Level 5)

Armor 2; Health 20; Deals 8 damage on ranged attacks shooting gouts of fire and gusts of wind at up to short distance.

7 The Hidden Garden. Continuing on into the tomb leads to a brightly lit room. Streaming down from the ceiling appears to be genuine sunlight, regardless of time of day. Dominating the room is a large garden, containing plants from all over Ardeyn, tended by many small humanoid creatures with butterfly wings and golden skin. They ignore the explorers unless they should touch any of the plants in which case they swarm the offender, biting them with razor sharp teeth.

Faerie Swarm (Level 4)

Armor 1; Health 16; Together dealing 8 damage on a bite attack.

8 The Swinging Axes. The secret hallway leading from the temple room has a small circle section within it. Should anyone attempt to pass through, two large crescent axe blades swing across from both walls, though there are no slots for them. They appear to come out of the wall itself, making them impossible to detect before they first strike. Each of the two axes makes an attack against Speed Defense at Difficulty 5, each dealing 6 damage on a hit.

9 The Ritual Chamber. The chamber after the garden is the largest one yet. All of the walls and ceiling are covered by shimmering white light. If touched it seems smooth as glass and is indestructible. The floors are covered with intersecting geometric lines, which converge in the center of the room forming a hexagram. Inside the hexagram is a dome of the same light, and appears to contain a large creature formed from many humans and animals.

The Many Beast (Level 6, 5 on Speed Defense)

Armor 2; Health 25; Attacks twice per round dealing 8 damage each; Special Move: Howls with many mouths, dealing 4 damage to all within immediate range who can hear; Will not attack a character holding the green pyramid.

Seven pedestals surround the perimeter of the room, each with a small glass pyramid atop it, one for each color of the spectrum. Removing one of the pyramids causes the light to dim. Removing all of them causes it to go out, but releases the creature.

10 The Treasury. After the light goes out, the explorers can find on the far end of the Ritual Chamber a carved tree with seven gems corresponding to the colors of the pyramids. Should one of the pyramids be destroyed, the corresponding gem disintegrates off the wall. Destroying all seven causes the wall to disappear, revealing a treasure room. The hidden room contains bolts of silk and clothe of gold (worth 25 crowns if sold), a chest containing a total of 65 crowns, and three Code Cyphers.

11 The Inner Sanctum. After disabling the light wall, the explorers can find a small hallway leading to another chamber. Inside sits a man on a gilded throne, wearing a costume reminiscent of the one worn by the hero in the temple chamber. The man introduces himself as Granna, inheritor to the Golden Age. He explains he is pleased by the explorers' progress, for they will make fine hosts for his demon servants. When he attacks, four humanoid creatures, appearing to be made of sand appear, aiding him in his assault.

Granna the Inheritor (Level 5)

Armor 2; Health 20; dealing 7 damage on ranged attacks with fire blasts and lightning bolts; Special Moves: 1) If at 10 or fewer Health, Granna becomes protected by a shield of white light which will not allow him to be harmed until the Sand Demons are destroyed], 2) Once during the battle Granna curses someone who has damaged him, dealing 5 damage and inflicting a terrible facial scar. This curse does not take up his action.

Sand Demon (Level 3)

Armor 1; Health 9; deals 5 damage on attacks with stinging blasts of sand and fire.

Tomb of the Inheritor

Secret Door

3 feet (1 meter)

Ashevale Estate

In the oldest district of the city of Shalmarn, there resides an ancient estate. Though from the outside it appears to be long abandoned, the elite of the city claim that the most fashionable parties are held there, despite the deteriorations of the neighborhood. Further investigation also reveals that anyone who has ever been invited to the estate of the last 200 years as never returned, but strangely no one seems concerned. It is also curious that one can only gain entry to the estate at night.

Note: In many rooms some action must be taken by one or more of the PCs in order to advance to the next area. In these cases doors are sealed tight and no amount of lock picking will open them.

1 **The Gates.** Passing through the iron gate of the state there is a startling transformation. Far from the desiccated, abandon grounds seen from the outside, the front garden is beautiful if haunting. Still reflection pools reflect the moonlight, regardless of the visibility of the moon. Fig trees and night blooming jasmine perfume the air, so thick is the scent that it is almost unbreathable. Marble statues hide throughout the garden, depicting terrifying monsters or attractive heroes. While from the outside the windows were dark, now they are lit with light, and laughter and music spills forth from the estate, but with a somewhat artificial feel to it.

2 **The Foyer.** The floors of the entry way of the estate are made from highly polished white marble. The walls are covered in murals depicting many of Ardeyn's greatest myths. A beautiful young man in a white tunic trimmed in gold asks for the invitation of anyone who enters. Miraculously, thick parchment appears in the pocket of anyone who enters, inviting them to the party and indicating that the Hostess, Lady Ashevale, would be delighted to meet with the new guests.

3 **The Closet.** Just off the Foyer is what appears to be a small closet. Inside however, are the accumulated garments of several decades' worth of guests. Fine clothing can be found in stacks as well as expensive jewelry and decorative weapons. The sounds of rustling and giggling can be heard from the back of

the closet. A young man in a servant's tunic and a noble woman appear to engaging in a romantic triste. If the two are found, they beg the explorers to not inform Lady Ashevale of their indiscretion, and the male servant offers them a golden key to the Secret Room.

4 **The Library.** A large room covered from ceiling to floor in shelves, the library appears to be full of thousands of books and scrolls. Two guests sit reading by a fireplace and one stands by the only table, muttering at a large stack of books. If approached, he begs the explorers to help him find the texts he needs. They will be unable to leave the library unless they do. Inspecting the books reveals that none of them have any writing at all. In order to assist the man, the explorers must help him acquire a book or scroll for each of the colors of the rainbow (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet). He describes his need for these books in terms of moods: "I seek something calming, something lively, something lovely..."

5 **The Grand Hall.** A massive chamber with marble flooring and held up by pillars carved to resemble mythical beasts. Dozens of guests spiral around the room in an intricate dance or huddle together in small clumps chatting and sipping wine from silver goblets. All of the guests are wearing masks, and at the entrance to the hall there is a table with spare masks available for the explorers. The masks come in three styles: wild cats, reptiles, and birds. If put on, the masks enchant the wearer, granting them a quasi-mystical power:

♦ **Cat Mask (2 Intellect).** Grants the wearer a regal demeanor, providing two assets on all attempts to impress for the next ten minutes. Action.

♦ **Reptilian Mask (2 Intellect).** Grants powers of seduction, providing two assets on attempts to do so for the next ten minutes. Action.

♦ **Bird Mask (2 Intellect).** Makes the wearer unbelievably witty, providing two assets on attempts to persuade or entertain for the next ten minutes. Action.

Guests in the great hall will refuse to interact with anyone not wearing a mask. In order to move from the grand hall

to the dining room, each of the masks powers must be successfully used on at least one guest. If taken outside of the recursion the masks no longer grant their powers.

6 Armory. The armory is full of a variety of different weapons, which span the full history of warfare in Ardeyn. There are also six guards in the room, talking or practicing with weapons. Upon the entering the armory, the door is sealed. The guards offer to challenge the explorers in two contests. One is wrestling and the other archery. The doors will only open again if the explorers are able to beat the guards at the contest. Should they be unable to defeat them or refuse the challenge, the guards will attack, in which case the door will become unsealed only once all the guards are dead. There are no social consequences for killing the guards- no one seems to notice.

Guard (Level 3, 4 when attacking with bow or sword)

Armor 2; 12 Health; Deals 5 damage with sword or bow; Special Move: Well-aimed bow shot can hit a specific location on a target at up to long range.

7 The Secret Room. Can only be opened with the golden key given to the explorers by the young male servant in the foyer Closet. The keyhole is found at the bottom of the basin of the fountain in the Dining Room. The walls are covered in strange glowing sigils and a long table in the center of the room is littered with jars, bottles and alchemical apparatuses. Chained to the walls are two guests with tubes coming out of their necks, draining an opalescent, shimmering fluid. An old man in grey robes is standing over the table reading a

The Sorcerer (Level 4)

Armor 1 (3 against electrical attacks); Health 20; Attacks twice per round, dealing 5 damage per hit with electrical shocks launched from his rod (successful hits stun for one round).

scroll. Once the explorers enter the room, the old sorcerer cackles gleefully and says he is pleased the mistress has sent him new specimens so soon. The sorcerer attacks, and if looted has the rod and a random cypher on his body.

8 The Dining Room. The dining room is full of small round tables holding between three and five guests. None of the tables have sufficient seating for the explorers to sit together, forcing them to mingle amongst the other guests. Servants bring course after of food in and endless stream of dishes. Getting past the dining room requires that at least one of the PC's impress the diners in some food-related way. They might best someone in an eating contest, accurately place a wine, or simply demand to see the chef because of the poor quality of the food or wine. A small fountain of dolphins and mermaids is set in an alcove at the far end

of the room, at the bottom of which is a keyhole which opens the hidden door to the Secret Room (area 7).

9 **The Game Room.** The game room features a large place with a roaring fire going and several guests in groups chatting. All of the guests ignore anyone who talks to them except for the guests sat at a table playing cards. The explorers instantly know the game, and can easily join in. The only way to win at the game however is to cheat and get away with it (a Difficulty 4 Intellect or Speed task). Should they be caught cheating, the dealer sighs and the game starts again. If they should succeed the dealer hints that to get upstairs to see Lady Ashevale the explorers might try bringing her a pot of tea from the kitchen.

10 **The Kitchen.** Half a dozen servants rush about the kitchen in a scene of frantic disorganization. The head chef can be found stirring a pot of stew bellowing orders at the servants. Should the explorers inquire about the tea, the chef will dismiss them, claiming he can only worry about the stew. He will then explain that there is something missing, and until he can fix the stew, nothing else matters. Investigating the kitchen reveals that there are many ingredients in the cupboards, one of which is a mysterious clay jar. If presented to the head chef, he will claim that the jar was exactly what he needed and hand the explorers the tea they need. Should they simply try to take the tea themselves; the chef will attack them with a cleaver (Chef: Level 6 creature; Health 25; dealing 8 damage with cleaver strikes). Killing the chef allows the explorers to fetch the tea themselves.

11 **The Bedroom.** Lady Ashevale's room is opulently appointed with a large four poster bed and a rose quartz vanity. The Lady herself stands at the balcony looking over the city. She is pleased that they were able to find her, but that she cannot allow those able to beat the game to leave her estate. Her form blurs and four copies of herself appear. The copies are armed with different weapons; a broken hand mirror, a sickle, a long knife and a blow gun.

Looting her vanity reveals a cache of gold coins and rubies worth 50 crowns, and lady Ashevale has the Artifact below.

Lady Ashevale (Level 5)

Armor 2; Health 20; dealing 7 damage with flying orbs of magical darkness.

Ashevale Copy (Level 3)

Armor 1; Health 12; dealing 5 damage with miscelanious items used as weapons; heals Lady Ashevale for 5 Health upon death.

Ashevale's Necklace (Level 8 Artifact)

Form: An ornate pearl necklace; Effect: Creates a copy of the PC which attacks nearby foes for ten minutes or until the end of the encounter, whichever is sooner. The copy is a Level 3 creature that deals 5 damage on attacks. Depletion: 1 in 1d10.

1

2

4

6

5

3

7

8

10

9

Stairs
Up

Second
Floor

11
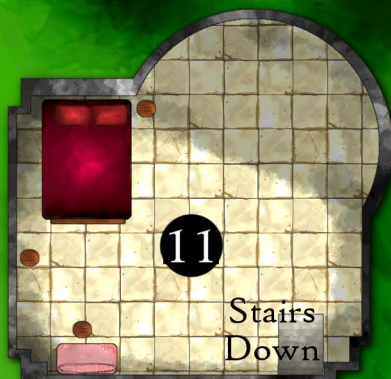
Stairs
Down

Ashevale
Estate

Secret Door

3 feet (1 meter)

Gnarled Hunger

Deep in the forests of the green wilds a tree exists grander than anything else found in the land of Ardeyn. Many legends speak of the tree, and none of them are pleasant. Some claim that the tree is home to a forgotten demon. Other tales speak of cultists who worship a god long dead. It has known many names over the past centuries, but is now called Gnarled Hunger.

This dungeon is not designed for beginning characters. Tiers 3 through 5 are probably best suited for its dangers. If lower Tier characters are used, 3 fewer cultists should inhabit area 5 and all poisons should no longer push characters down the Damage Track, but deal 2 additional Speed pool damage instead.

1 **The Entrance.** Entering Gnarled Hunger is done through a cave mouth that is located at the base of the tree. A dark passage way made of earth and vines leads to the base of the structure. The interior structure of the tree appears to be made of some kind of flesh, slick and cool to the touch. The air inside is cold, but smells faintly of cherries and blood. Growths in the ceiling provide illumination. Rainbow hued lights brighten and dim, similar in pattern to breathing, but much slower than any living creature known.

The walls are covered with what appear to be large, thick veins pumping viscous red, blue and yellow fluids in time with the lights. Cutting open the veins causes the liquid spray forth as though it were under pressure (Difficulty 3 Speed task to dodge). Any exposure, even through clothing will cause the following effects for one hour, depending on which liquid was splashed:

- *The red liquid provides +5 to Might pool maximum, but the character must pass a Difficulty 3 Intellect task in order to stop fighting after a combat.*
- *The yellow liquid provides +5 to Speed pool maximum, but all Speed tasks outside of combat are at a one step penalty due to jitteriness.*
- *The blue liquid provides +5 to Intellect pool maximum, but the character will suffer a visual or auditory hallucination as an Intrusion at some inconvenient point in the hour.*

Contact with the substances also causes the victim to desire more of the liquid, with a cumulative effect. If the substance is consumed in any significant quantity, their flesh will begin to mutate, becoming malformed and hideous. The liquid cannot be taken outside the dungeon.

2 **The Fleshy Stones.** The next bend in the long hallway looks much like the beginning of the structure, with one key difference. All along the walls, hundreds of different gemstones lay embedded in the fleshy structure. Any attempt to remove the stones, however, reveals that they are not stones at all. Touching them with any tool, or even striking them with significant force, such as fall against them, causes the stones to erupt in a sticky, metallic, web like substance that entangles everyone in an immediate vicinity, requiring a Difficulty 5 Might task to get free. Weapons provide little help on this task, but fire will provide an asset if applied to the strands.

3 **The Shrine.** Candle light illuminates what is clearly a shrine dedicated to some serpent deity. The fleshy walls are covered with tattered tapestries, stolen from all around Ardeyn. A large altar dominates the area, covered with hundreds of the candles. The central figure on the altar is a large statue, carved out of a shiny black stone, depicting a serpent wrapped around a tree.

Cultist (Level 3)

Armor 1; Health 12; Dealing 5 damage on a hit with a dagger, after which the PC must succeed in a Difficulty 3 Might task or move one step down the Damage Track.

Five cultists in various states of prostration dot the room. They wear pale green robes, and their features look as though they have been consuming heaving amounts of the structure's liquids. The cultists attack as soon as they

Crossbow Cultist (Level 3, 4 when firing crossbow)

Armor 1; Health 12; Dealing 7 damage on a ranged crossbow attack.]

Cult Leader (Level 4, 6 when using his whip)

Armor 2; Health 15; Dealing 7 damage with blasts of green magic at range; Special Move: Whip attack when anyone comes close to him, dealing 5 damage each to both Might and Speed pools. This attack takes no time, but he only does it when others move to him, never when he moves himself.

Miniboss Loot: The leader has his whip, which seems to always be covered in poison (a damage 5 light weapon), and a golden bracelet in the shape of a snake. The bracelet is actually a Cypher that when activated turns the person into a large, venomous, flying snake for an hour.

spot trespassers. They strike with hollow daggers covered in a thick black substance. Their daggers and poison cannot be looted because they disappear quickly after each one is killed.

4 **The Pools.** In the next stretch of hallway, the floor appears to be covered by thick puddles of the liquid found the walls veins. It is also quickly apparent that the liquids will seep through most shoes. Scattered down the hall are what appear to be small patches of scale which have risen above the puddles. The scales are close enough together that it would be simple to jump one to another, avoiding the liquid. However, should the scales be jumped on, the wall on either side will let loose a volley of spiked barbs (Difficulty 3 Speed task to avoid, dealing 3 damage and pushing one step down the Damage Track on hit).

5 **The Throne Room.** The cultists' throne room looks similar to the temple room, except for the presence of large chair draped in torn red silk. The leader of the cult looks similar to the other cultists, except his robes seem a little more elaborate and he is wearing a large head dress shaped like a cobras hood.

Besides the leader, six cultists are in the throne room. Four attack with the same hollow daggers as before. Two, who stay near the throne attack with crossbows that shoot

bolts made of bone. The cult leader can attack with blasts of green energy or with a whip laced with the paralytic agent.

6 **The Shimmering Curtain.** The next bend contains from ceiling to floor, long, silk thin threads that are near transparent. It is possible to pass through the threads, but contact on skin causes a burning sensation, though no actual damage. Should the threads be cut or torn, which is very easy, a tentacle will emerge from the wall, grab the person, and attempt to drag them to a mouth that emerges only if it captures prey. Dodging the tentacle is a Difficulty 4 Speed task, escaping its grasp a Difficulty 3 Might or Speed task. Each round the PC is "eaten" without escaping they take 5 damage.

7 **The Egg Room.** Dotting the floor are hundreds of seed shaped eggs, pale green like the cultists robes. While most of the eggs remain motionless, several are shaking and cracking. Given sufficient time, they open to reveal small snakes that slither out. The babies are attended by half metal half flesh spiders which seem to clean and feed them. The baby snake and

spider creatures will not attack or defend themselves in any way, though the baby snakes will attempt to flee if harmed.

⑧ The Hunger. The next area has the feeling a small chamber rather than hallway. The floor sinks down, and the ceiling is much higher than elsewhere in the structure. Dozens of woodland creatures are piled on the floor, some dead, some alive. They appear to be restrained by the same metallic webbing that shot forth from the gemstones in area 2. Stepping into this area causes webbing to fire, requiring a Difficulty 5 Speed task to dodge, and a Difficulty 4 Might task to break free.

on the floor. Several veins protrude from these pedestals, pumping the colored liquid throughout the structure. Several vats also appear to be attached to the heart. Tubes dump partially chewed animals parts into the vats, which then dissolve and funnel the goo to the heart. Touching the heart suffuses the body with unbound energy, and restores all ability pools to full. The way forward out of the chamber is blocked by a carapace door. Should some of the paralytic poison be dumped in one of the vats, the lights throughout the structure will dim, and the door will open. Otherwise breaking it down is a Difficulty 6 Might task.

⑩ The Head. Several stone pedestals ring the room, taking the shape of small consoles. Instead of controls, however, each possesses a bowl filled with neon liquid. Darting across the walls of the chamber, blurring images reveal both the interior and exterior of the structure. In the center of the room, tall figure stands. It is impossible to tell what the creature is, for all of its features are indistinct, un-textured. It gestures as though speaking to the explorers, but only garbled, disjointed phrases make it through.

Stomach Troll (Level 5)

Armor 1; Health 24; Dealing 4 damage on attacks, which pull the PC towards it, even if they are stuck in webbing; Special Move: Any PC that has been pulled to within immediate distance is pushed into a feeding hole, dealing 7 damage from the teeth and stomach acid.

Troll Loot: Two random Cyphers and an Artifact, all covered in stomach acid.

In the center of the chamber, a large, bulbous creature sits looking as though it is attached to the floor. The creature pulls the helpless creatures into a large mouth opening, lined with dozens of sharp teeth. It attacks any PC caught in the webbing, ignoring all others.

⑨ The Cardium. The heart is a giant crystal sphere, emitting the same rainbow light that illuminates the whole structure. Rather than being filled with liquid, the sphere appears to be filled with glowing vapor. The heart is attached to the structure by two fleshy pedestals, one on the ceiling and one

Serpent Avatar (Level 6, 8 when using its strength to throw or punch)

Armor 3; Health 24; Dealing 7 Might and 2 Speed damage on a hit with its whips, attacking twice per round; Special Moves: When at half Health or less it will become much stronger than before, dealing two additional Might damage on attacks.

Boss Loot: The Serpent Avatar possesses a crown which allows the wearer to speak to serpents of any kind. This is an Artifact with no depletion.
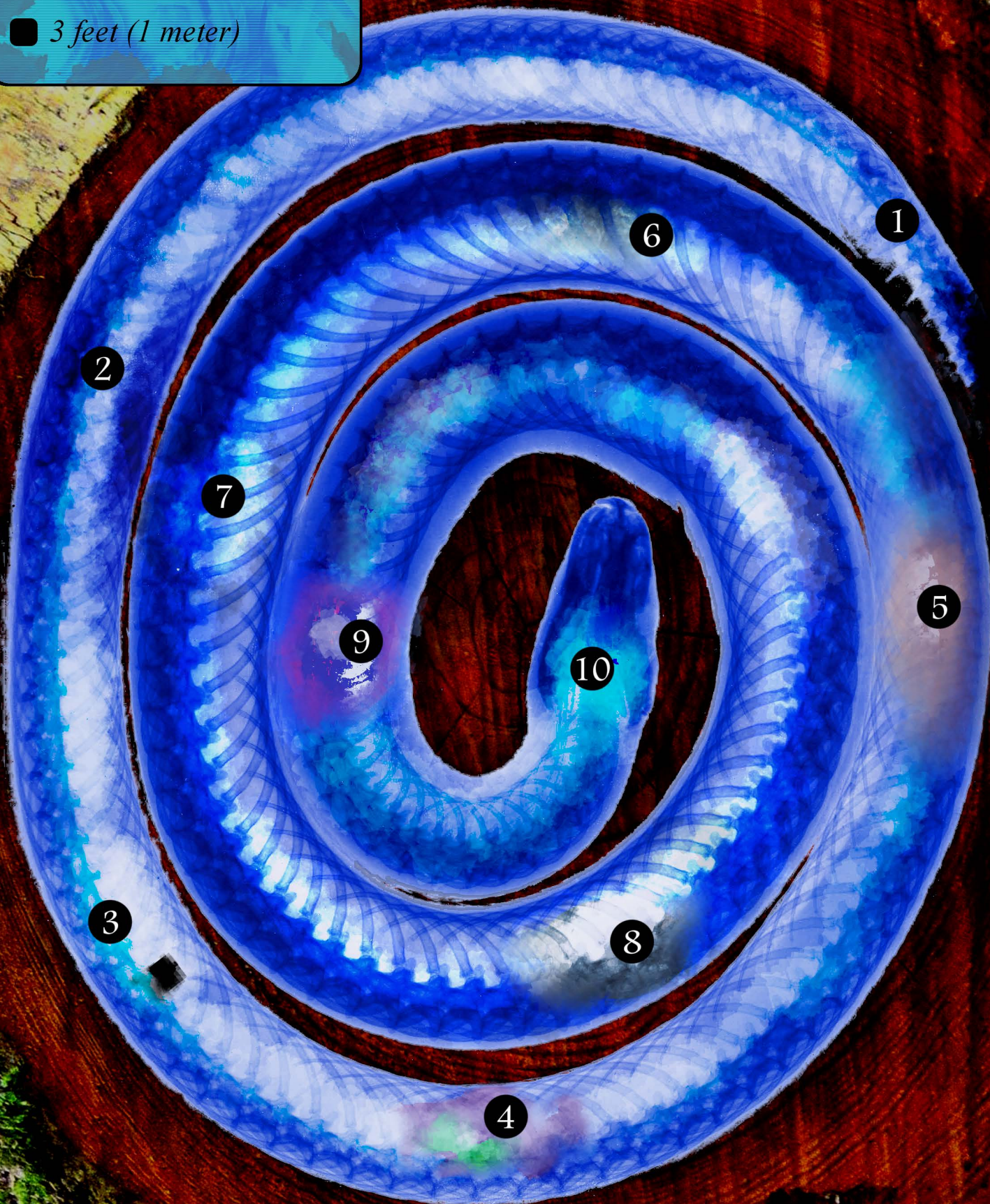
Chapter IV:
Loot Tables

As a roleplaying game, the world of Ardeyn was created to provide useful magical loot into the inventories of successful or lucky adventurers. The game world's programming works to bend circumstance to provide such a bounty, particularly to adventuring groups who explore the various dangerous locales within the recursion, braving dangerous creatures and impossible odds. Sometimes the loot just appears after an encounter, for no apparent reason.

At other times the useful items can be found on the bodies of villainous individuals, unused by these foes (again defying logic). Such appearances of treasure is especially common in the "instanced" sub-recursions that derive from the game's dungeons and battlegrounds. The items are sometimes found within chests, many of which bear a similar design throughout the world. But dropping off the corpses of slain foes is the most common source of loot.

As adventurers of Ardeyn notice this, they can at times become quite greedy. Those who carry The Spark, especially those who hail from outside the recursion and who know that the world is based on a video game can see combat as a means to seek out such magical objects. They court battle at every turn and seek out potential instances, looking for hidden passages and suspicious criminal activity wherever they go. Bloodlust and greed fuel these adventurers-turned-murderers, who can become quite dangerous once in possession of the kinds of powerful weapons the game tends to provide such "heroes."

Game Artifacts

The following Artifacts represent either items that are commonly found in the instanced dungeons of Ardeyn, or items whose existence derives from the programming underpinning reality in the recursion. Some are corruptions of what was intended or accidents of game design that were never fixed, making once mundane objects into treasures worth seeking out.

Bind Stone

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: An ornately carved stone with glowing runes.

Effect: Once touched by a PC, the Bind Stone becomes connected to their soul. The character can later choose to teleport back to the stone as an action, triggering a depletion roll. Some leave their stone in their home or a nearby inn room. Others entrust the stone with an ally. Anyone who holds your stone enjoys a two step bonus on attacks against you, so choose wisely.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Dragon Scale

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: A massive purple dragon scale adapted to serve as a rather large shield.

Effect: The Dragon Scale has the usual properties of a shield (an asset on Speed Defense), as well as the ability to protect against magical attacks. Activation of the Dragon Scale takes no action and cancels a magical attack or effect directly targeting you.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20
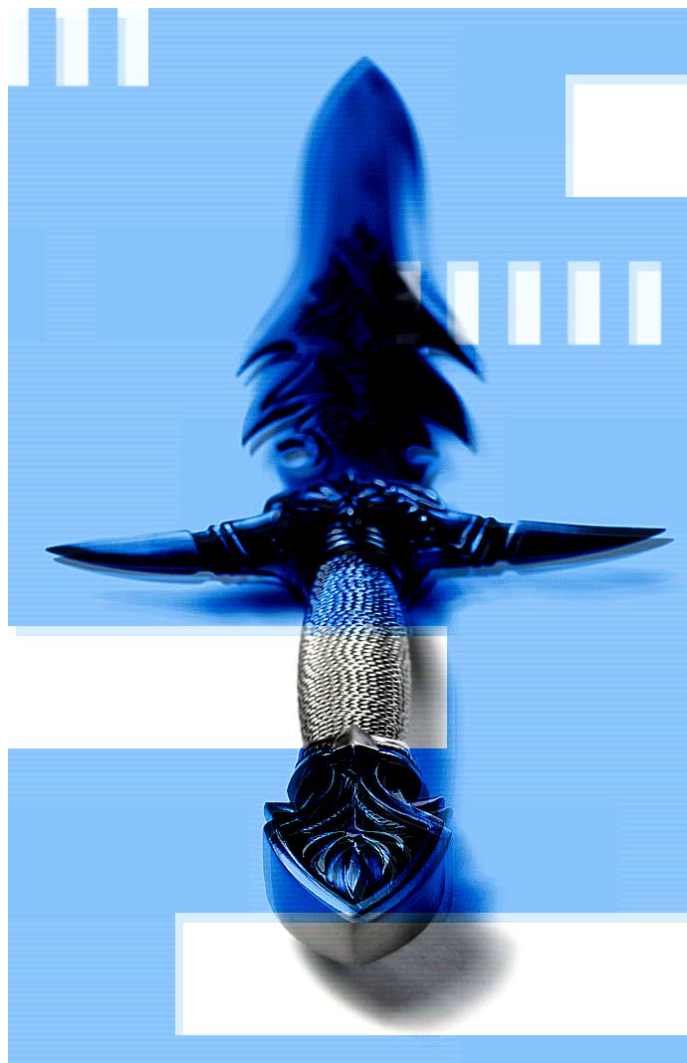
Hammer of the Lava Baron

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: An impossibly large hammer covered in lava-like glowing inscriptions, it is somehow light enough to be wielded in two hands by a character with a Might pool of 10 or higher.

Effect: The weapon deals 6 damage on hit, as per a two-handed hammer. Additionally it may be activated on a successful hit, causing it to fling the target a short distance up into the air, landing a long distance away on their back.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Impossible Sword

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: A medium sword with a blade so thin that it appears to be two dimensional.

Effect: The sword is as thin as an object can be, dealing 5 damage on a hit due to its sharpness. Additionally, it may be activated to cut a hole in reality itself, leading to the Strange. This hole sucks everything immediately around it in, requiring a Might Defense task against the item's Level to resist leaving the recursion through the howling maw. After 1d6 rounds the recursion seals the hole in itself.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

Lost Heirloom

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: A family heirloom, such as a brooch or ring. Somehow indestructible.

Effect: One of the original quest items of the game, the heirloom played a pivotal role in some important storyline, now lost to history. Unremarkable except for its ability to withstand all damage, the Lost Heirloom can be activated to provide the bearer with a boost to their confidence and motivation, gaining a +1 bonus to all Edges for one hour.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Ornamental Armor

Level: 1d6 + 2

Form: A set of light armor (1 Armor rating) that is comically ornate, possessing massive pauldrons and oversized bracers.

Effect: In addition to the benefits of light armor, this suit also provides two assets on social tasks involving diplomacy and courtly etiquette. The armor may be activated, causing it to glow and sparkle, the distracting nature of which grants the wearer an asset on Speed Defense when dodging direct attacks from creatures for the rest of the encounter.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Pet Golem

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: A massive stone statue that comes to life once the rune on its forehead is touched.

Effect: The golem follows the person who last touched its rune, following simple commands

quite literally. If commanded to attack, it deals 6 damage and knocks targets to the ground. Each attack requires a depletion roll. Once depleted, the golem becomes a statue once more.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

Rune Weapon of Souls

Level: 1d6

Form: A weapon with purple runes promising to capture souls carved into the metal.

Effect: This weapon functions as a normal weapon of its kind, but living creatures damaged by it suffer a one step penalty on all tasks until the end of the encounter.

Depletion: --

Sharpened Code Fragment

Level: 1d6 + 3

Form: A spear or dagger with a blade fashioned from a several Code Cyphers melded together and sharpened. As such, this Artifact takes up one Cypher slot when carried.

Effect: This weapons functions as a light weapon that deals 4 damage on a hit. If activated, the item requires no attack roll to strike its intended target that round, though a roll may be made anyway to determine bonus damage such as from a 17+ die roll, or major and minor effects. A roll of 1 does not trigger a GM Intrusion in this case.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

Untextured Wall

Level: 1d6 + 1

Form: A mote of color, like a dot of ink or glowing speck of dust, easily hidden in a pocket.

Effect: The object itself is more than the small dot it appears to be. Once activated it becomes an invisible but solid wall, 3 yards wide and tall, and infinitely thin. It is impossible to break, but will bear no load above it. The wall simply blocks the path of anything or anyone attempting to pass through it. The deployed wall is mobile and weightless, but will not budge unless grabbed by the small visible speck of it that can be seen at its center.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

CODE CYPHERS

The following Cyphers are presented as supplemental to the usual Cyphers found in Ardeyn. They represent pieces of code derived from the Ardeyn: Land of the Curse game, twisted and solidified by the Strange. These pieces generally represent real world influenced versions of commands from the game.

Code Cyphers can be found within the forms of the various "trash" items of the world. Bones, small statues, lucky coins, and other nearly worthless items that pervade the world and fill up the packs of adventurers. Seeking out small, dusty, easy to miss items is the best way to find this kind of Cypher, which still give off a sense of power to recursors and those with the Spark.

Roll 1d6 twice or choose from the following table:

1
1. /AFK
2. /ASSIST
3. /BUG
4. /DANCE
5. /DUEL
6. /EMOTE

2
1. /EQUIP
2. /FIND
3. /FOCUS
4. /FOLLOW
5. /FRIEND
6. /HELP

3
1. /IGNORE
2. /INSPECT
3. /INVITE
4. /LANGUAGE
5. /LEAVEAREA
6. /LOOT

4
1. /JOIN
2. /MAINTANK
3. /MAP
4. /MOUNT
5. /NAMEPLATES
6. /PVP

5
1. /QUIT
2. /RELOAD
3. /SAY
4. /SELL
5. /STUCK
6. /TAUNT

6
1. /TELL
2. /TOGGLEUI
3. /TRADE
4. /USE
5. /WHO
6. /YELL

/AFK

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6

Effect: For so long as you do not move from the spot you're currently in, you cannot be attacked by characters with the Spark. Characters without spark will ignore you socially, but may still attack you.

/ASSIST

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: Activated while you aid another, you provide three assets on the task roll.

/BUG

Type: Occultic

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: You may reroll two failed rolls you make in the next four hours.

/DANCE

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6

Effect: You break into an entrancing dance, causing all characters without the Spark to spend their actions simply watching you for the next ten minutes, or until you stop dancing.

/DUEL

Type: Occultic

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: You target a character within long range. Both of you may not attack any other character until the end of the encounter, or one of you is knocked unconscious.

/EMOTE

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6

Effect: Your next non-combat task requires no roll, so long as the Difficulty is 6 or lower.

/EQUIP

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: A suit of magical heavy armor appears on your body, temporarily replacing your current armor and providing 4 Armor rating. The suit remains on you until the end of the encounter, at which point it disappears. You count as practiced in the armor while you wear it.

/FIND

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6

Effect: You learn the location of an item you name aloud, in terms of direction, distance, and nearby landmarks.

/FOCUS

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: You pick a target you can see. For the rest of the encounter all of your attacks against that target benefit from two assets on their rolls.

/FOLLOW

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: Whenever you move in the direction of a creature within long range you target with this Cypher, you move at double your normal speed. This effect lasts until the end of the encounter.

/FRIEND

Type: Occultic

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: A PC within long range of you regains all spent points in a Pool of your choice.

/HELP

Type: Occultic

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: After naming a current dilemma and activating this Cypher, a list of possible solutions appears before you in glowing white letters. This list of advice lasts for ten minutes.

/IGNORE

Type: Occultic

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Target person within long distance is no longer able to affect you in any way. You cannot hear them and cannot be attacked by them. Their abilities and actions don't directly affect you, though you can still see them. This condition lasts for one hour.

/INSPECT

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: You learn all of the equipment and powers of a target within long range, as well as their Level and Health pool.

/INVITE

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: Used on a fellow party member within immediate range, for the next eight hours you are able to sense their Pool levels, status on the Damage Track, location and direction. You are also able to hear anything they whisper during this time.

/LANGUAGE

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6

Effect: You become fluent in a language of your choice for the next eight hours, however during this time you are unable to speak or understand your native language.

/LEAVEAREA

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: You are teleported to a safe location, usually near the entrance to whatever building or area you're currently in.

/LOOT

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: You take all of the items from a prone, unconscious, or diseased target. If possible, these items appear in your backpack.

/JOIN

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6

Effect: All of your party members, including you, become able to speak telepathically with each other for the next four hours.

/MAINTANK

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: Target PC within short range gains +2 to their Armor rating for the next four hours. This stacks with any other Armor.

/MAP

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6

Effect: You suddenly become able to view a map of the local terrain. The map appears in your head, but looks hand drawn. You can re-call it at any point within the next eight hours and it updates to include whatever area you travel to in that time.

/MOUNT

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: A horse suddenly appears, wearing saddle and harness. The horse is generally loyal to you and will not spook, lasting for the next eight hours.

/NAMEPLATES

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: For the next four hours you are able to see the names of everyone within your view, hovering over their heads. You're even able to see the common names of creatures you encounter.

/PVP

Type: Occultic

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: For the next four hours you regain 3 Might and 3 Speed points whenever you defeat a foe.

/QUIT

Type: Occultic

Level: 1d6 + 4

Effect: You call up the character design inter-face, allowing you to permanently alter your physical characteristics, race, and gender in Ardeyn. You can even switch Focus by chang-ing your class. Once done deciding, you trans-late into the recursion again, suffering only a 10 minute acclimation.

/RELOAD

Type: Occultic

Level: 1d6 + 3

Effect: You re-translate into Ardeyn over the course of the round, suffering no translation acclimation time. After doing so all of your Pools are replenished to full.

/SAY

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: The next statement you make is heard and believed by everyone within short distance.

/SELL

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: An object you hold disappears, re-placed by the usual market value for the item in crowns. Another Cypher will yield 50 crowns and an Artifact gets you 300.

/STUCK

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6

Effect: You teleport to a nearby location that is relatively safe and away from view by NPC's, if possible.

/TAUNT

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: Target creature within long range can-not attack anyone but you until the end of the encounter.

/TELL

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: For the next four hours you can send a telepathic messages to your party members whenever you wish.

/TOGGLEUI

Type: Occultic

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: A game interface is superimposed over your vision, allowing you to know the Level, Armor, and Health ratings of every creature you see in the next eight hours.

/TRADE

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6

Effect: You and another PC within short distance can trade any items you wish instantaneously. Activating this Cypher takes no time.

/USE

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6 + 2

Effect: You enjoy a two asset bonus on all rolls to activate your Focus powers for the next four hours.

/WHO

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: A list appears in your mind of the names of every person within long distance of you, along with what organizations that person is associated with (governments, guilds, religions, etc.).

/YELL

Type: Anoetic

Level: 1d6 + 1

Effect: The next thing you say can be heard by everyone within a ten mile (16 km) radius.
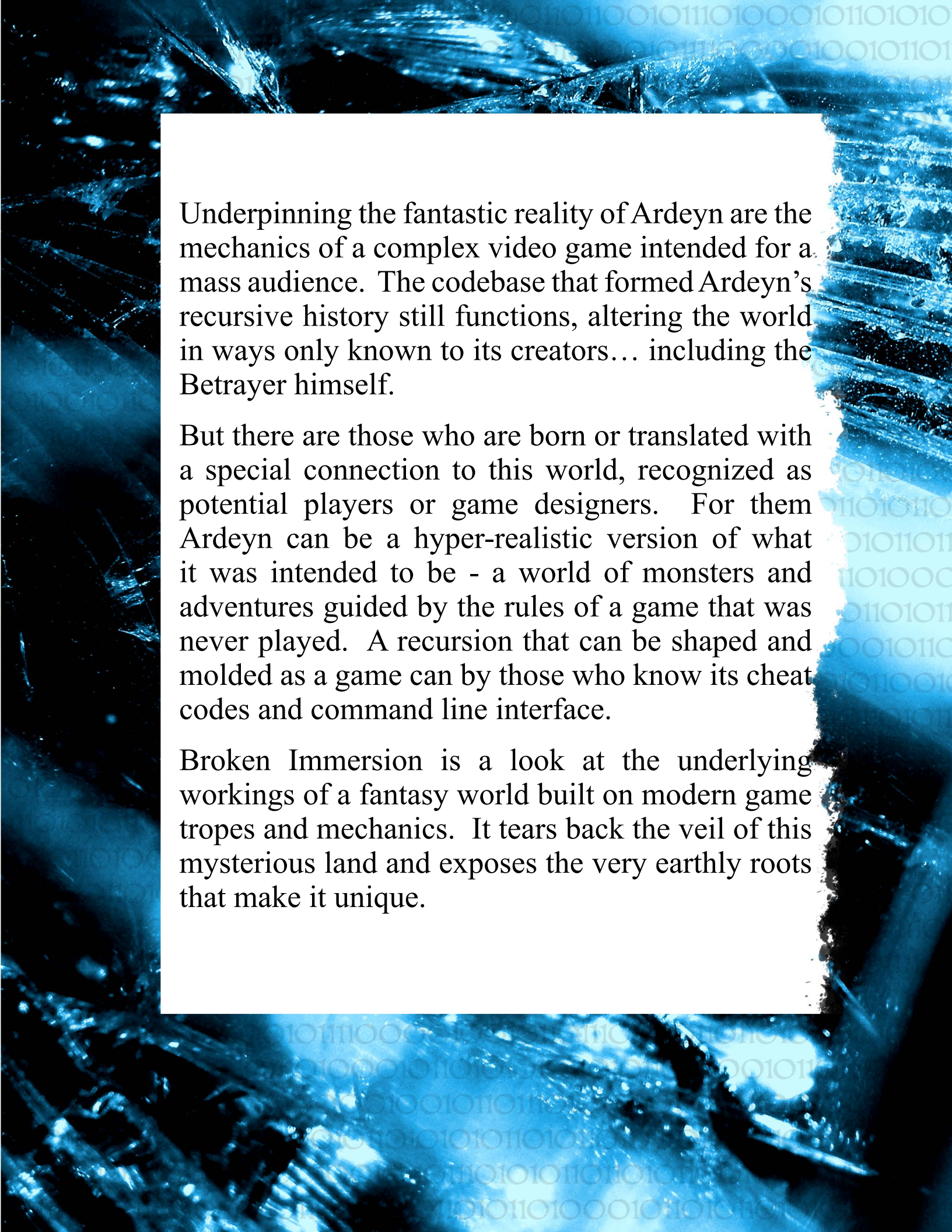
About the Authors

Jordan Marshall is a fantasy writer and gamer who lives in the wastelands of the Midwest 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 known universe and all the realms beyond. He deals with this paradox by designing games where mages plot to establish world dominion. 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.

Ryan Chaddock is a full time writer and game developer living in Bloomington, Indiana 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.

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Underpinning the fantastic reality of Ardeyn are the mechanics of a complex video game intended for a mass audience. The codebase that formed Ardeyn's recursive history still functions, altering the world in ways only known to its creators… including the Betrayer himself.

But there are those who are born or translated with a special connection to this world, recognized as potential players or game designers. For them Ardeyn can be a hyper-realistic version of what it was intended to be - a world of monsters and adventures guided by the rules of a game that was never played. A recursion that can be shaped and molded as a game can by those who know its cheat codes and command line interface.

Broken Immersion is a look at the underlying workings of a fantasy world built on modern game tropes and mechanics. It tears back the veil of this mysterious land and exposes the very earthly roots that make it unique.