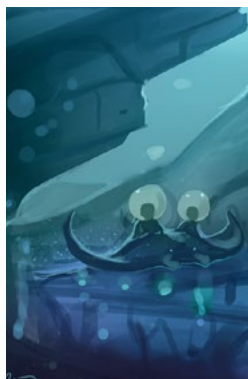


NUMENÉRA



THE THIEF, THE CLAVE, AND THE ULTIMATUM

BY BRUCE R. CORDELL



INTRODUCTION

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



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In this instant adventure, player characters (PCs) must locate a vehicle capable of traveling through the ocean's depths, into the gloom of universal night, and even between the gaps of the world itself. If you're unfamiliar with instant adventures, we've provided an explanation below.

INSTANT ADVENTURE FORMAT

Instant adventures are designed to be easy to grasp with just a quick skim. You must read and absorb all of this before play starts. Fortunately, these sections are short and written for easy comprehension and retention.

Each instant adventure begins with a brief summary and a few paragraphs that add detail. The most important points are called out again, this time in a bulleted list to help you remember (and reference) them. Next, you'll find a section that details the keys involved in the adventure. The boxed text explains how keys work. Last, you'll find a Further Development section that outlines experience point (XP) rewards, as well as ways to fit the adventure into a larger campaign.

Before play begins, you must have a good idea of what the keys are, but you don't need to know how they'll show up. In fact, that's the point. Where the keys are located and when they come into play are decided by the game master (GM) based on the flow of the session.

After the keys, look at the Starting Point and Wrap-Up sections, which are pretty self-explanatory. All encounters that the PCs experience in the session are found in the

two-page spread, organized in a map or chart (which can be followed just like a map).

- Some encounters have symbols designating that one or more of the keys might be present.
- Some encounters have predesigned GM intrusions (which are always optional).

After that essential spread you'll find a section called More Details. If you've got time, reading this will help flesh out the details—the places, the people, and so on. But nothing in this section is crucial. The adventure works fine without it.

Finally, the adventure ends with notes for GMs who want to incorporate it into an ongoing campaign or place it in a specific location in the Ninth World. You'll also find ideas for further development if you want to keep things going after the adventure is done. This includes awarding XP. None of this needs to be read ahead of time.



Throughout this supplement, you'll see page references to various items accompanied by this symbol. These are page references to the *Numenera* corebook, where you can find additional details about that item, place, creature, or concept. It isn't necessary to look up the referenced items in the corebook; it's an optional way to learn more about the game and provide additional information to your players.

USING KEYS

The biggest difference between running an instant adventure and a typical published adventure is that the GM manages when and where keys show up. A key is anything that moves the game forward; as such, it might be an object, a person, or a bit of information. Regardless of what it is, the GM determines when it shows up in the adventure.

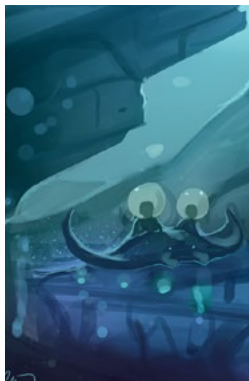
There are two kinds of keys: necessary keys and interesting keys.

Necessary Keys. If the PCs require a device to open a way into a ruin to complete the adventure, that device is a necessary key. Since the device is crucial to the forward motion of the session, the GM should pace things so the PCs have at least a chance to find it. The GM should pace the appearance of such a key for the right time in the adventure; otherwise, the session might end too quickly. But this pacing is up to each individual GM. Some GMs, for example, might want to reward smart play by enabling the PCs to reach their goal early.

Interesting Keys. These keys are almost their own kind of **GM intrusion**. Such a key might be a device that causes harm or makes things more complicated. It might be something that helps the PCs but isn't directly related to reaching the end of the adventure. These keys are not crucial, but they make things more fun. What's more, they inject drama. If the PCs find a strange device, they shouldn't know automatically that it's directly related to the plot. Maybe it's just a strange device. Worse, maybe it's dangerous. They have to figure it out.

*GM Intrusion,
page 108*





Laedris: level 4, tasks related to the numenera as level 6, Raft-related tasks as level 8

Tiny automaton: level 2, Speed defense as level 4; flies a short distance each round

Ooryal is a kind of creature known as a *quotien*.

THE THIEF, THE CLAVE, AND THE ULTIMATUM

BRIEF SUMMARY

The community surrounding a clave will be destroyed by a powerful entity of the prior worlds if the PCs can't identify who stole the Raft, a vehicle able to travel underwater, in space, and through alternate dimensions.

DETAILS

In the Beyond, in a small community called Naraderan, two Aeon Priests have focused on understanding and repairing a singular vehicle they call the Raft. Over the years, the clave has managed to bring the Raft back to life. It is a small ship capable of traveling through the depths of the sea, the endless gloom of space, and even into alternate realities where things unfolded differently than in the Ninth World.

The chamber in which the clave worked on the Raft was actually a section of a much larger prior-world structure. While the structure was mostly ruined, parts of it are inhabited by various weird entities that have survived the aeons.

The various entities within the structure are not necessarily aligned with each other, and some are not really even conscious; they're merely dangerous things best avoided. Others are benign, and provide useful information and even technical aid. The Naraderan clave benefitted greatly from this arrangement for several years, until one of those entities took interest in the finally repaired Raft. This creature, named Ooryal, demanded the Raft for itself in return for the aid it had rendered, or promised destruction for the clave and the death of every living thing in Naraderan.

Fearful of Ooryal, the clave agreed to hand over the Raft. There was just one problem:

someone stole the craft before the handover could take place.

Laedris, one of the two Aeon Priests of Naraderan, requests the PCs' aid (how they have arrived at Naraderan is up to the GM). Laedris is in her late thirties, wears bright orange robes, and is followed everywhere by a tiny automaton. She says the Raft has been gone for three days, and Ooryal gave a deadline of five. She says she and her fellow Aeon Priest Githea can reward the PCs by giving them a ride in the Raft to anywhere in (or out of) the world, before they deliver the Raft to Ooryal, plus of course any objects they can salvage in the installation while looking for the stolen craft. Laedris suspects that one of the other entities within the prior-world structure stole the Raft.

To learn what happened, the PCs must talk with several of the entities within the prior-world installation. Clues ultimately lead them back out of the installation to the home of the Aeon Priest Githea, the true thief. Githea had become so attached to the Raft that she decided to claim it for herself rather than surrender it. The characters can negotiate with Githea for the return of the Raft, fight her, or tell Laedris what they've learned.

SALIENT POINTS:

- Naraderan is a clave where two Aeon Priests studied a multi-function ship called the Raft.
- Naraderan is built over a prior-world installation that's partly ruined, but also home to various weird, sometimes helpful, and sometimes dangerous entities.
- To save itself from destruction, the clave promised the Raft to one of those entities,

a quotien named Ooryal. But the Raft was stolen before the trade happened.

- Laedris promises that she and Githea (the two Aeon Priests of the clave) will reward the PCs for helping by transporting them anywhere in the Raft before surrendering it to Ooryal.
- Though initial clues point to the thief being something from down in the installation, it is actually Githea.

STARTING POINT

Naraderan is home to nearly a hundred people. The clave (a dome-like brick structure) sits at the center of the community, and the surrounding homes are arranged in a staggered spiral pattern around it. The people are mostly farmers with a few hunters. There's a common house for PCs who want to rest, a tavern where they can find food, and a small marketplace where they can buy items, including a small selection of cyphers recovered in the clave's interactions with the installation below.

Laedris shows the PCs where the Raft was located: a chamber beneath the brick clave building. The cavity that once housed the Raft is a cluttered space filled with half-dead artifacts. Laedris describes the Raft, when "unfolded," as resembling something like a 20-foot (6 m) wide silver raindrop, round on one end and pointed on the other. However, apparently one of the Raft's amazing functions was its ability to fold into an easily transported case no larger or heavier than an adventurer's pack.

Laedris recommends that the PCs speak with Githea and also look for and speak with the ishenizar, a crystal creature with many eyes who lives in the installation. If anything saw what happened, the ishenizar is the most likely witness, but Laedris has had no luck finding it, because the ishenizar moves around the installation all the time.

WRAP-UP

The best-case scenario is that the PCs confront Githea and convince her to willingly hand over the stolen Raft. Of course, the PCs might also decide to eliminate Ooryal, which also prevents Naraderan's destruction, but

is risky because if the PCs lose, the quotien immediately follows through on its plan. If PCs seriously hurt Githea to obtain the Raft, they make an enemy of Laedris. It's possible the PCs falsely accuse Laedris, but she can defend herself (she's not the only Aeon Priest who dresses in orange like the thief, though she doesn't want to believe Githea could be the culprit). Regardless, if the craft isn't found soon, residents begin to flee the city fearing its inevitable destruction.

The Aeon Priests are friends, perhaps even more. Regardless, they keep separate rooms inside the clave building.

KEYS

This adventure has three keys, two of which are sources of information, and one of which is an object:

- ◆ Someone who knows the current location of the ishenizar.
- ▲ Someone who saw the covered, humanoid form of the thief so PCs generally know what to look for.
- Something the ishenizar desires, which is any object with psychic or telepathic resonance.

If an encounter has the potential to include a key but does not, it may have a few cyphers instead, depending on the flow of the session. Overall, the entire scenario should offer the PCs five to seven cyphers.



The dome-shaped clave building has four private rooms, but only two Aeon Priests. There is also a kitchen, a bath, various small utility chambers, and a guarded utility passage leading down into the prior-world installation.

DYSPHORIC INFLUENCE

A telepathic influence extends throughout the prior-world installation beneath Naraderan. At random times (and when the ishenizar is near), the GM chooses a PC who must succeed on an Intellect defense roll or suffer a hallucination. Ask the player to describe the best or worst thing that ever happened to their character; that's the hallucination that afflicts the PC, dazing them and increasing the difficulty of all tasks by one step until they can shake it off.

Telepathic influence: *level 3*

ISHENIZAR

When the GM feels it would be best, the ishenizar finds them. It's composed of faceted crystal, each facet reflecting an eye, hundreds in all, every one different. The crystal body floats in the air.

It communicates via flashes of intense emotion and telepathic images. PCs who succeed on a difficulty 3 Intellect roll can translate the gist of any response. However, it asks for something before it tells what it knows: a psychically resonant object. If the PCs have a cypher or artifact like that, they can hand it over; otherwise, they'll need to obtain one to gain the ishenizar's cooperation.

If it has the key to identify the thief, it flashes a mental image into the PC's mind of a humanoid form entering the Raft chamber, though the specific identity of the thief remains unknown and difficult to discern through the emotional resonance.

GM Intrusion: When it first appears, *all* the PCs are subject to a group GM intrusion and risk suffering from the telepathic dysphoria that floods the installation. The ishenizar is the source, or at least the conduit, for the psychic influence.

Ishenizar: *level 6, perception as level 10; Armor 2; teleports as an action; psychic attack inflicts 3 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor)*

GITHEA

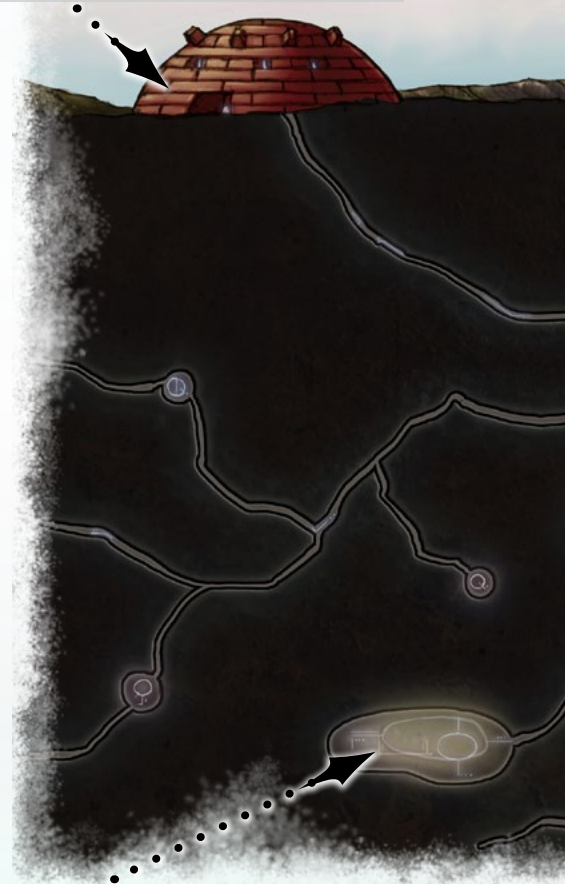
Githea has a room filled with papers and oddities (and a few cyphers) in the clave building. Githea is in her early thirties, wears a bright orange scarf, and is missing her right hand, but wears a metallic prosthetic.

The first time the PCs talk to her, she says that her best guess is that the thieves are none other than Lizan and Korz—two missing Aeon Priests—who left the clave a year earlier to explore the alternate dimension of Serenak. A portal to Serenak exists down in the installation. She believes they secretly returned and took the Raft to advance their explorations. She's lying; she wants to send the PCs in the wrong direction, because she is the thief and the folded raft is hidden in her chamber.

If the PCs confront her, she defiantly admits she stole the Raft. Then it's up to PCs to persuade her to come clean to Laedris; otherwise, it's a fight, or she attempts to flee in the Raft.

GM Intrusion: Githea uses a cypher that calls a transdimensional doppelganger of herself to assist in the fight.

Githea: *level 6, tasks related to the numenera as level 7, Raft-related tasks as level 8; prosthetic hand attack inflicts 6 points of damage (Depletion 1 in 1d10)*



RAFT CHAMBER

The chamber that once housed the Raft is a cluttered area filled with half-dead devices, with a big empty space in the middle. If the PCs search, a psychically resonant object—the same type of device the ishenizar desires—can be found beneath rubble in the chamber.

GM Intrusion: The clutter of devices contains a few dangers for those looking through them, including an invisible spot that swallows matter and sends it elsewhere, which the Aeon Priests were using as a garbage chute. A PC who stumbles on the anomaly must succeed on a difficulty 5 Speed defense roll to avoid suffering 5 points of damage (ignores Armor). Even on a success, they lose an article of clothing (such as a shoe) or a piece of equipment. A successful difficulty 5 Intellect roll negates the hole by covering up the gap with old garbage.

CORRIDOR NEXUS

Awnet is usually here, studying a bank of devices on the wall. Awnet is a seventeen-year-old male, skinny and awkward, who wants nothing more than to become an Aeon Priest. He's eager to please, eager to learn, and enthusiastic about anything related to the prior worlds. Laedris and Githea allow him to enter the installation, but he only comes this far without one of them.

Awnet doesn't know who stole the craft. On the other hand, he's seen the ishenizar many times because it manifests in the nexus every so often.

If Awnet knows the current location of the ishenizar, he says that Githea once told him the creature moves around randomly, but every day at noon and midnight, it appears in the Misted Corridor for some reason.

MISTED CORRIDOR

The air along this corridor of cast-off and mostly salvaged devices is filled with tiny pink particles, spewed by a vent in the floor. Breathing the particles is dangerous and results in 1 point of Speed damage (ignores Armor) per minute. PCs might be able to come away with some shins and perhaps a cypher if they spend some time searching, though that's risky unless they can figure out how to block the vent (or possess a device to let them survive in the cloud).

If the ishenizar location key is found here, it's because the ishenizar actually shows up to watch the PCs. It might flit away before they can talk with it, though.

GM Intrusion: The pink particles seem drawn to a particular PC and begin to eat at their skin, inflicting 1 point of Speed damage (ignores Armor) per round until they escape the area or somehow rinse off their skin.

SERENAK

This chamber contains a wide portal that leads into an alternate dimension (Serenak). PCs can enter into the weightless void and explore, possibly looking for Lizan and Korz if they're following the lead provided by Githea. They ultimately locate the missing "thieves," who have been dead for at least a year, frozen solid. They also find a massive, fishlike predator that feeds on heat.

If the telepathic resonant key is here, it's one of many silvery masks floating through this odd void.

GM Intrusion: The PCs must succeed on a difficulty 5 Intellect roll or become lost in Serenak until they spend at least a day searching for the way back.

Fishlike predator: level 4; short-range cold attack inflicts 5 points of damage on up to three targets as a single action

SELF-ASSEMBLING AUTOMATONS

This empty chamber contains cast-off and salvaged devices. PCs might be able to come away with some shins and perhaps a cypher or two if they spend some time searching.

If the ishenizar location key is here, it's because the ishenizar actually shows up to watch the PCs deal with the automatons. It might flit away before they can interact with it, though.

GM Intrusion: The devices in the chamber self-assemble over the course of one round into seven dangerous automatons bent on killing whatever they encounter.

Dangerous automaton: level 3; short-range electrical attack inflicts 3 points of Speed damage

OORYAL THE QUOTIEN

Ooryal the quotien floats in a small chamber thick with incomprehensible items that variously glow and hum, using telekinesis to operate objects. Presuming that the PCs must be envoys, it telepathically demands the Raft. It is unwilling to give up its demand, but clever negotiation will make Ooryal extend its deadline "for several days." Offering something it doesn't know or have experience with is one way to achieve this. It responds to any perceived threat or attack with deadly force.

Ooryal can have a key in that it might be able to identify the thief. If so, it is because it used a cypher to gaze back in time and saw a human wearing orange take it. Unfortunately, Ooryal doesn't know which human it was; it can't tell humans apart.

GM Intrusion: Just when things seem to be going well, a PC does or says something that somehow angers the quotien, risking any compromise potentially agreed upon.

Ooryal: level 7, knowledge of history and the numenera as level 9; Armor 3; long-range psychic attack inflicts 7 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) affecting all foes in an immediate area; if killed, regenerates from remaining tissue in five rounds

MORE DETAILS

Keep in mind that this scenario might not include a lot of (or depending on what PCs do or where they go, *any*) combat. This is important only in that some groups breeze through noncombat encounters quickly, and the session might end sooner than planned. If this seems likely, other extraneous people from the surrounding community of Naraderan could provide additional complications.

For example, a young but massive Glaive named **Zelsensia** might not be satisfied with waiting for the PCs to solve the problem, and so puts together a small mob of **residents** to storm the clave and head down into the installation to deal with Ooryal permanently. The PCs might not find out that Zelsensia did this until after she's led the group into the installation. That's when the PCs must decide whether they're willing to help find the various residents lost and scattered in the dangerous subterranean structure before they can come to harm. If they do, they might need to negotiate an extension with Ooryal on its deadline for getting the Raft.

Zelsensia: level 4;
Armor 3

Naraderan resident:
level 1

Broken hound, modified:
level 3, track as level 6;
four or more can attack
as one level 6 creature
inflicting 10 points of
Speed damage (ignores
Armor); howl inflicts
3 points of psychic
damage to creatures
within short range



Callerrail, page 234



Cragworm, page 236

THE RAFT

Level: 1d6 + 4

Form: When inflated, a teardrop-shaped silvery vehicle suited to travel in water, air, space, or through alternate dimensions; when folded, a pack-sized unit with carrying handles

Effect: Vehicle with room for up to ten passengers. With a successful Intellect task equal to the level of the artifact, a passenger can initiate travel to any location known to that passenger through personal experience or from having a map or coordinates, whether that location is deep within the sea, somewhere in space, or in another dimension. Such a trip can last from hours (for locations in the world or locations in parallel worlds) to months (for interstellar or bizarre dimension locations).

Depletion: 1 in 1d100 (check per day of use)

USING THIS ADVENTURE IN A CAMPAIGN

Read this section only if you're using the adventure in a campaign (and thus less likely to be under time pressure).

PCs who discover the installation under the clave, especially one with an open portal to the strange dimension of Serenak, may decide that they'd like to extend their time in the area and do more exploring of either the installation, the alternate dimension, or both. Doing so could generate many additional game sessions. You can use the following table to help inspire additional encounters in either location.

For each ten minutes that the PCs spend exploring, choose (or roll 1d6) to determine what they encounter.

1d6 Encounter

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 1 | Pack of six modified broken hounds with strange devices that provide additional abilities. |
| 2–3 | Chamber containing a callerrail in stasis. 25 shins can be salvaged from the devices keeping the callerrail in stasis, but doing so wakes it. |
| 4–5 | Strange floating crystal impossibly has nineteen equally matched sides and eight angles; studying it actually hurts human minds and requires observers to succeed on a difficulty 5 Intellect defense task or suffer 2 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) each round until they can push the awful understanding from their minds. |
| 6 | Corpse of a cragworm , curled around a clutch of what might be cragworm eggs. Glyphs painted on the wall in a local abhuman tongue describe the cragworm to be "She Whose Many Names the Yovoki Scream in the Night." |

PLACEMENT IN THE NINTH WORLD

Naraderan can be found almost anywhere in the Ninth World. However, if the GM has no preference, the village is in the Beyond, on the western edge of the Plains of Kataru.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Read this section after the adventure is over.

The PCs should earn 2 XP for discovering the real thief, 1 XP for successfully recovering the Raft, and another 1 XP if they do so through diplomacy rather than violence.

Awnet, whose illusions are shattered when it's discovered that Githea was the thief, wants to disassociate himself from the Naraderanclave. He almost certainly wants to join the PCs' group, and if rejected, might try to follow them when they leave the community. It's up to the PCs whether they want to take Awnet in or try to convince him to stay with theclave.

After finding the Raft, the PCs could decide to neutralize the threat represented by Ooryal. This might not only lead to a different way to resolve the original ultimatum, but also allow the PCs to gain some additional use out of the Raft. However, piloting the Raft is difficult without the aid of the Aeon Priests who have spent years repairing and studying the device. The

characters could gain some training in using the craft, though any general training in the numenera would also apply.

With the craft, the characters could go anywhere described in the many sourcebooks provided for the Numenera game line, including those locations described in *Into the Night*, *Into the Deep*, and *Into the Outside*. However, even if the quotien is killed, its ability to regenerate means it may eventually return. Even if the characters launch themselves into some other dimension, their theft of the device that the quotien considers to be its property could motivate Ooryal to stir from the prior-world ruin so it can track the PCs and enact terrible vengeance on them.

Finally, the ishenizar—the most inexplicable entity in the ruins—could take an interest in the PCs, whether or not they take off with the Raft. From time to time it might appear to observe them, bringing its dysphoric influence with it. Depending on when it makes its appearance, it could dissolve delicate negotiations the PCs are involved with, or give them the edge during a combat that wasn't going their way. The ishenizar seems to want something from the PCs, but doesn't seem to have the capacity to describe via emotions exactly what. The best the PCs can get from it is that it wants them to “connect to death.”

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OORYAL



SERENAK



NUMENERA GLIMMERS

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