

CYPHERCASTER

MAGAZINE

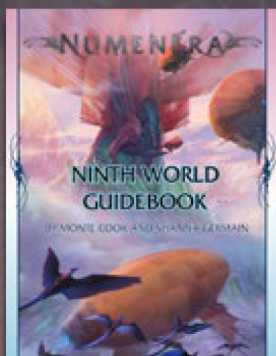


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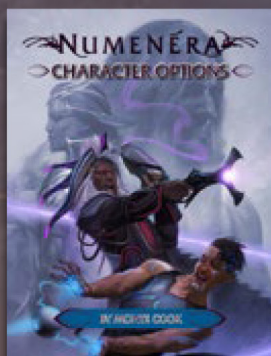
NUMENERA

Venture deeper still into the mystery and wonder of the Ninth World!

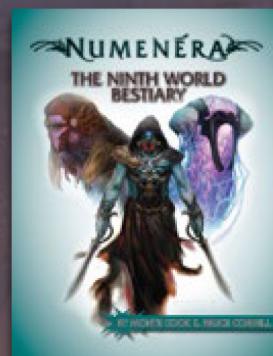
The journey into the Ninth World is far from over. Unearth more cyphers, encounter more weird creatures, and discover new abilities with these great titles from the continuing line of Numenera products!



Ninth World Guidebook



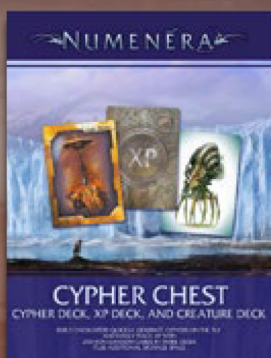
Character Options



The Ninth World Bestiary



Technology Compendium



Numenera Cypher Chest



The Devil's Spine



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CREDITS

Publisher & Layout
David Wilson Brown

Content Editors
Andrew Cady
Jeremy Land
Brandon Ording

Cover Artist
[Jeff Brown](#)

Logos & Bannerhead
[John Scott](#)

Art Director & Cartography
[Ryan Chaddock](#)

Contributors
Andrew Cady
Chris Fitzgerald
[Marc Plourde](#)
[Scott Robinson](#)
[Jim Ryan](#)
[James Walls](#)

Interior Art
[Avery Liell-Kok](#)
[Ryan Wolfe](#)
[SS Dabiz](#)

Jeremy Mohler
Christopher West
Matt Stawicki
Cathy Wilkins

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ON THE COVER:

A gravity skiff exploring the Varidraol Mountains. Searching for the source of the River of Sagas, the vessel scares a flock of Chuub-la birds into flight.

Greetings fellow "Ninth Worlders," "Strangers," & everyone else!

The magazine you are reading is a labor of love by those who have contributed content and helped produce this work. We are fans of the Cypher System and the works produced by Monte Cook Games.

For many of us, the games that Monte, Bruce, Shanna, and their team have created are incredibly inspiring and stir our creative juices.

Within these pages you'll find interviews, product previews, adventures, advice, fiction, and more. Our hope is that you find value in bringing content from our magazine to your table and that you will come back for our next issue and the one after that and so on.

This magazine has been produced under a special agreement with Monte Cook Games. As part of that agreement, we have been granted special use of MCG art that would not normally be allowed. We are most grateful for that exception and their overall support.

David Wilson Brown

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In Translation: The Strange Character Options

Remember how many more options for building your character the Numenera: Character Options book gave you? In Translation gives you the same scope of options for your character for The Strange!

With 19 new descriptors and 36 new foci, not to mention a slew of additional options for your Type tiers, this book is loaded with content to help you build your characters out no matter what recursion you are visiting.

If your players have the Player's Guide (or that section of the Corebook) and In Translation, they will have 32 total descriptors, 3 types, and 63 total foci for a total 6,048 build combinations!!!

New Descriptor Examples:

Addicted
Extroverted
Introverted
Jovial
Resilient

New Focus Examples:

Awakens Dreams
Collects Bounties
Masters Wuxia
Resides in Silicon

Out now!



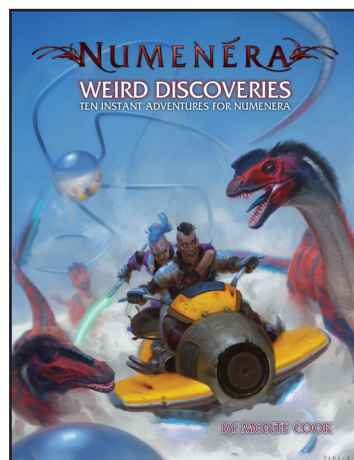
Weird Discoveries: Ten Instant Adventures for Numenera

This new book solves one of the age old problems for RPG GMs — preparation time. Ten “weird and wondrous” adventures built to minimize preparation time. Like making an RPG more like a board game in prep time.

The best way to describe the adventures themselves is modular- easy for players to move within them without feeling railroaded. They’ve done this by identifying “keys,” which might be people, objects, or information that reveals something, leading the players to another area. There might be different means to gain that key and while doing that, they may discover another key. So it’s built like a video game might be- different keys “unlock” different areas, whether that would be literal unlocking of an area or just the knowledge to look in an area. This is done through maps and diagrams that help the GM easily understand what part leads to the “unlocking” of another.

And what’s great about these adventures is that you could easily drop any one of them (or a series of them) into just about any campaign that you are running.

Out now!

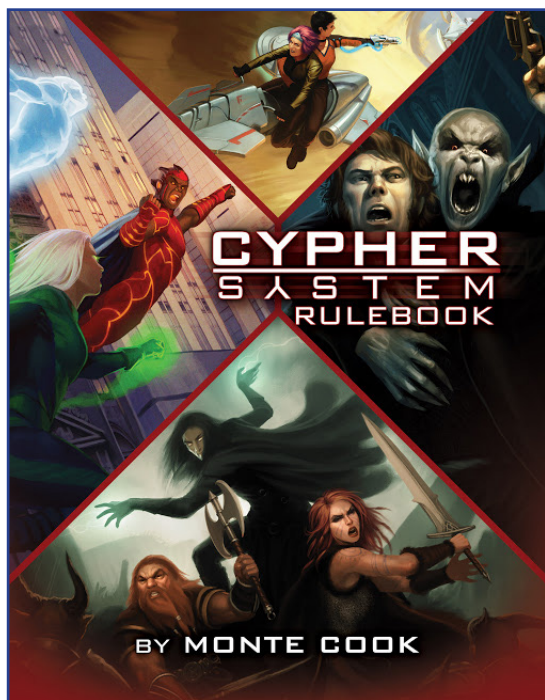


Product Preview - Spring/Summer 2015



[Cypher System Rulebook](#)

A Cypher System campaign of Victorian horror? High fantasy? Espionage? Galaxy-spanning space opera? Soon, any of those will be as easy as running *The Strange* or *Numenera*. The Cypher System Rulebook is the next big corebook release from Monte Cook Games, and it's coming in the summer of 2015!



The Cypher System Rulebook will be a hefty hard-cover rulebook with all the rules you need to run Cypher System games in a wide range of genres, along with advice on using the system to build and run those campaigns. It will draw in part from content already published in *Numenera* and *The Strange*, but tailor that content for play in different genres, and add hundreds of new genre-specific and genre-spanning types, descriptors, foci, creatures, cyphers, and rules elements. It will feature the incredible artwork and production values for which Monte Cook Games is becoming legendary.

Coming This Summer!



[No Thank You, Evil!](#)

Ever wanted to introduce kids to roleplaying in a kid friendly way that doesn't take away any of the fun? That's the intent of *No Thank You, Evil!* The Kickstarter launched May 13th and runs through June 17th!



Coming 2016!

Coming Soon:

New Glimmer and Fractal Adventures!





Back in January, *Shotguns & Sorcery*, the first third-party standalone Cypher System game by Outland Entertainment, was funded via Kickstarter. It is based off of the world Matt Forbeck created in various novels and short fiction. The Kickstarter campaign raised over sixty-four thousand dollars. In addition to a massive corebook, backers unlocked a player's guide, a Fiend Folio, an adventure, and even a 22 page comic. It has been a couple months since funding, and we were able to catch up with writer **Matt Forbeck**, and Game Designer **Robert Schwalb**, and ask them a few question about their upcoming Cypher System campaign setting. - *Interview by Andrew Cady*

First off, for those unfamiliar with Shotguns and Sorcery and the Kickstarter, what is this world all about?

Forbeck: It's a fantasy noir setting in which the a conglomeration of races live together inside a walled city built on and in a mountain ruled over by a dragon. The Dragon Emperor provided the people protection from the hordes of zombies roaming the land until the wall could be built, and in exchange for his protection, they are his loyal subjects.

It's Raymond Chandler or Dashiell Hammett meets J.R.R. Tolkien. The Maltese Falcon meets The Lord of the Rings. The people of Dragon City live in layered neighborhoods stratified by their longevity. The upper-class elves literally look down on everyone else, all the way to the poor goblins and orcs who live in the wall's sharp shadows.

Can you describe or outline a typical adventure that you could see players enjoying?

Forbeck: The traditional adventure takes the heroes outside of the city to plunder the abandoned cities of the dead, sneaking past or fighting their way through the zombie hordes. This winds up being a lot more like your standard dungeon crawl — assuming you make it to the dungeon alive.

Heroes can also adventure inside Dragon City's walls and enjoy its noirish flavors. They investigate mysteries, find lost treasures, protect those who need it, and stand up against gun-toting crooks or abusive Imperial Guards.

The previous Cypher System games have focused on exploration has that affected development in anyway?

Forbeck: That's one of the reasons we decided to go with the Cypher System. Finding your way in and around Dragon City is where a lot of the fun comes from, so we thought it would make an excellent fit.

Schwalb: From the mechanics side, the Cypher System's approach to character creation enables a wider range of character options that can speak to the various pursuits and activities the player characters might undertake. Layering in foci and descriptors on top of type lets us offer players interesting investigative, RP, exploration options without undermining the character's ability to contribute to the group. In other words, players can build characters that operate well in a variety of circumstances, whether ferreting out information in the city's tangled streets or delving into an undead-infested ruin.

Going out and looting the ruins of civilization is something of the protagonists past in the books, while dealing with city events and city politics take up a lot of his present. Do you expect both aspects to be a part of a typical S&S campaign?

Forbeck: Very much so. Max Gibson — the hero of the books — might have given up looting ruins, but that doesn't mean there aren't still plenty of other people ready to try their hand at it. And the game doesn't have to go just one way or the other. Players can move in and out of the city and change things up whenever and however they like.

Schwalb: For me, this is one of the most exciting things about Shotguns & Sorcery. The game gives the PCs a realized and detailed home base from which they can mount expeditions, yet also have plenty of things to do when not facing down horrors that want to eat their brains.

What kinds of unique twists on the traditional noir tropes can be enjoyed by blending magic and fantasy into the genre?

Forbeck: There are all the guns for one! The people of Dragon City are used to seeing pistols, rifles, and shotguns around, and weapons and ammunition of all types can be enchanted. Such things carry a stiff price, but Dragon City often places stiff demands on its heroes.

Schwalb: Private dicks always have a bottle, right? Well, dragonfire, is a special kind of booze infused with magic (shavings of dragon scales) that enhances the imbiber's magical ability at a cost—getting a bit impaired.

The S&S world is described as one big city, surrounded by lands crawling with undead. How does a one city

campaign world affect your design decisions for this line?

Forbeck: It gives us a bit more focus. One of the great things about Dragon City is you can take it and drop it wholesale into other settings. All you need is a part of the map that's a no-go zone. You know, one that says, "Here be dragons." You toss Dragon City in there, and you're ready to go.

Schwalb: It also lets us anchor character options to locations and organizations in the city. We can create rules elements that let players weave their characters into the fabric of the city.

Have you looked at any other 'one city' campaign settings for guidance? (if so, what?)

Forbeck: I was a huge fan of The City State of the Invincible Overlord from Judges Guild, and the Thieves' World boxed set that Chaosium put out many years back. I also wrote a book called The Redhurst Academy of Magic several years back, which detailed a magical academy that teleported from place to place.

Schwalb: Speaking Thieves' World, a few years ago, I worked on Shadowspawn's Guide to Sanctuary, a giant tome filled with information about anthologies' setting. Monte's Ptolus, the City of Greyhawk boxed set, and the Waterdeep boxed sets have also given me some inspiration.



In the S&S books, race has a lot of effect on the social standing and expectation, Previously in MCG Cypher Settings any race other than human is denoted as the character's Descriptor. How do you plan on handling race?

Schwalb: This has been the toughest nut to crack, no doubt. I've taken four or five different approaches including adding in a second adjective in the character creation sentence and making race your type and letting players choose a track for their tier benefits according to a broad theme. While either of these and others could work, I ultimately realized that one size does not fit all. Here's the thing, race is important in the books in how the characters fit into the fabric of Dragon City's society. But race, with the exception of elves, has little impact on the various characters' capabilities. In many ways, race is just a descriptive element, something that describes your character's body type, appearance, and, of course, longevity. Unlike other fantasy games, where race delivers a package of mechanics—the ability to see in the dark, a resistance to poison—there's nothing in the source material to indicate that dwarfs are any better at seeing in the dark than humans are or that halflings have crazy luck or something else. So the plan, at the moment, is to make race more descriptive and less mechanical for humans, dwarves, orcs, and most other peoples living in Dragon City. Choosing one of the standard races will determine how you allocate some of your additional points to your Stat Pools, but will function more as a roleplaying aid. Elves, however, are the big exception. They are simply better than humans. They live longer, move faster, and know more than anyone else in the city. They also, for the most part, keep to themselves and take antagonistic positions to the "lesser" people in the city. Since elves are so far removed from the other races, socially and mechanically, players who want to play them can do so by choosing the Elf descriptor.

Are the events of the books and short Fiction represented in the game? Does this campaign setting take place before? After?

Forbeck: The game is set in the time of the original two short stories I wrote for Shotguns & Sorcery: "Friends Like These" and "Goblintown Justice." This is before the events in the novels, which shake the mountain's foundations. We might someday get around to detailing times both earlier and later than that, but we're focusing on that period for now.

How will THE Dragon be depicted in the book? In the Fiend Folio section? Or more in-depth?

Forbeck: The Dragon Emperor is going to need a bit more depth than you'd see in a typical monster book entry. In many ways, he's the central character of the entire setting. His history, actions, and choices permeate the entire city.

Will you be using the same character advancement model from MCG's Cypher system products?

Schwalb: Definitely! Compatibility with other Cypher System games is one of the big goals for design. Doing so makes it easier for gamers to jump in having played Numenera and The Strange. And, best of all, it allows groups playing the Strange to migrate their characters into this world as a recursion if they want.

As we wait ever so patiently for the Shotgun and Sorcery Campaign Setting to be released. What other projects are you two working on?

Forbeck: I'm mostly working on novels these days. My latest is the Halo novel New Blood, which came out on March 1, but I have several others in the works.

Schwalb: Now that my Kickstarter campaign is over with, I'm working hard to wrap production of Shadow of the Demon Lord and all the awesome stuff unlocked by the stretch goals.





Exploring Cypher Space

By James Wallis

*"Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony."*

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,
by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

It was with this quote, read aloud to my players, that I kicked off "Another Sun Rises", a Cypher System-based, hard science fiction mini-campaign, late in 2014. I have always been an avid fan of what I would call "plausible" science fiction. Ben Bova's Grand Tour series of novels showed me that the "science" in sci fi can be just as wondrous and enchanting as any magical effect in a fantasy story, especially space science. But most science fiction simply uses space as a means of traveling from one fantastic location to another. Both Star Wars and Star Trek, the two great titles of sci fi, do space a terrible disservice. Space is magnificent and awe-inspiring in its sheer emptiness, but through the hand-waving of "hyperdrives" and "warp speed," the vast beauty of our natural universe is tossed aside by most authors and filmmakers. This is not to say that I do not enjoy space operas, but the concept of starfighters weaving about in space through a crowded asteroid belt is about as realistic as a giant cannon firing a shell full of passengers

into a moon made out of cheese.

But you have those rare science fiction gems that truly give the reader or viewer a firm grasp on the possible realities of space travel. Danny Boyle's "Sunshine," a movie about a mission to the sun itself, while not realistic in terms of today's science, did a terrific job embracing some of the hazards and risks of space travel. Following a late-night viewing of this movie back in October, coupled with an ongoing obsession for the realistic orbital mechanics and simulation of Squad's "Kerbal Space Program," I wanted to bring this concept of plausible science fiction to my Tuesday night roleplaying group. After careful consideration, I chose to hack and re-skin the Cypher System and create a campaign about characters lost in the very real and very deadly universe.

Another Sun Rises

Just a brief synopsis of the campaign:

Before we began, I gave the players a brief story about the setting, and an important mission to the Tau Ceti star system, only a dozen or so light years away from Earth. The trip would take several decades, and upon arrival, the player characters would take part in the exploration of a potentially habitable planet. It would be a typical, yet science-factual, mission to an exo-planet that actually exists.

Then I pulled the "bait and switch."

The first session opened with a reading of the quote from the Rime of the Ancient Mariner, and then each player character waking up from a cryo-stasis on a derelict craft tethered to a much larger, interstellar vessel: the Argos III. Both vessels orbited a strange planet, which in turn orbited a dim star that certainly was not Tau Ceti. As the campaign progressed, all hopes of an "exploration" campaign faded, as the story changed to one of survival in deep space. Challenges included conserving resources, restoring ship systems, and battling a defiant AI named GAIA that was in control of the Argos III.

After learning the ship had encountered a rogue singularity during its transit to Tau Ceti, the players discovered that the vessel had not only been flung out of the Milky Way galaxy, but that 225,000 years had passed! When the party eventually encountered an alien civilization in the same system, it was not an analog of a typical, humanoid space-faring species, but rather a civilization much further up the Kardashev Scale, capable of planetary and stellar engineering. Certainly trying to come up with hard rules for all of these themes and tropes would have been a significant challenge!

Choosing the Cypher System

Although I am a self-admitted Cypher System fanatic, there are certainly other options out there for gamers to choose from should they wish to create a home-brewed science fiction campaign. I first considered using TSR's *Alternity* and Pinnacle's *Savage Worlds*, and could have easily chosen either. There are other systems out there, but these are the games with which I'm most familiar. But my goal for *Another Sun Rises* was to tell a thoughtful and collaborative story.

In a way, I wanted to minimize the rules and just have them "running the background," to call upon when needed. The Cypher System was the perfect choice. One of the beauties of Monte Cook Games' creation is that the rules do a great job at keeping out of the way. Gamemasters and players can use them as much as they want, or as little, and still enjoy their experience at the table.



Borrow, Brand, or Build

I chose to focus on writing the story, not creating a broad set of customized rules, creatures, and character options. To do this, I considered source material from both *Numenera* and *The Strange*, with an emphasis on the Ruk recursion for the latter. As I reviewed both the *Numenera* and *The Strange* corebooks, as well as *Numenera Character Options* and the *Ninth World Bestiary*, I used the following guidelines:

Borrow: Whenever possible, select character options, items, and creatures from both *Numenera* and *The Strange* that can be used "as is." For example, I was able to use the magmid from the *Numenera Bestiary* without any adjustments. The creature fits perfectly in a near-future science-fiction setting.

Brand: If a character option, item, or creature would be interesting in the game, but has a conflicting backstory or appearance, simply change the name.

Build: Do not create something new unless absolutely necessary.

Cyphers were a particular challenge when designing a hard science fiction setting. Artifacts were not hard to reskin, as they have multiple uses and are easily described as complex devices, such as rebreathers, blow torches, or other special tools. But cyphers are special. In *Numenera*, cyphers are described as cobbled bits of old technology that have one final use. In *The Strange*, they are pieces of an alien dark energy network that can be used for wondrous effects.

When porting cyphers from one setting to another, context is very important. Since *Another Sun Rises* began on a damaged starship in orbit around a strange planet, I was able to mimic some of the themes from *Numenera*: a broken piece of a computer terminal, a leftover power cell that acted as an explosive device, or a spray bottle with one more use. In another campaign, I'd possibly consider a completely different mechanism for cyphers, but given their importance to the game mechanics, they should never be left out.

Creating Space Explorers

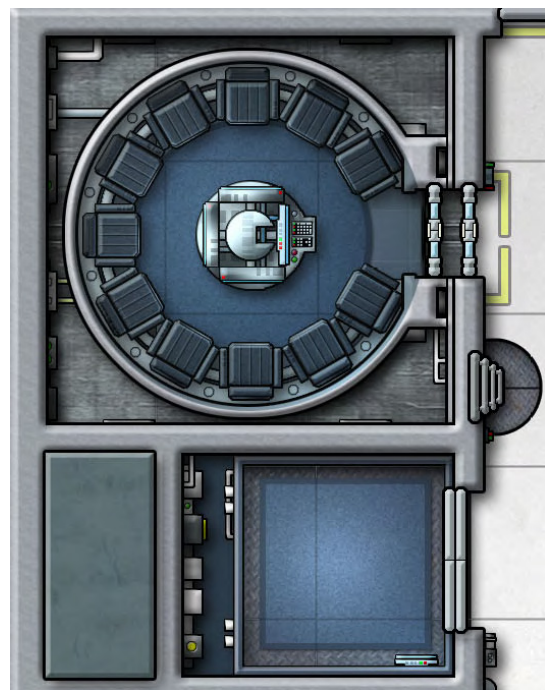
In the past, when creating home-brewed campaign settings, I have handed players large, customized "player's guides" to help steer them towards setting themes. I did not want to go through all of this work with *Another Sun Rises*. Instead, I gave my players a simple set of character design rules following the aforementioned guidelines:

Build each character with the *Numenera* types, using the following naming conventions:

Glaives become troopers.

Jacks become operatives.

Nanos become savants.



All descriptors could be considered, so long as they fit the theme of the game. All foci could be considered, so long as they could operate, or appear to operate, in a realistic, near-future universe. No psionics were allowed.

To help generate characters, I gave the players a three-page primer of themes, including the kinds of books, video games, and movies they could look to for inspiration.

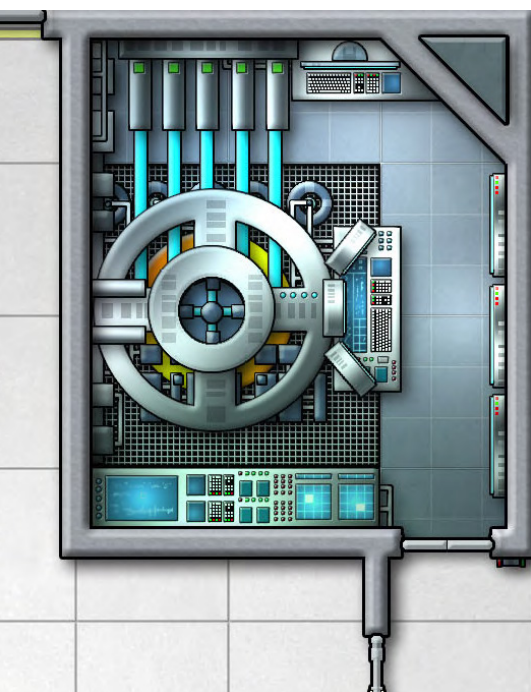
We ended up with the following PCs:

- A Hard-Boiled savant who Works Medical Miracles*
- A Learned savant who Talks to Machines
- A Graceful trooper who Operates Undercover
- A Stealthy operative who Adapts to Any Environment

**Hard-Boiled was from Ryan Chaddock Games' Wits Alone, and Works Medical Miracles was just a reskinned version of "Works Miracles" from Numenera.*

Visual FX

In a fantasy game, it's easy to draw simple maps on a dry-erase board or virtual tabletop, but for science fiction, a picture is worth billions upon billions of words. Since the entirety of our campaign took place onboard an enormous starship in a completely alien star system, I needed deck plans and star maps. Ryan Wolfe of [0-hr Art & Technology](#) has produced several dozen deck plans for sci-fi RPG's that you can find on Drive-ThruRPG. Each PDF is under \$10 and you get complete maps of the vessel that could be used with or without miniatures. The [Argos III](#) was a 0-hr art & technology design. To generate images of an alien star system I used a computer simulation called Universe Sandbox. Through this program, I was able to create the Crimson



star system, with multiple planets, moons, and one dim red dwarf star. During gameplay on Google Hangouts, I frequently shared my screen and flipped to the simulator to show various stellar objects as the characters slowly maneuvered their hulking craft through space.

There would be no point A to point B, hand-wavy space-faring in *Another Sun Rises*!

Tips for Your Creations

With the upcoming release of Monte Cook Games' Cypher System Rulebook, gamemasters will have the opportunity to create their very own unique universes, populated with rich characters, engaging stories, and terrifying foes. But you do not have to wait until the summer to start bending your favorite ruleset to your creative whims! If you already own *Numenera* or *The Strange*, you can start building a unique campaign setting for your players right now.

Just a few words of advice:

Make sure your players are on board with your plan. If you tell your gaming group about your ideas, and share your goals, you can collaboratively agree upon character designs rather than have to list out all of the options ahead of time.

Don't be afraid to tell your players "no" during character creation. Certainly during the course of a campaign it is always better to say "yes," but when creating characters for a unique, home-brewed setting, sometimes you need to ensure that the theme remains intact. If you are running a hard science fiction campaign similar to *Another Sun Rises*, and a player demands to use the "Embraces Qephilim Ancestry" focus, remember that, as a gamemaster, you have a say.

Borrow whenever possible, and reskin whenever necessary. If you enjoy a particular artifact from a recursion in *The Strange*, just steal it! If you want to call a titanothaur from the *Numenera* Bestiary a kaiju, there is nothing stopping you!

Never underestimate the value of show and tell. I created several scenes with Universe Sandbox, but you can also dig up images through a Google search or DeviantArt to share with your players. These may end up being more inspiring than what you had originally concocted in your head!

If you are interested in reading more about *Another Sun Rises*, you can find all five adventure summaries on [living4crits.com](#).

Images provided by [0-hr Art & Technology](#)

Shapes in the Salt

By Jim Ryan



"Are we lost?" Kaz asked.

She finished cleaning her Justice blade and stared out across the vast extent of the salt flats. Lopsided, honeycombed tiles of salt and white sand cascaded out in every direction. To Kaz, the ground looked like nothing so much as a huge expanse of cracked, dry reptile hide stretched on an impossibly huge frame. Heat waves rolled up in the distance, distorting the land beyond into a shining reflection of the cloudless sky.

There was not a single landmark in sight.

Whether Titania wanted to admit it or not, they were most definitely lost.

Kaz put her Justice blade back in its scabbard, at her left hip. She thought about cleaning her Mercy blade, as well, but she'd not had the occasion to use it for some time.

Of course, that could easily change before the day's end.

Titania blinked and turned to look at her, smiling broadly. "Lost? No, not at all, my friend. We are temporarily misplaced."

"Stow it, Tee! I know that look. You ain't taking me in this time. You have no idea where we are."

Titania made a show of carefully studying the metal sphere at the top of her staff. Kaz shook her head in disgust and adjusted the bands of her synth armor. Her

skin had begun to chafe in the heat. She was lucky, she supposed, that she and the other city guards back home hadn't been made to wear metal armor instead. Then she'd have been in real trouble.

"You could take it off, you know," Titania said matter-of-factly, returning her gaze to the periphery of the flats.

"Not a chance. There's blood-harvesting killers out here."

"Suit yourself. But black and gold are just about the worst possible colors you could be wearing right now. You're going to cook in there."

"Already have been. Forget about me, I'm used to it. It's you I'm worried about."

"I'm fine, Kaz. You know me."

And yet, Titania was already starting to succumb to the heat. Kaz could tell from the way her friend was leaning so heavily on her staff.

"Yeah," Kaz responded "That's the problem. I do know you. You're gonna say you're fine no matter what."

Odd symbols revolved slowly across the surface of the metal sphere. Titania spent another few moments looking at them, then nodded and pointed the staff to the right. She pulled up the hood of her light-grey robes and began walking in that direction.

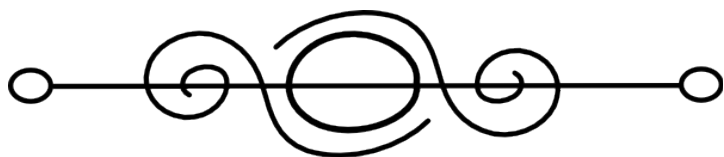
"This way," she said, giving Kaz an impish grin.



"I hope we're moving away from Lhauric this time. I don't fancy fighting off any more zealots today."

"Not to worry," Titania called back over her shoulder as she shambled on. "They won't pursue us just because we refused to take part in their oafish blood ceremonies. Not all the way out here, anyway. Just keep moving."

Kaz narrowed her eyes. Titania was being awfully pleasant today, even for her. They needed to get out of this heat. Soon.



They crossed a number of triangular islands that stuck up through the salt-encrusted surface. The land masses were bare, covered only in a kind of fine, powdery sand of a different shade from the rest of the ground. They looked like big, beige bandages covering wounds in the cracked skin of the salt bed. Each one was about fifty to a hundred feet across. Despite their plain appearance, the sight of them had stirred a glimmer of hope in Kaz's heart. Finally, here was something to break the terrain's dull monotony.

Not that she could see much of the terrain. The sun had moved higher in the sky and the resulting sheen off the salt crystals made it almost painful to look directly at the

ground. The heat was growing more intense, too. Kaz felt beads of sweat rolling down her arms and back and resisted the urge to claw at her armor.

Titania coughed a dry, hacking cough. She wasn't sweating at all. That was a bad sign. Kaz checked her waterskin. Like everything else in this place, it was disappointingly flat.

"I haven't got much water left, Tee," said Kaz. "What about you?"

"I'll be fine."

"You're out, aren't you?"

There was a long pause, then Titania sighed and said, "The blood priests got it when they took my pack. But I'll be fine. Trust me."

"We've got to get out of here."

"We will. And soon. There was a settlement not too far from here when I came through a year ago. It should be close. The people are quite friendly, too," Titania said. "They race across these flats on holidays. Look for chariot tracks."

Looking around once more, Kaz confirmed that there was not a single vehicle track anywhere in sight. "Do you remember these islands?" she asked.

"No. But I was coming from a different direction then."

"Then how do you know if—ah, forget it," Kaz muttered. If Titania heard, she was ignoring her. So she tried talking about something else. "I thought these islands were supposed to be brimming with life. And fresh water."

"Hmm... you're right about that."

Titania stopped and set her staff firmly on the ground. The symbols on the surface of the sphere slid around like quicksilver.

"Pity that thing doesn't have a compass on it," Kaz said.

"Now that's VERY interesting..." Titania said as she studied the symbols.

There was no talking to her when she was like this. Maybe when the sun got closer to the horizon they'd have an easier time sorting out which way was which...

The sound of a sudden intake of breath interrupted Kaz's thought.

Titania's jaw dropped open and her eyebrows were knit together in what looked like concerned concentration.

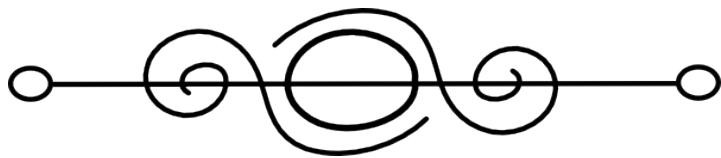
"What? What is it?" Kaz asked.

"What? Oh, er... It's not important. Just some curious things about the soil."

"You're not having a joke, are you?"

"No. Not at all. We're just in a dry spot, I expect. Not to worry! Now I believe we need to go..." Titania gazed around for a moment, then jabbed a finger past Kaz's shoulder. "...this way!"

She took off at a brisk pace. Kaz cursed under her breath and followed.



They were walking over perhaps the twentieth large, triangular island of sand when Titania stumbled. Kaz stepped forward and caught her before she fell down.

"You need to rest," Kaz said.

They both needed to rest. She was opening the vents in her armor every few minutes, now, and the sweat was pouring out in buckets.

"Nonsense. We'll soon be there, I'm quite sure." Titania

extricated herself from Kaz's grasp and kept moving.

"Come on, Tee, you're gonna kip over."

"No," Titania said, perhaps a little too quickly. "Let's keep going. I have a very good feeling about this direction. We'll be at the settlement soon, I promise you."

Titania did slow her pace, however, as she continued to study her metal sphere. Its surface flowed like liquid, but Kaz tried not to think about that, because the idea was making her thirsty. She couldn't make heads or tails of the pictures the sphere was forming anyway.

"Trust us to get lost in the one part of the Beyond where you can't see the bleedin' Clock of Kala," said Kaz, trying to fill the silence. The sun had finally dropped lower again, but that hadn't helped much. "We could use a big, stony landmark about now. Or some stars."

"No need for stars. Show a little optimism, eh?"

A low rumble echoed across the flats. At first it appeared to be coming from far away, but Kaz soon realized it was emanating from below them.

After a few moments, the sound ceased. Kaz stopped and glanced at the ground. It looked like perfectly ordinary salt and sand. But there had to be something more.

Apparently uninterested in what had just happened, Titania quickened her pace. "Come on! I think I can see something!"

"Hang on a minute! I think there might be water under here!" Kaz said. She drew her Mercy blade forth from its sheath at her left hip and knelt down.

"No!" Titania rushed back and grabbed Kaz's wrist. Kaz easily pulled out of her grasp.

Titania's eyes were wide with panic and exhaustion.

"What is it, Tee? You've been acting peculiar the last few hours, even for you. We're really in the suds here, aren't we? Worse than you're saying, I mean. What's happening?"

Another low rumble came up from the ground. The earth vibrated. Titania stumbled, tried to catch herself with her staff, missed, and fell into the sand.

The rumbling ceased. Kaz tried to help Titania up, but her friend had passed out.

"No time to sleep now!" Kaz said. She grabbed Titania by the shoulders and shook her.

Titania moaned slightly, but there was no other response. She was paler than usual and her lips were just about as cracked as the flats' salty surface.

Kaz had no idea what was happening, but they were going to die out here if they didn't get moving soon. She dug out her waterskin and poured the last few drops of its contents into Titania's mouth.

Titania's eyes snapped open.

"Have to go." She gestured weakly to the expanse of land beyond the island.

"Have to get you some more water first," Kaz said, lifting her Mercy blade.

The rumbling started again, this time even louder. The ground shook violently. Kaz shifted to maintain her balance.

"Please, Kaz," Titania said, her voice struggling to stay above a whisper. "We have to go. Now."

Kaz swore, sheathing her blade. She pulled Titania up into a sitting position.

"Why?"

"You have to trust me. Please."

Kaz's face poured with sweat. Standing up was proving difficult. Every movement was a monumental effort.

"All right," Kaz said. "I know you, Tee. I think you're out of your skull most of the time, but you're right on target when it matters most. If you say it's time to move, then it's time to move. But you've got to move with me."

Using Titania's staff for support, Kaz slowly struggled to her feet, pulling her friend up with her. The rumbling was getting worse. She fought to stay upright.

At Titania's urging, they walked forward.

"Just a bit further," Titania said through gritted teeth. "It will be all right in just a moment. Just a little bit further."

After stumbling and nearly falling over again, they came to the edge of the island and stepped off. The moment Kaz set foot on the white, crusty surface and heard the reassuring crunch of the salt beneath her, she felt infinitely safer.

The feeling lasted only a few seconds.

The rumbling had become a cacophony. The ground around the island shook violently. The sand on its

surface rippled like a storm cloud.

Then the island tore itself up from the ground.

The rumbling sound stretched into a low hum as its pitch moved upwards. As the land mass rose, its narrow, salt-encrusted side came into view, revealing it to be only a few feet thick. Rope-like objects dangled beneath it, writhing backwards and forwards in an almost rhythmic fashion. They whipped out like vines, threatening to trip and entangle the two companions.

Titania trembled and rocked back and forth unsteadily. After a moment of confused struggling, Kaz realized she was laughing. It was a raw, voiceless laugh that fell somewhere between surprise and hysteria.

"Dammit, Tee, this isn't the time to go off your lorebox!"

She grabbed Titania and yanked her several paces back from the grasp of the lashing tendrils.

As the island lifted up into the air, Kaz could see that its underside was covered in many small, beige appendages, most of which ended in hooks. The salt and sand poured off of the thing, revealing it to be more trapezoidal in shape than she'd expected.

The hum changed again, this time moving up and down as though it was... singing?

Kaz blinked.

A huge, flat piece of land was now drifting above them, humming out a sonorous tune.

"What... what?" was all Kaz could manage. She touched the hilt of her Justice blade.

Titania shook her head, recovering herself. "I'm sorry, Kaz. But I've never seen one of these. Isn't it wonderful?"

"No! No, Tee, 'wonderful' is very low on my list of choice words right now."

"I'm sorry I couldn't tell you sooner."

"Sooner? You knew about this... thing?!"

Titania nodded sheepishly and coughed again. "Didn't want you to overreact. Had to get to the edge first."

"Overreact?! It's... it's a flying island!"

Titania smiled feebly. "Not exactly."

The large, flat object revolved in the air. A pair of wide, dark eyes opened on its underside, near its apex.

It regarded the two of them.

"This is why I didn't want you to use your sword," Titania said. "Can you imagine what trouble we'd be in if you'd stabbed one of these creatures in the back?"

"Hang on... what do you mean one of them?"

Titania nodded back in the direction they'd come. To her horror, Kaz saw at least two dozen more of the huge beasts rise from the salt flats and drift up into the air.

"We're trounced."

"Possibly," Titania said, her lips curling into a mad grin. She looked to be on the verge of another fit of laughter, but she kept it in check. "Just watch them!"

"I really hate it when you get like this, Tee. Have I told you that lately?"

Titania clicked her tongue chidingly. "Shh!"

For a few tense moments, nothing happened.

The creatures hung in the air, humming a haunting melody to each other. Kaz held her breath. Of all the ways she thought she'd die, this had most definitely not been on the list.

Then, as one, the beasts turned away from them and started moving away.

Getting her feet under herself at last, Titania grabbed hold of her staff and pointed it at the creatures as they retreated.

The metallic sphere atop the staff rotated first one way, then the other. Its features melted and changed to a new pattern.

"Heh. Got you," she exclaimed weakly.

"What in the name of the Sky Devils are those things?" Kaz asked.

"No idea," Titania said. "Like I said... I've never encountered anything like them before. If the staff hadn't detected them, we might have done them injury."

"Yeah. Right. Poor things. I'd have felt really sorry for them while they were eating me. I can't believe you let us walk all over those monsters!"

"Well, how else were we going to wake them up?"

The beasts were flying further away now, so Kaz took the opportunity to catch her breath. She quietly counted to

ten before speaking again. "If we live through this, I am gonna give you such a bashing. What reason could you possibly have for waking them?"

Titania pointed at the creatures, who were quickly turning into distant dots. "They're migrating. Which means they are probably heading north. And that means..." she said, turning and gesturing, "...the settlement should be right over there."

Kaz squinted in the direction Titania indicated.

"Are you sure?"

"Absolutely. Just a little further and we can rest."

Kaz considered arguing but decided against it. After all, what choice was there? The only alternatives were either to abandon her friend or to give in to death and despair. To Kaz, those two options were pretty much the same thing.

No, she would see this through to the end.

"You had better be right about this."

After only a few painful moments of walking in the blistering heat, Kaz was delighted—and, to be fair, not completely surprised—to see the dark furrows of chariot tracks appear in the cracked, salty ground. They led off toward a series of domes and small towers that rose up from another island in the salt, one with several trees and cacti, from the look of things. The buildings hovered just on the edge of her vision, blinking with welcoming lights.

"There," Titania said. "A few paces further away than my initial estimate, but close enough, I'd say. Wouldn't you?"

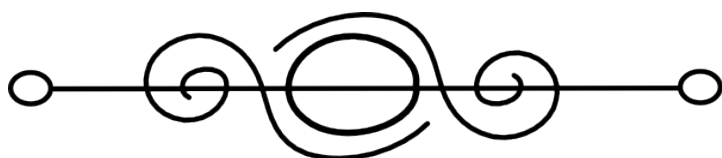
"I'm sorry I doubted you, Tee. I must admit—even when you're half-mad, you're still brilliant."

"An apology and a compliment? From you? I'm truly honored."

"Don't let it go to your head."

Titania smirked. "I'll try not to, my friend."

Leaning on each other for support, the two travelers followed the tracks through the salt to civilization.



HUNTING FOR KROFWARTEN

BY CHRIS FITZGERALD

Hunting For Krofwaren is a Numenera adventure designed for characters between 1st and 3rd tier. The adventure takes place in an urban environment and is structured primarily as a sandbox (events and characters can be experienced in no particular order). This module assumes that Hunting For Krofwaren is set in the city of Aian in the southern region of the Steadfast; however, it can be modified to fit into any urban environment within your campaign.

BACKGROUND

In the city of Aian, City of Merchants and Beggars, on the north shore of the Sadara river: A caravan transporting goods owned by a man named Kempon Bragg was waylaid two nights ago on its way to a warehouse in the river district. The caravan was diverted from its planned route and then attacked by members of the Silver Mountain, a local crime syndicate. The target of the raid was actually an artifact called the Luminous Scrolls. The Scrolls were being moved in secret, so the fact that the Silver Mountain even knew about them is a cause for concern to Kempon. The Scrolls can be used to see (imperfectly) into the future, which makes them immensely powerful. How much the Silver Mountain knows about the Scrolls is still a mystery.

The raid was organized by a mid-level boss named Triple-Blade Malana. To carry out the job, Malana decided to go outside the Silver Mountain for some of the skills she needed. One of the people she involved was a small time con man and crook named Jip Krofwaren. It was Jip's job to help divert the caravan drivers. Unfortunately for Jip, he was recognized by one of the caravan drivers who survived the attack, which makes him the only lead available for recovering the Luminous Scrolls.

Kempon Bragg is very interested in finding Jip and recovering the scrolls, and he also doesn't want to make it obvious what he is doing. So he's leaned on his contacts to get a bounty issued for Jip's arrest.

To further complicate matters, Jip has pulled a double-cross on Malana and made off with the



Scrolls himself. He is planning to fence the artifact and then flee Aian with his family.

SYNOPSIS

This adventure is designed to play out like a Guy Ritchie movie: lots of different competing bad guy interests, all pointing at the same thing, come into conflict and present both risks and opportunities to be played off against each other.

The heart of this adventure revolves around Jip and his family, and how the PCs choose to deal with him. Jip should be characterized with as much sympathetic realism as you can bring to bear: he is a con-man and a swindler, and he is trying to take care of his girlfriend and his daughter. He is not physically imposing or brave, and he has the courage (or stupidity) to double cross the Silver Mountain and make a bold play for his own future.

MAJOR NPCs

JIP KROFWARTEN



Jip is medium height and build, with sandy hair. He has an aural implant that gives him enhanced hearing. A dreamer and a schemer, with a knack for biting off more than he can chew. Recently pulled a scam on a local crime

syndicate where he was part of a job stealing a rare Numenera device from a caravan headed through Aian. Jip's plan is to sell the device (he does not know what it does or how it works) to a fence he knows and then skip town with his family on a river boat headed upriver to Far Brohn.

Jip wants the Luminous Scrolls for the money he thinks he can get by selling them. His motivation is to make a better life for his family. His preferred moves include laying low, staying out of sight, making a deal for the Scrolls, hearing danger at the last second, and sneaking his family away from danger.

Jip is planning to meet his fence, a man named Fat Gombar, at an empty lot near the riverfront at midnight, then take ship on the river scow Sadara's Wishes early the next morning.

Jip Krofwarten - level 2, level 4 at all tasks involving hearing, level 3 at all tasks involving deception. 1 Armor from leather jacket and synth-backed gloves. Knife and needler.

KEMPON BRAGG



Kempon Bragg is a powerful and wealthy merchant with connections all across the Steadfast and even some in the Beyond. He owes a large part of his success to his use of the Luminous Scrolls and the (occasional and imperfect) visions of the

future they have granted him.

The last time he used the Scrolls, Kempon saw himself in a future where he had lost the Scrolls. Which is why he then arranged to have the Scrolls moved to a new hiding place, camouflaged as part of a caravan moving general trade goods to one of his warehouses. His attempt to cheat fate backfired, and now his most prized possession has been taken.

Kempon is fairly nondescript in most ways - short brown hair, slight build, early 40s. He dresses well, although not extravagantly, and usually speaks in moderate voice-tones. Beneath the calm surface, however, Kempon Bragg is a man of increasingly alien desires and intensity. Prolonged exposure to the temporal radiation of the Luminous Scrolls has driven him mad, loosening his fundamental connections to humanity and reality.

Kempon wants the Luminous Scrolls because he is addicted to them. His motivation is to acquire power, wealth and knowledge. His preferred moves include using a powerful business connection, offering something of great value with a catch, showing complete lack of compassion for others, employing surprising knowledge of current and future events, and exhibiting alien powers.

Kempon has pressed the civil authorities to offer a bounty for Jip Krofwarten. He wants Jip alive so he can find the Scrolls, although he intends that anyone with even potential knowledge of the Scrolls be killed once he no longer has any use for them. Kempon also wants information about the Silver Mountain, about what exactly they know or suspect about the Scrolls, and who ultimately is responsible for trying to take them away from him.

Kempon has hired the services of a dangerous bio-synthetic construct named Ritova. Ritova looks like a tall, pale human woman, and while it serves Kempon now, it owes ultimate allegiance to a shadowy cabal of assassins and information brokers called the Cold Grasp.

Kempon Bragg - level 4, level 6 at all tasks that involve bartering, level 7 at anticipating danger, 12 hp, 2 Armor (from powerful personal energy shield). Kempon has access to a variety of strange and surprising powers - feel free to get creative.

Ritova - level 6, level 8 at all tasks that involve stealth, assassination and investigation, 2 Armor, 20 hp, favored attacks are to use her hands and arms morphed into rigid blades and to fire beams of energy from her eyes at long range. If Ritova is killed, her body could be scavenged for 1d6 + 1 cyphers.

TRIPLE-BLADE MALANA



Triple-Blade Malana is a member of The Silver Mountain syndicate. She organized the job to steal the Luminous Scrolls from Kempon Bragg's caravan. Her father is a high-ranking figure in the syndicate, and she's very afraid of disappointing him and of looking weak or foolish in front of her

people. Malana gets her nickname from a pair of Numenera gauntlets she wears, one of which sports a single retractable blade, the other having two. The gauntlets can be activated so that the blades become phasing, which means they ignore armor. Malana is very practiced with these weapons, and has developed a reputation as a cold-blooded, ruthless killer.

Malana wants the Luminous Scrolls because she has been ordered to acquire them by the Seven Clouds of Heaven, the circle that leads the Silver Mountain. Her motivation is to impress her superiors and her underlings. Her preferred moves include using thugs for brute force, taking sudden and violent action, making threats for the Scrolls, and holding someone captive.

Malana has her enforcers asking around town for Jip's whereabouts, working to track down his history and likely hiding places. This will lead her eventually to Jady the Kwo, and the Sweet Leash.

Triple-Blade Malana - level 4, level 5 in combat as long as she is using her special gauntlets, which also ignore armor and negate the speed defense benefit of shields. Green liberty spikes, tight black synth clothing with red stripes up the sides of her legs and arms. 1 Armor from force field implant at the base of her spine.

THE LUMINOUS SCROLLS

The Luminous Scrolls are three narrow, 16" long metal rods wrapped in layers of sheer, translucent synth. The synth is etched with bizarre hieroglyphs, and can be unrolled to a length of 2 feet. When fully unrolled, the synth stiffens so that it holds its shape, and the ends of each unrolled sheet can then be fit into shallow grooves that run the length of each of the metal rods. When connected this way the Scrolls form a triangle, with each of the rods at one of the points of the triangle and the synth forming the outer edges.

When fully assembled, the Scrolls begin to glow, emitting a soft, blue light. The hieroglyphs start pulsing in random, quickening patterns, and the air inside the triangular space fills with fractal, swirling tracers of light. Any living creature within immediate range must succeed on a level 4 Might defense roll or be overcome with feelings of nausea and vertigo from the temporal radiation emanating from the Scrolls. Any sentient creature that puts its head into the space within the triangle must make a level 9 Intellect defense roll; success means that the creature is able to master the alien images beamed into their brain and see something meaningful about either the past or the future. Failure means the creature takes 6 points of intellect damage and is knocked unconscious for several hours.

For transport, the Scrolls were placed in a special case made of dense black metal. The interior of the case is full of gray foam, with three custom-built depressions in the foam where the rolled-up rods can be placed.



Kempon Bragg has a specially constructed device in a secret room in his home made to hold and use the Scrolls. This device makes it much easier to use the Scrolls; anyone interacting with them through this device must only succeed on a level 6 Intellect defense roll.

GETTING THE PCs INVOLVED

They could hear about the theft from Kempon Bragg's caravan and hear that a reward is being offered for recovering stolen goods. They could be looking for work and hear that the city guard offers freelancer bounties. They could get invited through a merchant connection with Kempon, or even (although this would change the orientation of the adventure somewhat) through connections with the Silver Mountain.

PCs have multiple different paths to success in their attempts to locate Jip and resolve the situation. Questioning the guards or local contacts could lead them to Jady, Lurm, or Kempon Bragg. Questioning Jady could lead them to Brody and Sal. Lurm could lead them to the Silver Mountain or to Kempon Bragg. Kempon Bragg could lead them to the Silver Mountain and could put them in the eye of Kempon and Ritova. They could encounter Silver Mountain enforcers at any time, which could lead them to the Silver Mountain hideout and put them in the eye of Malana. The Silver Mountain could lead them to Jady. Brody and Sal could lead them to Veena. Veena could lead them to Jip.

GUARDHOUSE ■

The guardhouse is a long, squat building running along the edge of one of the central government palaces in the heart of the city.

LURM'S TENEMENT WALKUP ■

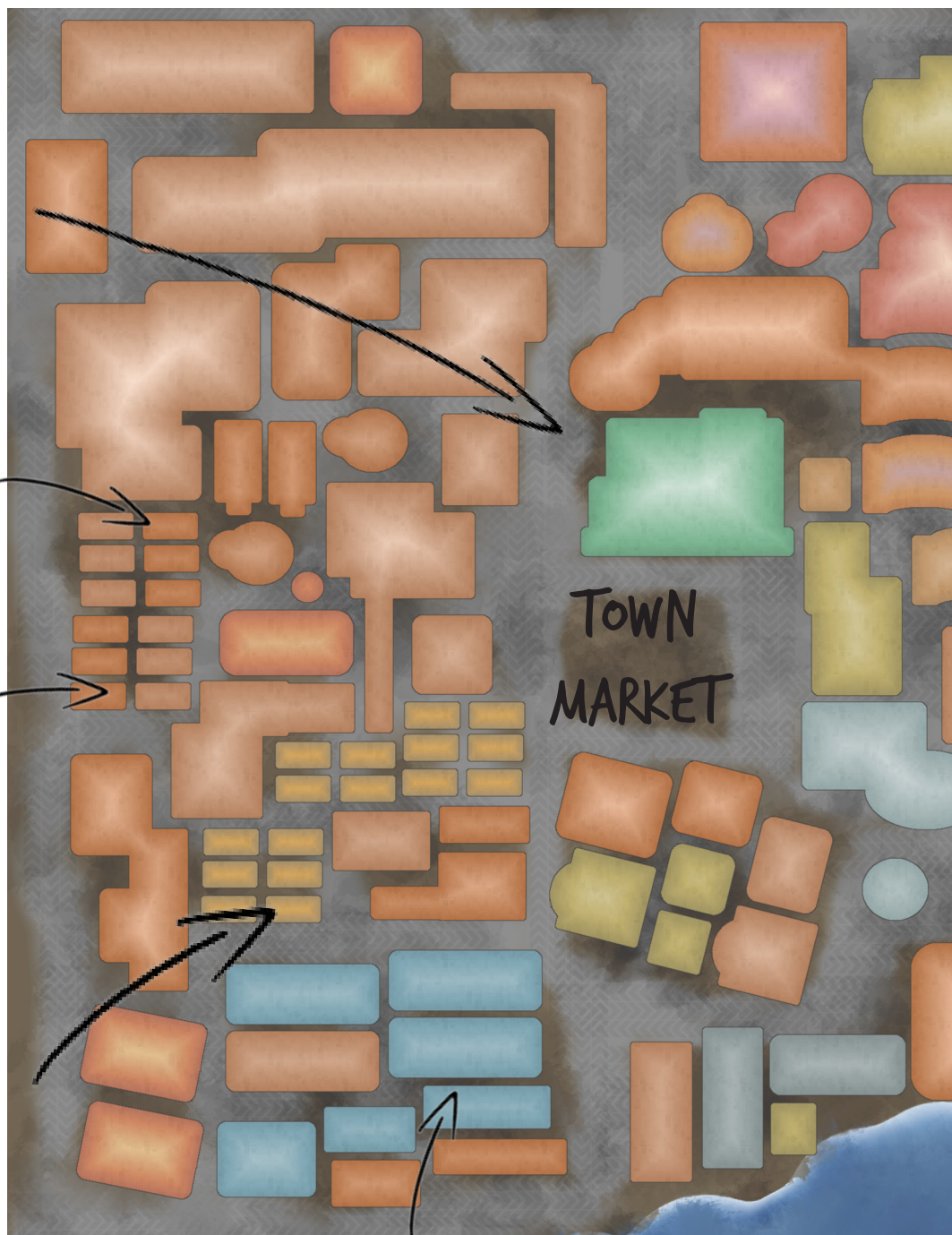
'Mining-street' Lurm lives in a small, cramped, smelly third floor walkup in a rough section of town near the western wall.

JIP'S LOFT IN ROOFTOPS ■

Jip and his family are staying in a flat on the fifth floor of a decrepit building in the slums on the lower west side, in a section known as Rooftops because of the many walkways and shanties connecting the densely packed buildings.

BRODY AND SAL'S HOME ■

Brody and Sal live in a small room in a rambling, three-story common house that stretches for a full block.



WAREHOUSE RUINS ●

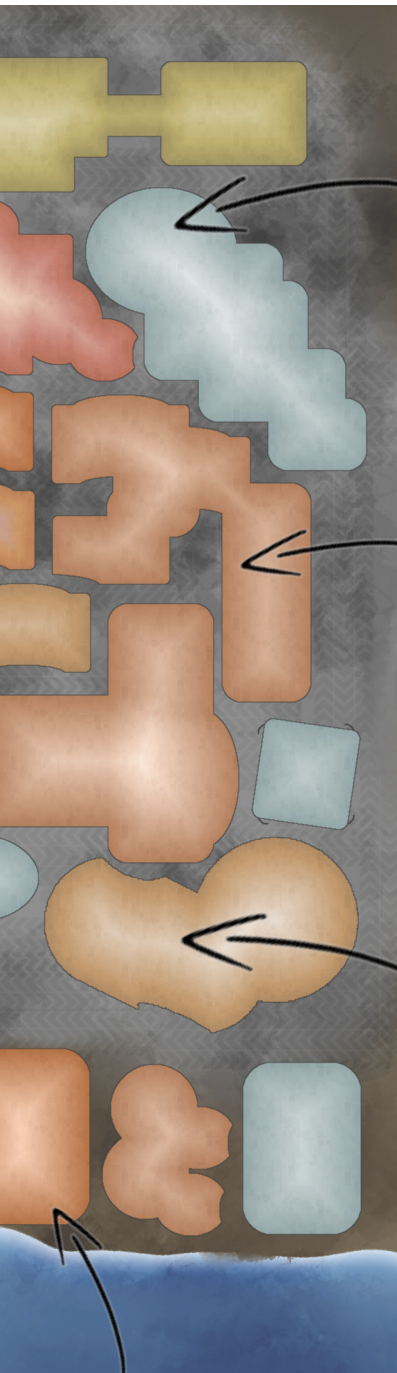
Jip has arranged to meet his fence in the gutted ruins of a warehouse burned in a fire about a month ago.

KEYS TO THE ADVENTURE

● Wants to harm Jip

◈ Wants to help Jip

■ Indifferent to Jip



KEMPON BRAGG'S HOME ●

Kempon's palace is a beautiful fusion of technology and organic structures located in the north-central part of the city, near the city council buildings. Lots of glass, sculpted gardens, water fountains and expensive art.

SILVER MOUNTAIN DEN ●

Triple-Blade Malana's base of operations is a cellar in the eastern district, next to a slaughter-house. The rooms are dark and stink of meat, blood and sweat.

THE SWEET LEASH ◈

The Sweet Leash occupies the top 2 floors of a tall, narrow building sandwiched between a residential building with a general goods store in the bottom and a seamstress' shop.

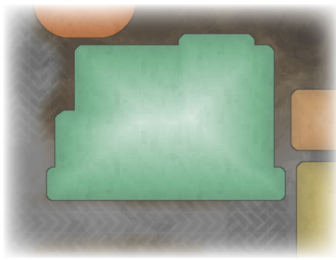
CITY DOCKS ■

Sadara's Wishes is a broad-beamed river scow tied up at one of the docks along the river.

HOW THINGS WILL UNFOLD IF THE PCS DO NOTHING:

- Silver Mountain thugs will rough up Jady the Kwo and learn about Veena and Veena's parents
- Malana will send people to watch Brody and Sal's apartment
- Jip will leave by himself to meet Fat Gombar, after telling Veena to stay put and wait for him
- Veena will disobey Jip and take Trillian to visit Brody and Sal one last time
- Malana's thugs will follow Veena home, then alert Malana
- Fat Gombar's hired goons will beat Jip within an inch of his life and take the Luminous Scrolls from him
- Malana will set an ambush for Jip at his home
- Jip will return and be captured by Malana
- Malana will threaten Veena and Trillian
- Jip will reveal that Fat Gombar has the Scrolls
- Malana will let Veena and Trillian go and kill Jip
- Malana will take her enforcers and go after Fat Gombar
- Malana and her followers will kill Fat Gombar and his men
- Ritova will trace the energy signature from the Scrolls in time to catch Malana as she is finishing with Fat Gombar
- Ritova will kill Malana and her thugs, take the Scrolls, and return them to Kempon Bragg

PLOT SECTIONS AND LOCATIONS



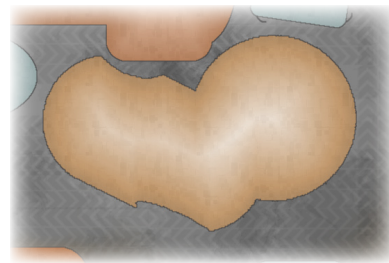
GUARDHOUSE

The guardhouse is a long, squat building running along the edge of one of the central government palaces in the heart of the city. Two guards are on duty at the bounty board. Sergeant Lux and Armsman Velnor. Lux is world-weary, not-quite-but-almost cynical, a middle-aged, red-haired woman who's been a guard for some time. Velnor is older than Lux, a balding man who sucks his teeth and talks with a whistle. They both want the same thing - to get through their shift with as little disturbance as possible.

THINGS LUX AND VELNOR KNOW

- A bounty is being offered for information on the whereabouts of one Jip Krofwaren, wanted in connection with theft from a caravan two nights ago.
- The bounty reward is 100 shins for information about Jip's location, 500 shins for actually bringing Jip, alive, to Kempon Bragg's mansion.
- Kempon Bragg is a rich and powerful merchant, with friends on the Council.
- The caravan was ambushed while making it's way through the city, and some valuable goods were stolen.
- Jip was identified by one of the surviving caravan drivers, a man named Lurm.
- Lurm lives in a slum tenement complex on the west side of the city.
- Jip has a history of crime, mostly con-games and petty theft.
- Jip's last known associate was a woman named Jady the Kwo.

- Jady the Kwo was working at a bar called the Sweet Leash a few months ago and may still work there.



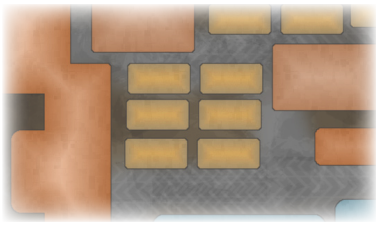
THE SWEET LEASH

The Sweet Leash occupies the top 2 floors of a tall, narrow building sandwiched between a residential building with a general goods store in the bottom and a seamstress' shop. The place is a dive bar mixed with neon dominatrix lounge. On a busy evening there are a good dozen men, women, and others working the crowd downstairs where the main bar is located, attempting to entice patrons upstairs to one of the small, dim-lit pleasure rooms.

Jady the Kwo is a bartender. She is wide-hipped, with short dark hair slicked tight against her skull on one side and long neon pink hair shaped into a flat upward wedge on the other side. She wears a long skirt and a sleeveless top that bares her midriff, exposing a gleaming steel device of several hair-thin spindles all joined together in a central woven cluster that she wears in her belly button. The ornament is actually a semi-sentient automaton that Jady uses to help her tend bar. Jady comes across tough, busy and with a chip on her shoulder.

Jady doesn't know where Jip is, but she does know that he's been seeing a girl named Veena for some time, and that Veena's parents (two women named Brody and Sal) live in a common house in the old neighborhood. Jady would be surprised and a little concerned to hear that Jip is involved in a major theft with the Silver Mountain. Jady knows them as big time criminals, killers and thieves, and Jip was never really willing to hurt people. He had a gift for getting into trouble though.

GM Intrusion Possibilities: Silver Mountain thugs show up wanting to question Jady about Jip, one of the PCs is invited upstairs, a lover's quarrel erupts into violence.



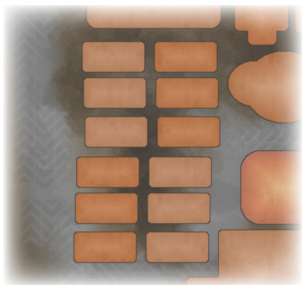
BRODY AND SAL'S HOME

Brody and Sal live in a small room in a rambling, three-story common house that stretches for a full block. Brody is distracted and vague, Sal is concerned and sweet. They know where Jip and Veena are staying because Veena asked them over to visit her and Trilly one final time before leaving town. They are sad, and scared for their daughter and granddaughter, but they don't want to give away their location. They could potentially be persuaded to talk if they felt like doing so would protect Veena, especially Brody, who doesn't like or trust Jip.

Brody Joss - dark-haired, mid-fifties, female. Brody is generally the tougher of Veena's two parents.

Sal (Sally) Joss - blond-faded-to-white haired, late-forties, female. Sal is the nice one, although she too is worried about what danger Jip may be exposing her daughter to. Sal is an avid gardener; her numerous plants fill the small room and the little balcony they have outside.

GM Intrusion Possibilities: one of the PCs spots a Silver Mountain agent watching the common house, Veena and Trilly show up for a surprise visit, Brody demands a promise to protect her daughter and grandchild.



JIP'S TENEMENT HIDEOUT

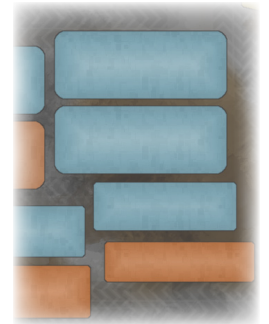
Jip and his family are staying in a flat on the fifth floor of a decrepit building in the slums on the lower west side, in a section known as Rooftops because of the many walkways and shanties connecting the densely packed buildings.

The apartment is made up of just two small rooms, a living room / kitchen and a bedroom. There are toys scattered around the floor of the main room, and two small trunks of clothes in the bedroom. The whole place smells strongly of boiled cabbage.

Veena Joss - Jip's girlfriend. Veena is young, easily impressed, and believes wholeheartedly in Jip. Even so, she's worried about leaving the city behind, especially her parents. Level 1.

Trillian Joss - Jip and Veena's daughter. Everyone calls her Trilly for short. Trilly is three years old, skinny, with unkempt blond hair and faded juice stains on her bright green dress. Talks with a lisp. Level 0.

GM Intrusion Possibilities: Jip hears the PCs discussing something they are trying to keep hidden, Veena interrupts an important discussion, Silver Mountain thugs attack, Malana shows up, Ritova makes a surprise assault.



MEETING PLACE WITH FAT GOMBAR

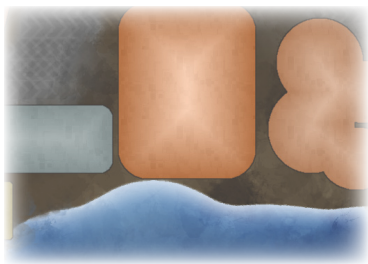
Jip has arranged to meet his fence in the gutted ruins of a warehouse burned in a fire about a month ago. Gombar and his two thugs are expecting just Jip, and will not be happy if Jip shows up with anyone else.

Fat Gombar plans to have his two hired goons beat up Jip and simply take the Scrolls.

Fat Gombar - large, sweaty man. Wears blue robes splattered in food stains. Level 2.

Pollis and Bedra - Gombar's thugs are big, muscly and not very bright - stereotypical street toughs. They're armed with a pair of heavy spiked clubs. Level 2, 8 hp, 4 damage.

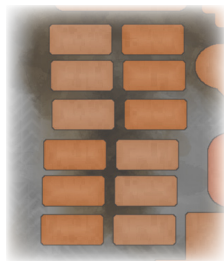
GM intrusion possibilities: part of the wall, floor or ceiling collapses, Pollis and Bedra make a combined attack, Fat Gobar uses a level 5 sonic disruption cypher to try and paralyze everyone in immediate range.



DOCKS WHERE THE RIVERBOAT IS MOORED

Sadara's Wishes is a broad-beamed river scow tied up at one of the docks along the river. Captain Lillian Tuvoros agreed to take Jip and his family to Far Brohn for 60 shins. Lillian is tall and brusque, with a jaw like a shovel and beautiful bright blue eyes. She plans to leave first thing in the morning; it would take something substantial to convince her to leave in the dead of night.

GM Intrusion Possibilities: Captain Tuvoros reveals a last minute double-cross, one of the sailors recognizes Jip and says they should turn him in for the bounty, the wet stones of the quay are treacherous and slippery.



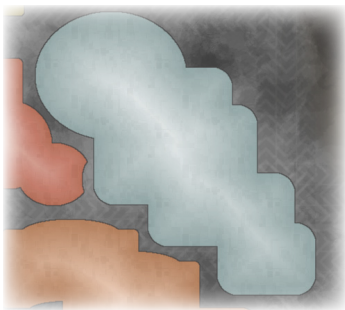
LURM'S TENEMENT WALKUP

'Mining-street' Lurm lives in a small, cramped, smelly third floor walkup in a rough section of town near the western wall. Lurm is older, with grizzled wisps of white hair floating around his mottled scalp and skin like old wrinkled leather. He wears stained gray pants and a grey shirt, and answers the door barefoot.

THINGS LURM KNOWS

- Lurm recognized Jip from several years back, when Lurm was working as a porter down by the docks. Jip frequented a tavern where Lurm would go after work.
- Lurm remembers Jip as a boasting, small-time grifter who would try to scam tourists and other new arrivals coming off the river.
- At some point Jip just stopped being around, which wasn't remarkable. Lots of people stopped being around after awhile, including Lurm. "Fate runs like a river, eh?"
- The caravan was supposed to transport 5 wagons of goods from Kempon Bragg's mansion to one of his warehouses down near the river. There were a dozen armed guards, 5 drivers, and one of Kempon's chief clerks, a man named Sallus Poexemian.
- Since it was late at night and Sallus and the guards made a point of keeping quiet, Lurm figures something secret and valuable was being moved.
- The caravan was headed down a side street when it encountered a wagon blocking the road. The wagon appeared to have broken down. Jip was there, cursing and stumbling around trying to fix an axle. He seemed very drunk. The caravan guards were amused, Sallus got angry, and then steel darts started flying out of the shadows. There was a short and vicious melee and Lurm managed to escape by luck as much as anything else, although not before recognizing Jip, who was talking to some woman that seemed to be in charge. Lurm could describe Malana pretty clearly, although he doesn't know who she is.
- One of the attackers had a tattoo of the Silver Mountain on his left hand. Lurm did not tell the guards about this because he is afraid of the Silver Mountain coming after him.

GM Intrusion Possibilities: Lurm's experience and cynicism make him resistant to the PCs attempts to influence him, Lurm's drug-dealer shows up looking for trouble.



KEMPON BRAGG'S HOME

Kempon's palace is a beautiful fusion of technology and organic structures located in the north-central part of the city, near the city council buildings. Lots of glass, sculpted gardens, water fountains and expensive art.

Kempon is not going to be easy to reach unless the PCs are lucky or clever, or they actually have information about Jip or bring him to Kempon's palace. Kempon has many guards, as well as clockwork automaton traps and secret hard-light walls.

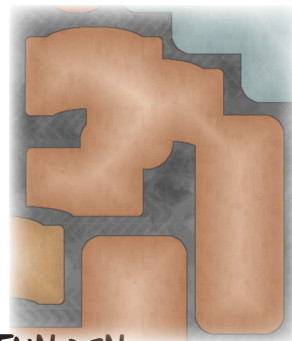
Ritova is not likely to be found at Kempon's home, since it is spending most of its time combing the city for traces of energy signatures coming off the Scrolls.

If the PCs do manage to gain an audience with Kempon, here are some things he knows: That the real purpose of the caravan was to move the Luminous Scrolls from the vault at his home to a warehouse near the river.

That the attack on his caravan was a targeted theft of the Scrolls, which means that someone knows or suspects their power.

That there is a planet made from a huge titanium cube called Retz, and that it is inhabited by a race of singing dwarf-monkeys who call themselves the Shabbaz Gukhtar (hey, weird right?).

GM Intrusion Possibilities: some of the plants in Kempon's gardens spray a narcotic mist when anyone not coated in a special nanite solution comes within immediate range, Kempon predicts something detrimental that happens a few minutes later, one of the PCs accidentally trips an alarm.



SILVER MOUNTAIN DEN

Triple-Blade Malana's base of operations is a cellar in the eastern district, next to a slaughter-house. The rooms are dark and stink of meat, blood and sweat. Silver Mountain thugs relax here, gambling and drinking. Malana's private rooms are far in the back. There are several secret passages in and out of the cellars.

The enforcers will challenge any outsider trying to gain entry; if the PCs do gain audience with Malana, she is likely to attempt to dominate anyone she sees as weak, kill anyone she sees as a threat, and make temporary alliance with anyone who has something she wants.

THINGS MALANA KNOWS:

- Her father, Rin ho Fuk and the rest of the Seven Clouds of Heaven ordered the attack on the caravan.
- The main purpose of the attack was to recover a Numenera device of great power hidden in a special metal case in one of the wagons.
- Jip tricked her and took the case and vanished.
- The leaders of the Silver Mountain will blame her for not delivering the case.

GM Intrusion Possibilities: Malana requires that one of the PCs win a fight against her giant mutant champion, the overpowering stench of the slaughterhouse causes one or more of the PCs to vomit, a rival gang raids the safe-house.

CONCLUSION

Endings to this adventure will depend largely on what actions the PCs take along their journey. If the PCs help Jip escape the city, they will have made a friend for life. If they are instrumental in delivering the Luminous Scrolls to either Kempon Bragg or the Silver Mountain, then they will have made both a dangerous enemy and an untrustworthy ally.

If they sided with Kempon, he will likely want to use them in further investigations as to how and what the Silver Mountain know about the Scrolls, while at the same time planning their long-term demise in order to keep his secret safe.

If the PCs sided with the Silver Mountain, then the Seven Clouds of Heaven will want leverage on them to keep them under control, and will not hesitate to use trickery and blackmail to bind the heroes closer into their schemes.

If the PCs have kept the Luminous Scrolls for themselves, or somehow placed them beyond the reach of Kempon and the Silver Mountain, then both parties will attempt to actively hunt and punish them.

If the PCs encountered and destroyed Ritova, it is likely they will be approached by secretive members of the Cold Grasp about how the PCs can repay the shadowy assassins guild for the loss of their expensive construct. Perhaps they will be asked to perform some dangerous and ethically questionable task that Ritova was supposed to complete....

ENCOUNTERS AND COMPLICATIONS

Malana has people looking for Jip also. Some of her thugs can be skulking around or already asking questions at any of the plot locations described.

At some point, perhaps at Jip's apartment or at his meeting with Fat Gombar, it might be exciting to have Malana show up along with several of her enforcers.

Similarly, Ritova's whole purpose is to be a terrifying, relentless adversary who shows up unexpectedly (like the Spanish Inquisition!). Its focus is tracing the Luminous Scrolls, so it can be introduced anytime the PCs are in proximity to them. Have Ritova arrive just when Malana looks to have gotten the upper hand in a finale encounter for bonus tension

points.

Hunting for Krofwaren is really a game about interacting with lots of different people and getting information out of them. Characters are presented here with lists of things they know so that you, the GM, can have lots of information at your disposal. That does NOT mean that your players get the same advantage. In fact, the point of you having all this information is specifically so that the players don't get all of it. They should feel like they are piecing together a puzzle, putting the whole picture together bit by bit. A really good way to make this feel true is to play up the characters and their lives as much as possible. To that end, here are some possible 'random daily life interruptions' to throw in the mix. Just remember - too much salt spoils the soup.

Jady gets interrupted while you're talking to her by a customer irritated that you are monopolizing the bartender.

A pair of guards at Kempon's palace put out saucers of cream for a host of alley cats near the loading gate by the kitchens.

An elderly neighbor comes knocking at Brody and Sal's door, wanting advice on one of his plants.

Trilly befriends one of the PCs and then keeps bringing them her toys and telling them random little kid stories. If you really want to twist the knife, have her get one of the PCs to tell her a bedtime story, then give them a sleepy goodnight kiss before she passes out.

Lurm says he will trade information for protection from a drug-dealer he owes a lot of money to.

Jip frequently adjusts his bionic ear, occasionally complaining about the headaches it gives him.

One of Malana's goons makes a foolish comment about her father's likely displeasure, and she has a violent reaction.

A gaunt woman addicted to Screamers (narrow flat green pills that cause intense highs followed by extreme anxiety attacks) accosts the PCs for money.

EXPERIENCE POINTS AND REWARDS

Find Jip before he meets with Fat Gombar - 2 XP

Successfully assemble the scrolls - 2 XP

Successfully use the scrolls to see the past or the future - 4 XP

You may also want to award 2 XP for an especially clever resolution to the various conflicting interests in the adventure.

If the party gives Kempon information about Jip, he will pay them 100 shins. If they deliver Jip alive, he will pay them 500 shins. If they deliver the Luminous Scrolls, he will pay them 1,000 shins.





THE ESTATE FOUNDATION

Director,

I've reviewed all of the field reports for the 2343 Recursion Cluster as you requested. The following reports were selected to provide a broad overview of the compiled whole. Further review of the ancillary documentation will take additional time, but for now, I can say that it is highly likely the cluster in question exists in its current state by one of two likely courses.

Firstly, it could be that these recursions were initially created by the active belief and faith of the Northern European Norsemen and have since been corrupted by the numerous fictional depictions of that mythology since.

Secondly and alternately, these recursions may be far newer than their size suggests and almost entirely born from the fictional depictions and less rigorous "histories" of the last century.

Regardless of their source, I think that further investigation of these recursions by fully trained scholarly operatives should wait until we have a better grasp of their inner workings from more experienced recursion scouts. They are clearly too far removed from any Prose Edda to be of any considerable scholarly value.

Even if you disregard this recommendation, I suggest that Dr. Smythe be thoroughly briefed before allowing him to translate. His temper is well known, and I anticipate he'd be rather furious at the winged helmets, the "unique" speech patterns, and other bastardizations of historical truth. That recursions are well documented to be heavily influenced by fictional leakage seems unlikely to afford significant balm.

Alistair Jenkins

Alistair Jenkins





THE ESTATE FOUNDATION

FIELD REPORT

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Submitted by: Agent Christine Olafsson

Submitted to: Dr. Alistair Jenkins, Special Agent in Charge - Recursion Studies

Subject: Recursion 2343BX5, Assigned name: Yggdrasil

Date: Thursday, March 5th, 2015

Contrary to the mythology, Yggdrasil itself is not a particularly large tree. It is most certainly an archaic sub-species of ash, and so determination of its stature within that particular sub-species is impossible until such time as we encounter other specimens.

The tree itself resides in a forested recursion with an approximate median diameter of one kilometer. The tree sits in the center and is clearly the focus of the recursion itself, as all other trees are indistinct, having muted colors for their species. Further these trees, when looked at, are nondescript and difficult to focus on, as though they are literally the window dressing or background for the Yggdrasil tree itself.

I entered the recursion at the foot of the tree on a small isle surrounded by a rather shallow pond. Oddly, despite the presence of a natural body of water, there was a passage within the tree's roots that lead to an underground cave that was almost entirely dry. In this cavern, I noted seven significant roots, each terminating with a large globe-like burl. Upon touching these burls, it became clear that each was a sustained translation gate to another recursion. Without backup, I decided to forego further exploration of these recursions.

Returning to the surface, I noticed that the tree's branches were heavily interwoven, but that a path lying near the main trunk allowed for access to the tree's upper branches. Once more, I investigated and determined that the entire upper portion of the tree was also a kind of sustained translation gate. I have no doubt that had I translated I would have found myself in the mythological Asgard.

Dr. Jenkins, it would seem as though the Yggdrasil recursion, and the tree for which we have named it, is indeed a focal point between earth and eight other worlds. The natural translation gates formed by the tree's structure (for indeed I did determine that the isle itself was such a gate for access to Earth) provides access to each of the legendary realms of Norse mythology.

I recommend that exploratory teams be sent first to the recursion which is likely Asgard before exploring the lesser realms, as there is likely much to be learned from the inhabitants there whom we can expect, based on the mythology, to be amenable to humankind.

End of Report

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Are the Yggdrasil recursion and its "child" recursions spawned by the Prose Edda and influenced by modern perceptions, or spawned directly from more recent sources?

- Jenkins



THE ESTATE FOUNDATION

FIELD REPORT

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Submitted by: Special Agent Malcolm Wallace

Submitted to: Dr. Alistair Jenkins, Special Agent in Charge - Recursion Studies

Subject: Recursion 2343BY1, Assigned name: Asgard

Date: Monday, March 23rd, 2015

As ordered, my team translated via the Yggdrasil translation gate located in the upper branches of said tree. Upon our arrival we found ourselves on the shore of what I can only assume was a fjord. Turning from the water, we found a dense forest, and through it a path lined with a myriad of colored flowers in seemingly every hue.

Before proceeding, we took stock of the changes wrought upon us by the translation. Aside from our gear and clothing, we all appeared to have retained our earthly appearance and form. Most of us wore heavy wool and furs with a smattering of leather or ringed armor. In place of our firearms, we had mostly hand weapons, axes in particular, and large, round shields.

Only the doctor stood apart, being clad in roughspun robes in dark colors. She claimed to have gained no special abilities, but, as we later found, that was a lie as she had gained some form of magic. I suspect that her reluctance to share was due to the sinister mein her powers took, and I believe that she would have been painted as a witch had we encountered less noble inhabitants.

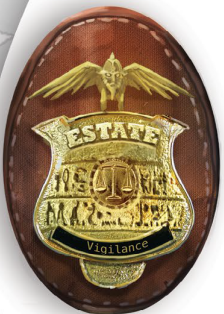
Given the lay of the land we proceeded up the path, as there seemed little other option. The land rose away from the water, and as we finally topped the great hill, we were met with the view of a lengthy stone bridge and, beyond it, a grand settlement. The bridge's arch construction was markedly colored by different forms of stone. Dr. Olafsson suggested that this bridge was perhaps the mythological rainbow bridge, or at least the source of its inspiration.

As an aside I recommend a psych evaluation for the doctor; I think she is forgetting that these recursions are seeded by Earth's myths and not the other way around.

Atop the hill, a man stood in the path gazing out at the fjord and the ocean. Dr. Olafsson approached him, calling to him as "Lord Heimdall," and begging our passage to the city beyond.

Dr. Olafsson's
psych. eval. was
completed on
April 17th.
Copies of the
report can be
obtained from
Dr. Hall.

- Jenkins



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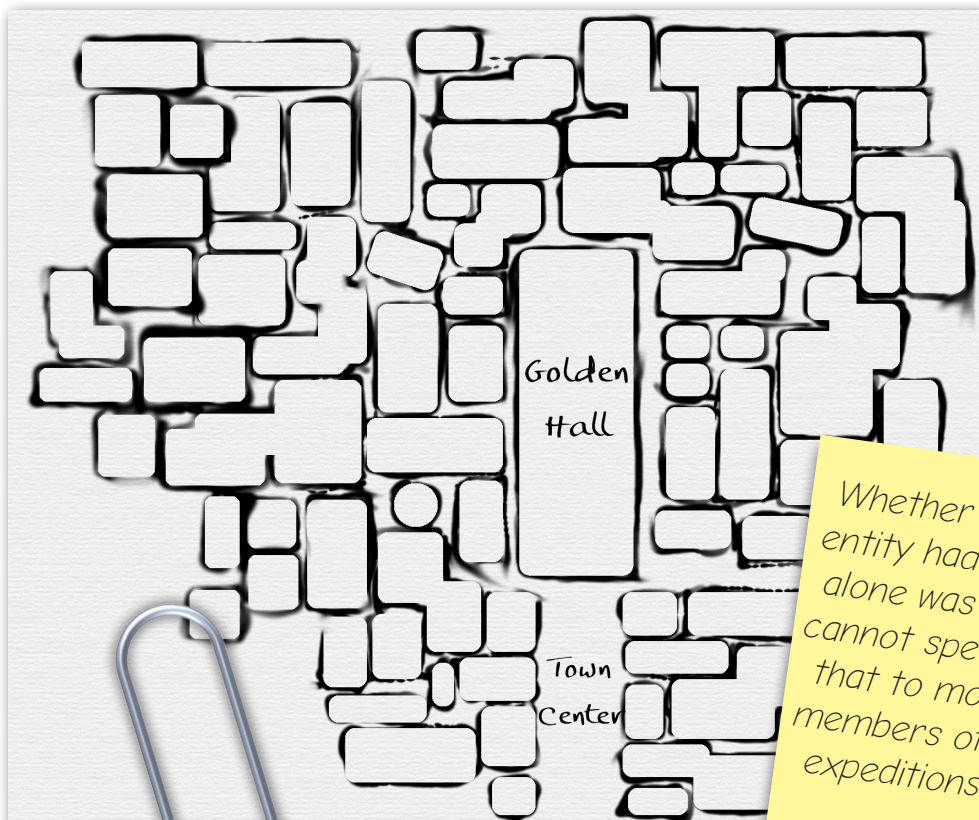


Heimdall, as it seemed that indeed that was his name, sized each of us up in turn. His gaze was unsettling, and I can only say that I am certain the others' reports will say the same; it felt as though he was reading our souls and judging our hearts. Ultimately he refused us, though not outright; instead, he bade us complete a quest to prove our worthiness. Yes, really, a quest.

The "quest" we were given required us to go to ~~blaborepro in velle borest alie tenist la ver-~~
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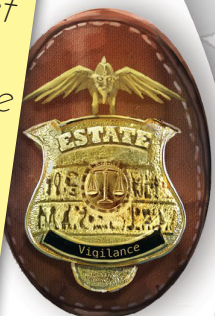
Once we completed the task (as detailed in report ~~██████████~~) and returned the ~~██████████~~, Heimdall consented to allow us across the bridge into Asgard proper.

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Whether the Heimdall entity had the spark, let alone was quickened, I cannot speculate. I leave that to more learned members of subsequent expeditions.

-M.W.





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FIELD REPORT

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Submitted by: Agent Alex Nicolas

Submitted to: Dr. Alistair Jenkins, Special Agent in Charge - Recursion Studies
CC: Special Agent Malcolm Wallace

Subject: Jotun [Giants; ref. Recursions 2343BZ8 (Jotunheim), 2343CV3 (Nifelheim), & 2343HX2 (Muspelheim)]

Date: Tuesday, March 31st, 2015

Special Agent Wallace suggested that rather than a full mission debrief as is usual I focus instead on the specific effects of the translation during our mission to Jotunheim. I'll thank him later for that kindness.

On our arrival to the ice realm, my comrades found they had changed little from their forms in the Asgard recursion. At first, as is usual while the memories unfurl in your mind during the acclimatization process, I thought that we had all come through unchanged. Smith was the first to note that I looked bigger than I had.

It took a little time—the translation had been a little more difficult—but within an hour I realized that I had gained giant's blood. Sixteen feet tall may not be Godzilla big, but when your C.O., who normally has three inches on you, doesn't even come up to your hip, you realize it's kind of a big deal.

It turned out to be a good stroke of luck on our parts; the jotun weren't keen on humans, but after I K.O'd one of their warriors, they decided that I deserved respect, and that meant that "my guests" wouldn't be eaten.

At least I think that's what they wanted to do. Anyway, long story short, I'd suggest that SOP be to include a giant blooded agent for any excursions to Jotunheim or any of the other giant-inhabited realms. Better safe than sorry, especially since we can't translate explosives.

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S.A. Wallace also observed that Agent Nicolas appeared to gain a degree of temper and aggressiveness proportional to his growth. This requires further study.

-Jenkins



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FIELD REPORT



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Submitted by: Special Agent Malcolm Wallace

Submitted to: Dr. Alistair Jenkins, Special Agent in Charge - Recursion Studies

Subject: Surtur [ref. Recursion 2343HX2 (Muspelheim)]

Date: Saturday, April 11th 2015

Director, as you are aware, our excursion to the recursion dubbed Muspelheim was cut short due to our encounter with, and subsequent escape from, the entity known as Surtur. That said, given the environment, we would have been hard pressed to maintain an extended mission there.

Muspelheim is a wasteland of ash and fire, an active volcanic landscape that is seemingly inimical to life and yet harbors giants with swarthy, ruddy complexions. The mythology, in this case at least, seems more than accurate. These giants seem at home within this fiery waste, suffering no ill effects from the heat, fires, or tainted air.

The largest of these giants by some measure is their leader, Surtur. Surtur's skin is bright red, noticeably less dark than other such giants, and he carries a great iron sword that glows brightly, almost such that the air around it seems to burn. It is a certainty that Surtur has the spark and is likely quickened to some degree. Given the belligerent disposition the giant displayed and the "prophecies" regarding his role in Ragnarok, combined with his quickened nature, it seems highly likely that Surtur could be a potential planetovore.

I recommend that we do not allow further expeditions to recursion 2343HX2, and continue to monitor the activities of Surtur as we would any other emergent threat. Thankfully for us Surtur is still consumed with his hatred of the Asgardians (ref. 2343BY1), which may divert his attention from Earth for some time yet.

Luckily the "prophecies" around Ragnarok suggest that Surtur may not be able to survive those events...

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I cannot stress enough the danger that the discovery of this natural translation gate poses to the general public. The fact that this chain of recursions can be accessed by any person via [redacted] demonstrates a persistent and continuous threat to the public welfare. We should strive to close off the area and ensure that people do not stumble into other worlds by any means. If possible, we should embed an operative within [redacted] as well to help keep tabs on the area.



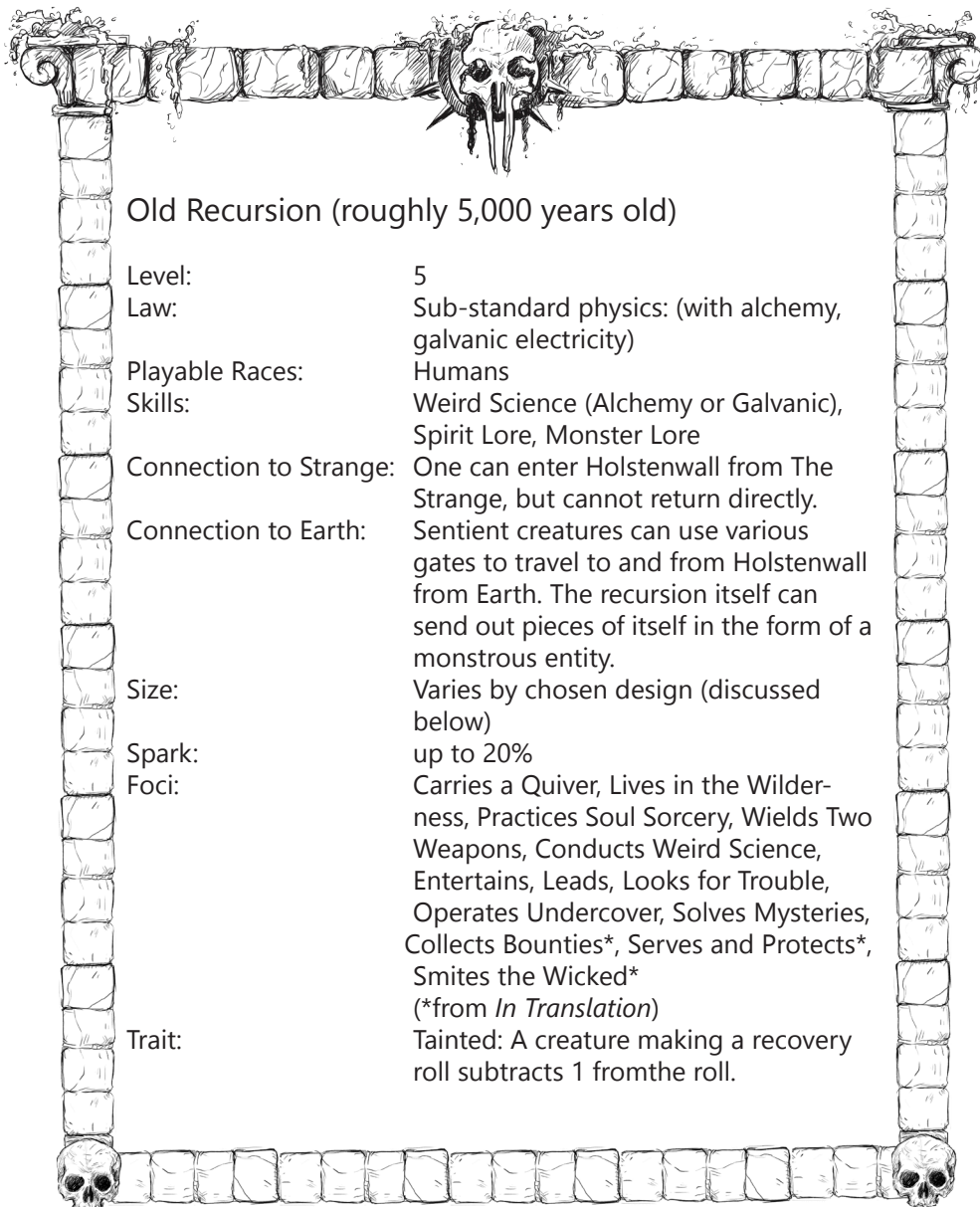


HOLSTENWALL

A RECURSION OF GOTHIC FEAR

BY SCOTT ROBINSON

A HOWL IN THE NIGHT SENDS VILLAGERS HOME TO COWER FROM THE CREATURES THAT HUNT THEM IN THE DARKNESS. UNIVERSITIES HIDE MAD SCIENTISTS WORKING TO REWRITE THE RULES OF ALCHEMY AND ELECTRICITY – MAYBE EVEN THE RULES OF DEATH ITSELF. UNCARING ARISTOCRATS RULE THROUGH FEAR WHILE FEEDING (SOMETIMES LITERALLY) ON THOSE THEY RULE. AGAINST THESE THREATS, A BRAVE FEW STAND TO PROTECT THEIR NEIGHBORS – HARDENED BY THEIR FAITH THAT A NEW DAWN IS COMING TO BURN AWAY THE DARKNESS AND ALL THAT CHOOSES TO LIVE THERE.



Old Recursion (roughly 5,000 years old)

Level:	5
Law:	Sub-standard physics: (with alchemy, galvanic electricity)
Playable Races:	Humans
Skills:	Weird Science (Alchemy or Galvanic), Spirit Lore, Monster Lore
Connection to Strange:	One can enter Holstenwall from The Strange, but cannot return directly.
Connection to Earth:	Sentient creatures can use various gates to travel to and from Holstenwall from Earth. The recursion itself can send out pieces of itself in the form of a monstrous entity.
Size:	Varies by chosen design (discussed below)
Spark:	up to 20%
Foci:	Carries a Quiver, Lives in the Wilderness, Practices Soul Sorcery, Wields Two Weapons, Conducts Weird Science, Entertains, Leads, Looks for Trouble, Operates Undercover, Solves Mysteries, Collects Bounties*, Serves and Protects*, Smites the Wicked* (*from <i>In Translation</i>)
Trait:	Tainted: A creature making a recovery roll subtracts 1 from the roll.

USING HOLSTENWALL

Holstenwall is a recursion that allows you to explore themes of gothic horror in a game of The Strange (though variations on it may be useful in other Cypher System games). It stands as a large recursion reflecting fictional leakage of various classic horror films and other art of similar themes. However, the recursion is also particularly well suited for “incursions” through which the dark forces of Holstenwall break through the walls of the recursion to infiltrate Earth itself (or Ardeyn, possibly).

I will explore the recursion and its use in your Cypher System games through a series of articles in the CypherCast Magazine. In this article, we illustrate the tone of the recursion, provide a series of location seeds to illustrate potential adventures in the recursion, and offer some tips on adapting foci and cyphers to give them a feel appropriate to Holstenwall. Further articles will reveal new locations, threats, or approaches to injecting gothic horror into your games.



TONES OF HOLSTENWALL ADVENTURES

While we have written the elements of the Holstenwall setting material to accommodate a wide range of approaches to gothic horror, there are three we would like to spotlight. Each will emphasize different aspects of a gothic horror setting. While you can define your own approach, you may find these descriptions useful for matching the tone with your story.

UNIVERSAL HORROR / CLASSIC GOTHIC HORROR

Many of the iconic images of gothic horror come from the classic Universal Pictures movies such as Dracula (with Bela Lugosi) and Frankenstein (with Boris Karloff). You can adopt this tone for your own stories in Holstenwall—or when using elements on Holstenwall in other recursions. It is important to note that the term “gothic” horror emphasizes the architectural associations of these early works: Dracula is intimately connected to his cob-webbed castle, and Frankenstein’s laboratory (and the collapsing tower that contains it) is almost as memorable as the monster itself. In this approach to Holstenwall adventures, you should emphasize the shadow-drenched locations and the remnants of (usually foreign) abandoned buildings. These are the places that the monsters dwell. Their decrepit condition serves as a warning—or a reminder—for the players that they are not safe here.

It is also worth noting that the early Universal Pictures movies (and the works that inspired them like The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari—the source of the name Holstenwall—The Golem, and Nosferatu) drew from the expressionist artistic style. In this style, the architecture and setting express the fundamental psychological states of the central characters in the story. This adds some substance to the gothic association with architecture. It is not just that architecture matters or that a specific style of architecture is common (like gothic castles). These settings express the mental states of the antagonists. The abandoned castle represents the isolation of a vampiric lord. A ramshackle cabin represents the fragile psyche of the lycanthrope barely hanging onto her sanity. The mold-ridden fishing house could represent the slow invasion

of foreign ideas (even madness) in a run-down coastal town. Even the weather, shadows, and other elements of the setting seems to conspire to express the antagonists inner conflict.

The nature of conflict in this approach to story is also important. Dracula did not end with the count swinging from chandeliers and fighting van Helsing with a rapier. Frankenstein's monster did not run through town pulling peoples' arms off. Violence is implied—and thereby threatened—but rarely shown. The most famous example is when Adam (accidentally) drowns a little girl. One version of the film cut the scene of him picking up the girl entirely. None of the versions include a depiction of the girl thrashing and gasping for air. The simple shot of a flower floating on the water is enough to communicate what happened. While your players probably want some conflict (which will likely include violence), this approach de-emphasizes violence; direct physical conflict between protagonists and monsters is rare.

Part of the appeal of these movies (in some cases) was the sympathetic or attractive nature of the creatures. Dracula charmed people, and you can see why on screen. Frankenstein's monster is portrayed sympathetically, particularly in *Bride of Frankenstein*. This is not an element you will want to explore if your players are looking for sessions with neat moral categories, but the option is present in a story grounded in these classical sources.

Tonal GM Intrusions:

[1] Racing through the streets of Holstenwall, you duck around a corner to catch your breath. You think for a moment that you have escaped the pursuing ghuls. As you look for the safest path to return to the Coming Dawn cathedral, you notice a single owl perched on the roof of the building across the alley. It looks directly at you with eyes that speak of warped intelligence. You may have escaped the ghuls, but the Dracul Lord knows exactly where you are.



HAMMER FILMS AND THE RE-IMAGINED MONSTERS

An alternative to the classic Universal Pictures approach to these monsters stories is to adopt the style of the later Hammer Films versions, most notably starring Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing. These movies took the monsters from the classic movies and books (Dracula, Dr. Frankenstein and his creation, the Mummy, etc.) and wrote new stories filmed in bright color. Alternatively, one can model stories on the many Corman directed Vincent Price movies based (often loosely) on the tales of Edgar Allen Poe. These films are remembered for the use of vivid colors as elements of the horror, e.g. the bright red blood dripping from the mouth of a recently feeding vampire. They are also remembered for their more direct connection of sexual themes (though quite tame by today's standard). Though it is not important for film and horror historians, these films generally reached a climax with a direct physical confrontation. In one, van Helsing does fight Dracula with a rapier. In another, Frankenstein's monster races across the roof tops of buildings.

This approach can also downplay the sympathetic or attractive nature of the monsters. In the Hammer version, Dracula rarely speaks. When he charms someone, it is a clearly hypnotic power that overcomes his repulsive presence. Frankenstein's monster is almost purely a killing machine. In these films, sympathy for the creatures is almost entirely absent, and the morality of destroying the creatures is clear.

A session using this approach should focus on the sensual experiences of the setting and vivid descriptions of the monsters and their wake. While these movies (and sessions based on them) are far removed from the contemporary use of gore and effects in horror films, you can describe the blood dripping from a lupine's maw or the sickly pale skin of a fisherman with tainted blood. Rather than hiding horror in the shadows, these movies filmed its aftermath in bright colors.

Tonal GM Intrusions:

[1] Tracking the small doll-like creatures back to their source, you find that the toy store contains more than a simple word-working shop. A concealed door reveals a complex alchemical lab. Maybe

the alchemical lab could reveal how these Gholas were created. Tracing the path of the elaborate connections between various beakers and cylinder, you accidentally break the seal on a valve. Purple gas begins to escape the apparatus. It corrodes everything it touches: stoppers, tubing, even other glassware. The device itself begins to disintegrate, releasing a miasma chemicals into this small room. Make a Might defense roll to avoid being poisoned by your exposure to these gases. [A failed defense roll results in characters moving one step down the damage track until the characters have four 10-hour recovery rolls or one 10-hour recovery roll and a transfusion]



CONTEMPORARY ACTION HORROR

Finally, you could borrow inspiration from more recent movies and television shows that depict conflict with supernatural creatures as the stuff of action adventures. Here van Helsing could be an adventurer who punches werewolves and shoots stakes at vampires with a crossbow contraption. The conflict between creatures and heroes can be direct and physical. Most stories of this kind focus on combat as players encounter a series of henchmen (lesser versions of the main protagonists, human thugs in thrall to the creature, etc.) as the buildup to the final battle with the main villain, usually involving large explosions.

To emphasize, all of these approaches are possible within the Holstenwall setting. You don't have to pick only one. However, thinking about these different approaches to horror storytelling can help you balance the tone and content of adventures for your table.

Tonal GM Intrusions:

[1] The hulking beast has cornered you in the basement. Its roughly human form gives a false sense of familiarity. It moves with a speed that defies its large size. Charging you, it swings its immense fists—like blacksmith's hammers. You duck under what you know would have been a staggering blow. The Gholas continues its swing and shatters the wooden support column. You wonder

for a moment how much damage that would have caused if it connected with your chest rather than the column. The thought does not last though, as you notice the ceiling caving in after the loss of the vital support column.

POTENTIAL TRIGGERS

Creating stories inspired by horror films and literature inherently involves subjects that may make players uncomfortable, sometimes in non-obvious ways. We would like to briefly discuss some of the potential triggers present within the three tones of horror discussed here. In each case, you should talk to your players about what boundaries exist for the adventures, which subjects they would prefer not to explore, and what sort of imagery they would prefer to avoid.

Universal Horror:

We often think of the Universal horror films as being quaint and tame by modern standards. In terms of graphic violence, nudity, etc., this is certainly the case. However, the original material includes some material that may make your players uncomfortable. A theme present in many of these films is xenophobia. This led to some stereotypical representations of some groups (notably the Roma, but also just about any non-Caucasian character appearing in the film). Some of the foundational literature in this era is explicitly racist, such as the work of H.P. Lovecraft. Take care when using these images and materials. We have deliberately modified some of the references from this era of film and literature to avoid these problems.

Hammer Horror:

Hammer films are remembered for their emphasis on violence and gore (by the standards of their time). What is less well-remembered by many viewers was the prevalence of explicit or implied sexual violence. Many of the plots involved the predation of creatures—or civic leaders, or religious figures—on vulnerable women. This may be a theme your player group would prefer to avoid despite its centrality to the Hammer oeuvre.

Contemporary Action Horror:

Contemporary Action Horror presents its own potential problems, though they are less pronounced than in some of the other tones. The pulpy plots of the material emphasizes the power of the protagonists, including prominent female protagonists. However, the aesthetics of these movies may still involve a level of gore with which players are uncomfortable, and the fetish-inspired fashions used in some works may imply a sexualization of characters that your group would prefer to avoid.



LOCATION SEEDS

To illustrate the sorts of stories that Holstenwall can support as a recursion, this section includes a brief discussion of different locations within the Holstenwall area. Each description is followed by a rumor section with more specific story seeds for the location.

THE ESTATES OF THE DRACUL

The social elite of Holstenwall reside in a series of estates in the Hilltop district—and in their personal holdings just outside of town. The district is strictly patrolled by the personal guards of the various estates to ensure that none of the members of these high-bred families need to interact with residents from the rougher neighborhoods. Each estate has an expansive holding with palatial mansions and such features as fountains, topiary, and hedge mazes.

Most members of the elite trace their lineage back to the great houses of Dracul, a hereditary line known for its remarkably frail frames and pale pallor. Despite these similarities, the various families are known to compete with each other for prestige. The battlefields for these conflicts are the notorious balls held with a staggering frequency—staggering at least for any who wonder where all of the resources come from for the elaborate clothing and decorations.

Rumors:

- 1) What seems like social rivalry between several houses—specifically between the Torreants, the Brawnels, and the Copplu—has exploded into open warfare. At night, the agents of houses sneak through the hilltop neighborhood fighting a shadow war unseen behind the high walls of the estates. Assassins and saboteurs look for the right opportunity to undermine the power base of a competing family.

- 2) The House Torreant has recently staged a series of masquerade balls. Some prominent members of the family have been conspicuously absent from all occasions other than these. Rumors are emerging that something has made these family members unwilling to attend anything without a mask.

- 3) Hilltop is rumored to be hollow. There have been several reports of moaning sounds coming from the sewers that run through the vicinity of Hilltop. The reports are common enough that a nicknamed has emerged from who, or what, is under the hill: the “Undercourt.”

THE ROYAL HUNTING GROUNDS

Just outside of Holstenwall’s city walls lies a preserve held in the honor of the distant Pale Regent. It is said to be held as a hunting ground reserved for the Pale Regent herself and any specific named guests, though no guests (much less the Regent herself) have visited in anyone’s memory. This leaves the hunting ground untouched. Of course, many local hunters are tempted to sneak into the preserve to seek what may be ample game.

The Regent’s Ordo Lycos patrol the grounds to prevent poaching. Their threat of harsh fines, though, is not all that keeps any but the bravest (or most desperate) hunters out of the area. For the most part, members of the Ordo Lycos keep to themselves within the confines of the hunting ground, rarely venturing into Holstenwall proper. Given their reputation for animalistic manners and tendency to react furiously to even the most minor slight, the locals don’t miss them much.

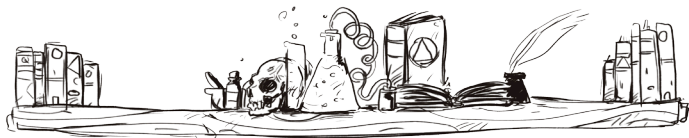
Rumors:

- 1) The areas set off for the hunting grounds are infamous for the howling often heard near their borders. The howls are deeper and louder than anything anyone has heard in the surrounding area.

- 2) Some hunters talk about having snuck into the grounds with the hopes of finding easy prey. Most of these reports include references to extraordinarily large animals, particularly predators. Some report a rundown building deep within the hunting grounds. The most peculiar aspect of the building is that it seems to be built to keep something in rather than keep thieves out.

- 3) Some wonder why the Pale Regent’s Ordo Lycos is tasked with patrolling such a distant and seemingly unimportant hunting ground.

Located between the central business district and the harbor, Auroleaus University has a campus of various buildings. The university has become one of the more prestigious education centers in all of the domain of the Pale Regent. Having a prominent university within Holstenwall casts a long shadow, as the faculty tend to be involved in various parts of the city and its administration. The university itself is managed by the Provost's Council that oversees the curriculum of the university and its process of enrollment as well as having a role in guiding the various research projects throughout campus. The Council is dominated by a group of natural philosophers pursuing various approaches to understanding the universe, notably through harnessing galvanic electrical forces or through the alchemical transformation of various substances.



Rumors:

1) There are several reports of grave robbers in Holstenwall, with many seen fleeing toward the university district. Some allege there is a robust trade in corpses for scientific research at the university. The fresher the corpse, the higher the price.

2) The Council itself is rumored to be split between factions championing galvanic vs. alchemical research. This conflict may have started as a merely academic dispute between different fields of research, but it has escalated to active smear campaigns (including suggestions of catastrophic failures or unethical research conduct) and sabotage.

3) The university has been buying up properties in largely abandoned areas of the city. The purchases are disguised so that casual observers will not know that the buildings are owned by the university. Some claim that these purchases are intended to be locations for particularly dangerous or controversial research.



The Cathedral of the Coming Dawn lies at the very heart of Holstenwall. The church had been moribund for generations. The old church was seen as quaint but irrelevant with the advent of the reign of the Pale Regent and the consolidation of her power.

It has only been in the past few years that a new doctrine has emerged to reinvigorate the church. The doctrine of the "Coming Dawn" focuses on the potential for redemption and the promise that a great purifying event is imminent wherein all those that prey upon the faithful will be burned from the land. For some, this is the first reason for optimism they have ever heard. For others, this is seen as an obvious attempt to rally the faithful without actually improving anyone's lot.

Rumors:

1) The emergence of the doctrine of the "Coming Dawn" has not proceeded without creating its own enemies within the church itself. Some adherents to the classical version of the faith are suspicious of the millennial zeal of the new doctrine and wonder why it has become so prominent so quickly.

2) Members of the church, particularly the adherents to the "Coming Dawn," has been openly critical of the Pale Regent and the local Dracul families in Holstenwall. This would have been unimaginable even a few years ago. Why is it that the church has come to openly oppose the Dracul, and why don't the Dracul act more openly to remove these critics?

3) Several people wanted by the Dracul families for various crimes have been seen in the vicinity of the Cathedral of the Coming Dawn. Could the cathedral be harboring these fugitives? What purpose would that serve?

INSPIRATIONS

To help inspire you for Holstenwall adventures, consider these films and books. The tones and settings vary quite a bit. Together they represent the range of stories you might tell with this recursion. Of course, this list is not comprehensive. I have chosen to emphasize books and films that you are more likely to have missed or skipped but that I think may be inspiring. I will use the US release titles and dates for consistency but many of these sources have had different titles over time and across countries.



Book Authors:

- Poe (Collected Works),
- Shirley Jackson ("The Haunting of Hill House"),
- Richard Matheson ("I Am Legend"),
- Tomb of Dracula (comic, various, 1972-1979),
- Katherine Neville ("The Eight"),
- Brian Lumley (Necroscope series),
- Clive Barker ("Books of Blood"),
- Dan Simmons ("A Summer Haunting")

Classic/Universal horror tone:

- The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920),
- Nosferatu (1922),
- The Phantom of the Opera (1925),
- The Black Cat (1934),
- I Walked with a Zombie (1943)

Hammer horror tone:

- The Two Faces of Dr. Jekyll (1960),
- The Gorgon (1964),
- The Plague of Zombies (1966),
- Frankenstein Created Woman (1967),
- The Devil Rides Out (1968),
- Captain Kronos - Vampire Hunter (1974)

Action horror tone:

- Vampire Hunter D (1985),
- Underworld series (2003-current),
- Van Helsing (2004),
- Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunter (2013),
- I, Frankenstein (2014),
- Penny Dreadful (2014-)

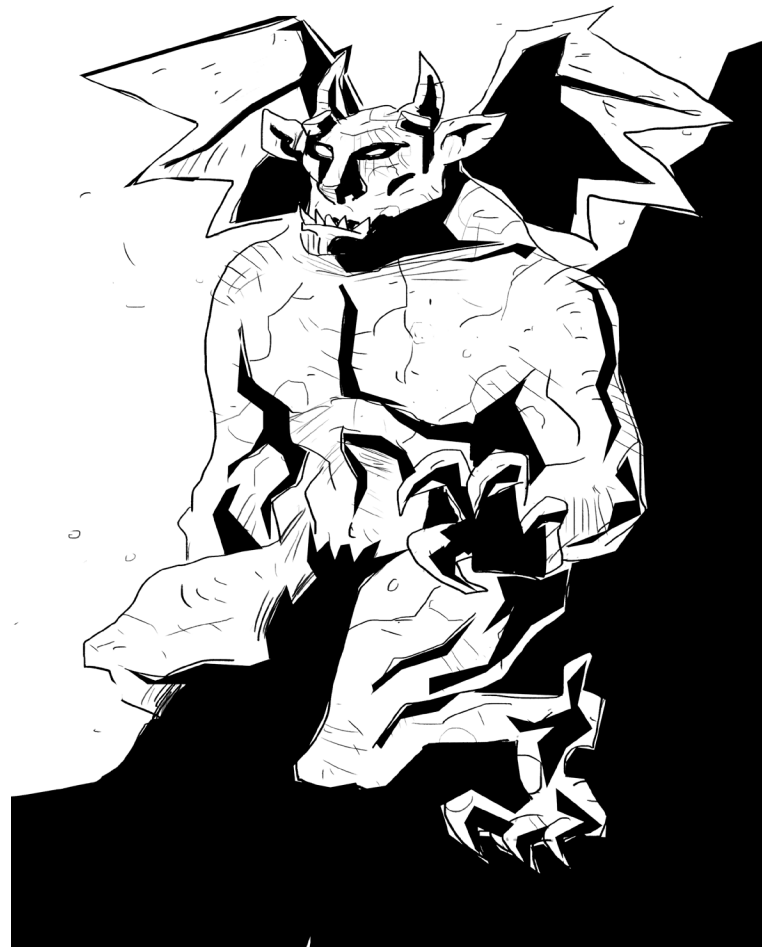
CONCLUSION

Holstenwall presents a wide variety of options for your Cypher System games. This article serves as a brief introduction to the recursion and the sorts of adventures and elements you can expect to find there. In the coming issues, I will continue to elaborate on the recursion to provide such material as new and adapted monsters, theme-appropriate cyphers, advice on modifying or creating foci, adventures, and new locations for the setting. Keep your eyes peeled for more material like this in future articles for the CypherCast Magazine and the Strange Encounters blog (www.strangeen.blogspot.com).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The art in this article is by SS Dabiz of La Caruña, Spain. Find more of his work at: <https://www.patreon.com/Dabiz>.

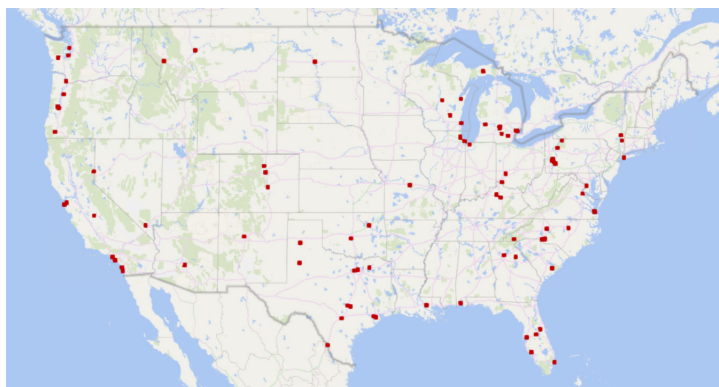




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MCG Organized Play

One of the most requested options MCG fans have asked for is an official Organized Play program. Well, the time is nearly here! We're not ready to release much of the details surrounding it, but we've got plans for a launch soon that will likely focus initially on a Numenera campaign.

Something that we felt strongly about is sharing the wealth of good adventure materials with those playing. GMing the Cypher System is very accessible, so having their own copy of the adventure means those participating could take their friends through what they've been through.

Glimmers & Fractals

MCG has produced a deep library in just a few years, but augmenting their print line-up are a series of digital only releases- "Glimmers" for Numenera and "Fractals" for The Strange. You can find them for sale online in the MCG Store and DrivethruRPG.



MCG Booth, Gen Con 2013 (l-r: Monte Cook, Charles Ryan, David Wilson Brown, Shanna Germain)

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- Including over 70 Cypher System games
- MCG Seminar 3pm Thursday July 30th
- MCG Fan Hangout (TBD)

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September 4 - 7, 2015



MCG Panel, Gen Con 2014 (l-r: Bruce Cordell, Monte Cook, Shanna Germain, Bear Weiter, Tammie Ryan, Charles Ryan)



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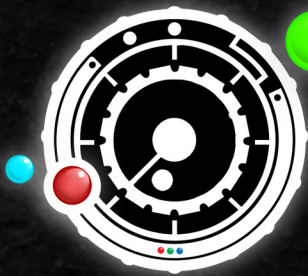
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